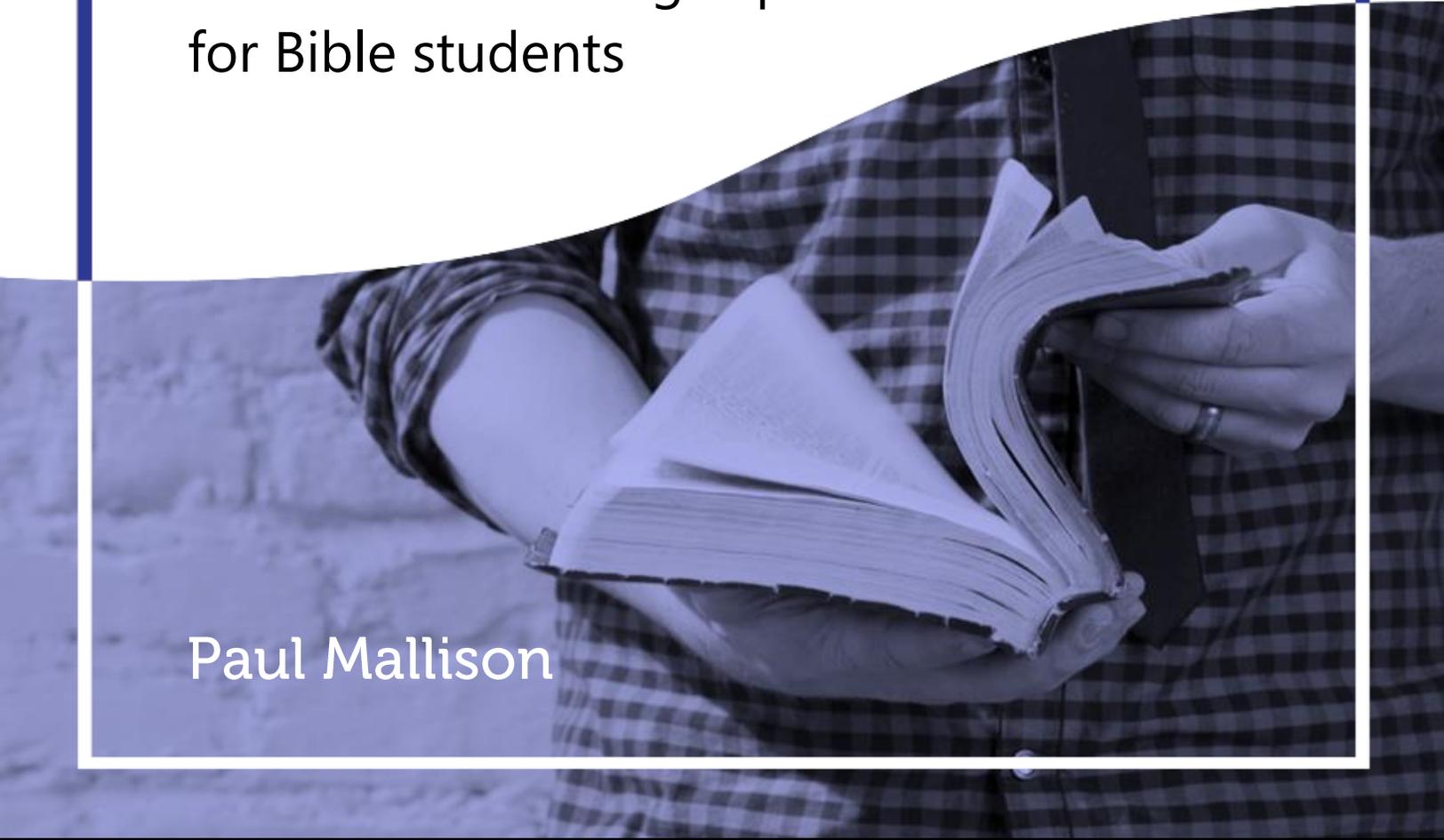


The Bible *Unpacked*

In-Depth Edition

The Bible's teaching expounded
for Bible students



Paul Mallison

Featuring the *English Standard Version*

The Bible Unpacked™

In-Depth Edition

The Bible's teaching expounded
for Bible students

Paul Mallison

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This copy was made on: 16-Mar-24.

This work is dedicated to the members of the persecuted church, faithful to Jesus Christ.

Users are asked to pray regularly for persecuted Christians and, if possible, support them financially. These things can be done through organizations that provide both aid to them and prayer notices, such as those listed at:
www.thebibleunpacked.net/persecuted-christians.

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Foreword

Overview

The aim of this book is to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order, using the Bible itself – i.e. verses taken from the Bible. The structure provides a practical framework for assimilating the Bible's teachings. *Volume I: What to Know* covers basically the same themes as a theological text. *Volume II: What to Do* is more like a manual or a "practical theology" text – mainly giving directions on how to relate to God and to other people.

Each chapter is divided into two parts. Both of these parts contain major headings, which in turn contain groups of subheadings. Each subheading states a teaching derived from the common theme of the verses that follow it. (Thus the subheadings are based on the verses, rather than the verses being selected to support the subheadings.) The parts of the verses that the subheadings reflect are in *italics*. Many of the verses are followed by a comment, which are indented.

The Selection and Order of Verses

Rather than including all pertinent verses under each subheading, if two or more verses say something using the same or very similar wording, often only one has been used.

Under the subheadings, the verses (or passages) have been ordered according to content, with biblical order being a secondary consideration. This has been done to attempt to produce a smoother flow of thought from verse to verse.

The listing of verses under some subheadings begin with a verse/s that is right on the subheading's theme, followed by others that expand on the theme. Often where subheadings contain a command or instruction, the initial verses contain comparable *instructions* – with latter verses containing *examples* of people following the instructions or *outcomes* of following or not following the instructions.

Contemplating Verses

Much care has been taken to interpret the verses both in the context of the passage that they are from and in the light of Scripture as a whole. Nevertheless, if you have doubts about the usage of a verse then:

- read the section in the Bible from which it is taken, and consider how it is used in its context.
- consider how the verse fits in with Scripture as a whole. (For example, interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching.)
- read commentaries on the verse and its passage.

Symbols

The symbol ¶ denotes an additional point. It occurs at the end of some subsections, where it introduces the last verse or passage. An additional point introduced by the symbol will have a closely related theme to that of the subsection that it and the accompanying verse are "tacked on to".

Thick arrows pointing up or down occur in some cross references and comments, e.g. Ex 40:38 ↑; Ex 13:21 ↓. These indicate that the verse or passage has been included in the previous subsection or the following subsection.

Thin arrows pointing up or down occur in some comments, e.g. Ex 24:9-11 ↑; Ex 6:3 ↓. These indicate that the verse or passage has been included above or below, in the same subsection as where they are used.

Occasionally ". . ." appears at the end of a subheading and at the beginning of the following one. This indicates that the teaching in the second subheading's verses follows on closely from that of the first. (Likewise when a subheading begins with a phrase or word like "As such" or "Thus", the implication is that its teaching follows on closely from that of the previous one.) In such cases the reader may at times find it beneficial to first reread the preceding subheading.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations in comments denoting quotations from Bible translations other than the English Standard Version are identified on the copyright notices page, at the beginning of this book.

Abbreviations for books of the Bible are standard ones. "OT" is used for "Old Testament" and "NT" for "New Testament".

Where a comment was notably influenced by a particular commentary or study bible, the source is acknowledged with an abbreviation. (Further publication details for each of these are available in the *Bibliography*, along with other books that have influenced the author.) These abbreviations are:

- BBC = Believer's Bible Commentary
- BKC = The Bible Knowledge Commentary
- ESB = ESV Study Bible
- NBC = New Bible Commentary
- NEL = The Nelson Study Bible
- NSB = NIV Study Bible
- ZBC = Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary

Endorsements

Note that some of the following endorsements are for *The Bible Unpacked* series in general or for editions other than this one.

The author has done a great job in collecting and arranging texts under doctrinal and practical headings.

Dr Paul Barnett, Bishop and noted author

I highly recommend The Bible Unpacked for its use both in evangelism and helping people grow in their Christian faith.

Dr Peter Ralphs, Former Principal of Bible College of Queensland

Paul Mallison has compiled an excellent resource for the seeker through to mature Christians.

Glyn Henman, CEO of Young Life Australia

I am a big fan of the Intermediate level one. I carry it everywhere with me.

Gary Irvine, YWAM Leader

About the Author

Paul Mallison has a BA Dip Ed from Macquarie University, Sydney. He has spent most of his working life teaching students from a cross section of ages and backgrounds. In his work he has composed numerous teaching materials.

Paul is a son of best-selling Australian author and international educator, the late Rev. Dr John Mallison. He is credited with extensive work on the final draft of the last two of his father's 20 published books.

He considers the theology of his *The Bible Unpacked* material to be "evangelical". As for a statement of faith, he adheres to the Apostle's Creed.

Paul lives in Sydney, Australia.

Paul wishes to thank the publishers of the ESV for their generosity in allowing such a large number of verses from the ESV to be used in this *In-Depth Edition*.

Navigating This File

General

In this file almost all instances of colored text are hyperlinks.

If using *Adobe Reader*, to ensure that the target of a hyperlink will always be displayed at the top of the screen, from the **View** menu select **Page Display** and then **Enable Scrolling** – or **Two Page Scrolling**. (Note that this file may not display correctly if it is opened in *Preview*, an Apple program.)

After clicking a hyperlink, to return to it, use **Alt** + **←** (i.e. hold down the Alt key and press the left arrow key). On an Apple computer use **Command** + **←**. If the focus has since moved to another page in the meantime, you will need to do this more than once.

Quick Navigation Page

The *Quick Navigation Page* is located at the end of the file. It has hyperlinks to:

- each of the book's 8 units and all the chapters;
- each of the 8 units' listings in *Major Headings*;
- each chapter's listing in *All Headings*;
- each book of the Bible in the *Scripture Index*;
- each letter in the *Subject Index*; and
- the main headings in the introduction and reference sections.

The bottom of most pages have hyperlinks to the main sections of the *Quick Navigation Page*, as per the following:

[A](#) – [B](#) – [C](#) – [D](#) – [E](#) – [F](#) – [G](#) – [H](#) – [OT](#) – [NT](#) – [Subj](#)

Hyperlinks in Contents

In addition to the Contents near the start, there is a contents at the beginning of both each chapter and each group of chapters (i.e. the eight units). Each heading listed in a contents is a hyperlink to the heading.

Each chapter is divided into two parts, which in turn contain major sections. Under each major section there is a list of hyperlinks to the subheadings that follow (effectively a contents). These lists enable users to see what lies ahead, as well as to jump directly to any subheading.

Hyperlinks to the ESV Bible Website

To enable quick checking of a passage's biblical context, the reference at the start of a passage is a hyperlink to the first verse in the passage in its chapter on the ESV Bible website.

(If your web browser is not already open, allow a few extra seconds for the website to appear.)

If a security warning appears asking whether you trust the website, ensure **Remember this action for this site for all PDF documents** is checked and then click **Allow**. If you are using Adobe Reader and it will not allow you access, click the **Edit** menu (Windows) or the **Reader** menu (Mac OS), and then click **Preferences**. In the subsequent dialog box, click **Trust Manager** on the left and then click the **Change Settings** button. This will open a dialog box that will enable you to allow access to the website.

Users should note the generosity of the publishers of the ESV, in allowing such a large number of verses from the ESV to be used in this *In-Depth Edition*.

Hyperlinks in Headers and Footers

Each chapter is divided into two halves or parts. The headers in the main text have the name of the chapter and the name of the chapter part on alternate pages. The chapter names are hyperlinks to the corresponding chapter names in the *Major Headings* list. And the chapter part names are hyperlinks to the corresponding names in the *All Headings* list.

At the start of footers in the main text is an arrow (↗). This links to the start of the second column on the page, to allow mobile users to easily move there.

The footers also have hyperlinks to the main sections of the *Quick Navigation Page* (as referred to above).

Hyperlinked Indexes

There is both a *Scripture Index* and a *Subject Index*. Each of these contains hyperlinks to the verses and topics listed.

Following each verse or passage in the text is the symbol . Clicking it will take the user to the entry for the verse or passage in the *Scripture Index*. From there the user can navigate to other occurrences of the verse / passage in the text.

Hyperlinked Headings and Lists of Headings

There are two lists of the headings in the main text – *Major Headings* and *All Headings*. The first contains the major headings in each chapter and the second contains all headings including every subheading. All the headings in these lists are hyperlinks to the corresponding headings in the text.

Conversely, all the headings in the text are also hyperlinks to the corresponding headings in the *All Headings* list. This allows users to quickly view the headings within a chapter, enabling them to see what headings lay ahead or to see the context of a heading that they have arrived at by clicking on a cross-reference hyperlink.

Additionally, there are also links between key corresponding headings in the *Major Headings* and *All Headings* lists – indicated by upward and downward pointing triangles (△, ▽).

Bookmarks

Depending on the readers device, this file should open with a bookmark pane. If using *Adobe Reader* on a computer, it can be displayed by pressing **F4** or selecting from the **View** menu: **Show/Hide > Navigation Panes > Bookmarks**.

Clicking on a bookmark will navigate to and display the corresponding heading in the document.

Adobe Reader View Options

Bear in mind the options available through the Adobe Reader **View** menu's **Zoom** submenu, notably the options: **Actual Size (Ctrl + 1)**, **Fit Width (Ctrl + 2)** and **Fit Width (Ctrl + 3)**. These can also be added to the toolbar by selecting from the **View** menu: **Show/Hide, Toolbar Items, Show Select & Zoom Tools** and then clicking the appropriate option.

By using shortcut keys or the submenus under **Show/Hide**, the user can get extra space for viewing the document by hiding objects on the Adobe Reader screen. The user can hide (and later show) the **Menu Bar (F9)**, **Toolbars (F8)** and/or the **Navigation Pane (F4)**.

VOLUME I.

WHAT TO KNOW



Unit A

God and Spiritual Powers

1. God's Being	5
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CHAPTER 1

God's Being

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I. Basics

The concepts in the first half of this chapter are fundamental to understanding what God is like, as they concern basic attributes of his being. These include attributes which show God to be very different to us, but also attributes which indicate that he is like us in that he is a personal being.

a) God's Form

See also:

- *God's glory is an integral aspect of God's presence*, p. 14
- *God's glory manifests his presence . . .*, p. 15

Subsections

- God is one
- God is spirit
- God cannot be seen by people . . .
- . . . In some sense, God is said to have been "seen"
- God is everywhere, not just in temples
- Visions of God
- God's presence has been manifested in a cloud
- God's presence has been manifested with fire
- Note: God primarily dwells in heaven . . .
- . . . God's temple is in heaven

God is one

See also:

- a) *The LORD Is God – the Only God*, p. 246

In teaching that God is one, the Bible indicates that God is a single entity or being.

Deut 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, *the LORD is one*.^a

^a Or *The LORD our God is one LORD*; or *The LORD is our God, the LORD is one*; or *The LORD is our God, the LORD alone*

Mark 12:29, 32 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, *the Lord is one*.' ...³²And

the scribe said to him, "*You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one*, and there is no other besides him." 

Rom 3:29-30 Or is God the God of Jews only? *Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also*,³⁰since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 

Gal 3:20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but *God is one*. 

James 2:19 *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!* 

God is spirit

God's nature is spirit; he is a spiritual being. So God is not a physical being, in contrast to people and particularly to idols.

John 4:24 *God is spirit*, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. 

Isa 31:3a The Egyptians are *man, and not God*, and their horses are *flesh, and not spirit*. 

The parallel phrases "man, and not God" and "flesh, and not spirit" imply that, in contrast to men, God is spirit.

Job 10:4 *Have you eyes of flesh?* Do you see as man sees? 

The direct implication here is that God does not have eyes of flesh. This points to the fact that God as a whole is not flesh – he is spirit.

Ps 139:7 *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?* 

The correlation of "your presence" with "your Spirit" (cf. Ps 51:11) – or "your spirit" (NLT, NRSV) – arguably points to God being spirit.

‡ **God is not a metal or stone image made by man:**

Acts 17:29 *Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.* 

God cannot be seen by people . . .

Deut 4:12, 15 Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, *but saw no form*; there was only a voice.  ...¹⁵"Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since *you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you* at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, ... 



God has no physical, observable form.

Job 9:11 Behold, *he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him.* 📖

Matt 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to *your Father who is in secret.* And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 📖

One implication of God being “in secret” is that he is “unseen” (GNT, NIV).

John 1:18 *No one has ever seen God; the only God,^b who is at the Father’s side,^c he has made him known.* 📖

^b Or *the only One, who is God; some manuscripts the only Son*

^c Greek *in the bosom of the Father*

1 John 4:12a also states: “No one has ever seen God...”

John 5:37 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, *his form you have never seen, ...* 📖

In saying that they had never seen God’s form, Jesus may well have been meaning that like all people they had not “seen him face to face” (CEV, NLT; cf. GNT). As such it is pertinent to this subsection. But given the context, the second part of this verse may be referring more to the Jews’ lack of spiritual perception (cf. AMP), in particular in the face of God’s revelation through Jesus.

John 6:46 *... not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.* 📖

Col 1:15 He is the image of *the invisible God*, the firstborn of all creation. 📖

1Tim 6:15-16a ... which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, *whom no one has ever seen or can see.* 📖

... In some sense, God is said to have been “seen”

See also:

- *Visions of God*, p. 9
- *God’s glory manifests his presence . . .*, p. 15
- *... God’s glory is spoken of as manifesting his presence in his temples*, p. 16

Gen 16:13 So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,”^d for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.”^e 📖

^d Or *You are a God who sees me*

^e Hebrew *Have I really seen him here who sees me? or Would I have looked here for the one who sees me?*

Verse 11 indicates that it was “the angel of the LORD” who spoke here to Hagar, rather than necessarily God himself. (Regarding the relationship to God of “the angel of the LORD”, see the comment below on **Judg 6:22-23**.) The rendering in the text note provides a further possible meaning.

Gen 32:30 So Jacob called the name of the place *Peniel*,^f saying, “*For I have seen God face to face*, and yet my life has been delivered.” 📖

^f *Peniel means the face of God*

Verses 24-30 appear to speak of Jacob encountering a manifestation of God, possibly in the form of an angel.

Ex 24:9-11 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, ¹⁰and *they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.* ¹¹And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; *they beheld God*, and ate and drank. 📖

The fact that the description of what they saw of God is restricted merely to what was under his feet, arguably suggests that they did not see the whole of God.

Ex 33:11, 20 Thus *the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.* When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent. 📖 ... ²⁰But, he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” 📖

The phrase “face to face” (v. 11) may be a figure of speech emphasizing the directness and clarity of God’s communication with Moses. This is supported by v. 20, with God saying to Moses “you cannot see my face” (and v. 23 – “my face shall not be seen”). Note that like v. 20 there are other verses that refer to seeing God resulting in death (cf. **Gen 32:30** ↑; **Ex 24:9-11** ↑; **Judg 6:22-23** ↓; **Judg 13:21-22** ↓; **Ex 19:21**; **1Sam 6:19-20**; **Isa 6:5-7**). Sinful, unworthy people cannot look upon the holy, almighty God and live.

Num 12:7-8 Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. ⁸*With him I speak mouth to mouth*, clearly, and not in riddles, and *he beholds the form of the LORD.* Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? 📖

The phrase “mouth to mouth” (v. 8) is often translated “face to face”. Note that Moses is said to behold – or see (cf. GNT, NCV, NIRV, NIV, NKJV, NLT) – God’s “form”, which quite likely



implies that he did not: see God in all his fullness; or necessarily see God's face (cf. [Ex 3:20 ↑](#)).

Judg 6:22-23 Then Gideon perceived that *he was the angel of the LORD*. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."²³ But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." 

Here and in [13:21-22](#) immediately below, it is the angel of the LORD who is seen. Although he is correlated with God (v. 23), possibly this is only in the sense that he is speaking on behalf of God (cf. [Note: "The angel of the LORD" is identified with God](#), p. 172).

Judg 13:21-22 The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.²² And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." 

Heb 11:27 By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as *seeing him who is invisible*. 

This may allude back to the expression earlier in Hebrews 11 of being "the conviction of things not seen" (v. 1), possibly meaning that Moses persevered "as if he could see" God (NCV; cf. GNT). Alternatively it may refer to Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush and his ongoing close communication with God (cf. [Ex 3:11, 20 ↑](#); [Num 12:7-8 ↑](#)).

✦ **The LORD's visible appearance to Abraham, conversing with him:**

Gen 18:1-2, 13-14, 25-26 And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks^g of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.² He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth  ...¹³ The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'¹⁴ Is anything too hard^h for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."  ...²⁵ [Abraham:] Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"²⁶ And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." 

^g Or terebinths

^h Or wonderful

As well as the use of the title "the LORD", the content of the conversation suggests that this was an appearance of the LORD. Many commentators consider that this was quite likely the angel of the LORD.

God is everywhere, not just in temples

See also:

▪ [a\) God Is Always with His People](#), p. 802

Ps 139:5-10 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. ⁷Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! ⁹If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. 

Prov 15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. 

Jer 23:23-24 Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? ²⁴Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD. 

Num 14:21 But truly, as I live, and as *all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD*, ... 

God's glory is often linked with his presence, and as such the sense of the latter part of the verse may be: "...my presence fills the earth" (GNT). With the future tense of the verse as it here (cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV, NRSV), the meaning may be that God's glory and presence will become clearly manifested throughout the earth.

1Ki 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! 

Acts 7:48-50 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,⁴⁹ "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?"⁵⁰ Did not my hand make all these things? 

The first statement in v. 49 speaks of God being present in and even throughout heaven and earth – as opposed to merely within temples (vv. 48, 49b). Note that the fact that God has made all things (v. 50) points to the absurdity of any notion of him being confined to a building (cf. [Acts 17:24 ↓](#)).

Acts 17:24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, *does not live in temples made by man*,ⁱ ... 

ⁱ Greek *made by hands*



Acts 17:27-28 ... that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. *Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,* ²⁸for “*In him we live and move and have our being*”;^j as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.”^k 

^j Probably from Epimenides of Crete

^k From Aratus’s poem “Phainomena”

Following his assertion that God “he is actually not far from each one of us” (v. 27b), in v. 28a Paul appears to be quoting the Cretan poet Epimenides to illustrate that our existence and its continuation are dependent on God enveloping us.

Eph 4:6 ... one God and Father of all, *who is over all and through all and in all.* 

Here “all” may well be speaking of all things (cf. NCV) – making the verse particularly pertinent to this subsection. However it may instead primarily be speaking of all believers.

Visions of God

Isa 6:1-4 In the year that King Uzziah died *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train¹ of his robe filled the temple.* ²*Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.* ³*And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”^m* ⁴*And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.* 

¹ Or hem

^m Or may his glory fill the whole earth

The “seraphim” (v. 2) are apparently a high order or class of angelic beings. Their presence and activity (vv. 2-4) accentuates God’s glory.

Ezek 1:26-28 And above the expanse over their heads *there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire;ⁿ and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance.* ²⁷*And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him.^o* ²⁸*Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.* And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking. 

ⁿ Or lapis lazuli

^o Or it

God is described in like-terms in 8:2 as part of another vision of God – “Then I looked, and behold, a form that had the appearance of a man. Below what appeared to be his waist was fire, and above his waist was something like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal.”

Ezek 43:1-3 Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. ²*And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory.* ³*And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he^p came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face.* 

^p Some Hebrew manuscripts and Vulgate; most Hebrew manuscripts *when I*

The other visions referred to are in chs. 8-11 and chs. 1-3 (cf. [Ezek 1:26-28](#) ) respectively.

Dan 7:9-10 As I looked, thrones were placed, and *the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.* ¹⁰*A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.* 

Rev 4:2-5 At once I was in the Spirit, and *behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.* ³*And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.* ⁴*Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.* ⁵*From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings^q and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ...* 

^q Or voices, or sounds

The “twenty-four elders” (v. 4) are quite possibly a high order or class of angelic beings. The “seven spirits of God” (v. 5) is usually interpreted as referring to the Holy Spirit.

God’s presence has been manifested in a cloud

See also:

- [Ex 13:21](#) ; [Deut 4:11](#) ; [Deut 5:22](#) 
- [God’s glory manifests his presence . . .](#), p. 15
- [. . . God’s glory is spoken of as manifesting his presence in his temples](#), p. 16



Ex 16:10-11 And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and *behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.* ¹¹*And the LORD said to Moses, ...*

This indicates that God spoke from the cloud (cf. [Ex 19:9a ↓](#); [Ex 24:16 ↓](#); [Ex 33:9 ↓](#)), affirming his presence within it.

Ex 19:9a, 16-17 And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, *I am coming to you in a thick cloud*, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.” ... ¹⁶*On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain* and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷*Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.*

Ex 24:16 *The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.*

Ex 33:9-10 When Moses entered the tent, *the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD^r would speak with Moses.* ¹⁰*And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door.*

^r Hebrew *he*

Ex 34:5 *The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.*

Ex 40:34-38 *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.* ³⁵*And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.* ³⁶*Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out.* ³⁷*But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up.* ³⁸*For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.*

The cloud of God's glory and presence, which had filled the tabernacle (vv. 34-35), guided the Israelites during all their travels (vv. 36-38).

Lev 16:2 ... and the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For *I will appear in the cloud* over the mercy seat.”

1Ki 8:10-12 And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, *a cloud filled the house of the LORD,* ¹¹*so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.* ¹²*Then Solomon said, “The LORD^s has said that he would dwell in thick darkness.*

^s Septuagint *The LORD has set the sun in the heavens, but*

Just as the cloud of God's glory and presence had filled the movable tabernacle (cf. [Ex 40:34-35 ↑](#)) to accompany the Israelites in their travels, it likewise later filled the completed temple in Jerusalem. Note that “thick darkness” can be rendered “dark cloud” (CEV, NCV, NIRV, NIV, NKJV; cf. NASB).

Matt 17:5 He was still speaking when, behold, *a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son,*^t *with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”*

^t Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

Here God speaks from a bright cloud on the occasion of Jesus Christ's transfiguration.

Acts 1:9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and *a cloud took him out of their sight.*

A number of commentators consider this cloud to be, as in the above references, a manifestation of God's presence.

Ps 18:11-12 He made darkness his covering, *his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water.* ¹²*Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds.*

The description here appears to be figurative, although the writer is possibly alluding to earlier manifestations of God's presence in a cloud (as per the above references).

God's presence has been manifested with fire

See also:

- [Ex 40:38 ↑](#)

Ex 3:2-6 *And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.* He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³*And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.”* ⁴*When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!”* And he said, “Here I am.” ⁵*Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”* ⁶*And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of*



Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for *he was afraid to look at God.* 

The “angel of the LORD” (v. 2) is identified with God (v. 4). God’s presence is here manifested in fire from within a bush.

Ex 13:21 *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.* 

Ex 19:18 *Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.* 

Ex 24:17 *Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.* 

Deut 4:11-12 *And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. ¹²Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice.* 

Deut 5:22 *These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.* 

Lev 9:24 *And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.* 

This is not necessarily saying that the fire was a manifestation of God’s presence, but it does at least associate the fire with God’s presence (cf. NIV, NLT).

✦ **God’s Holy Spirit was manifested in what looked like “tongues of fire”:**

Acts 2:3-4 *And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested^u on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* 

^u Or *And tongues as of fire appeared to them, distributed among them, and rested*

Note: God primarily dwells in heaven . . .

See also:

▪ . . . *God is enthroned in heaven*, p. 251

Verses which speak of God being in heaven are not understood to indicate that he is in any way confined to one location. But they do suggest that his form is such that his primary presence is in heaven. Note that some verses suggest that God is present throughout the earth through his Holy Spirit (cf. *The Holy Spirit is correlated with God’s presence*, p. 143).

Deut 26:15 *Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.* 

1Ki 8:30b *And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.* 

2Chr 20:6a . . . and said, “O LORD, God of our fathers, *are you not God in heaven?* 

Job 22:12a *“Is not God high in the heavens?”* 

Ps 20:6 *Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand.* 

Ps 73:25 *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.* 

Eccl 5:2 ^v *Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.* 

^v Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

Isa 63:15a *Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful^w habitation.* 

^w Or *holy and glorious*

Matt 6:9 *Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”*^x 

^x Or *Let your name be kept holy, or Let your name be treated with reverence*

Acts 7:55 *But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.* 



Gen 28:17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! *This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*" 

Jacob was speaking after having a dream of a stairway reaching up to heaven, with God being above the stairway (cf. vv. 12-13).

Isa 40:22 It is *he who sits above the circle of the earth*, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; ... 

... God's temple is in heaven

There have been earthly temples of God. But as heaven is where God primarily dwells, that which is spoken of as ultimately being God's temple is in heaven.

Ps 11:4 *The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.* 

Heb 8:5 *They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.* For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." 

The priests served at a sanctuary – initially in the tabernacle and then later the temple – which was set up to reflect God's heavenly sanctuary or temple.

Rev 11:19 *Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple.* There were flashes of lightning, rumblings,^y peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. 

^y Or *voices, or sounds*

The ark of the covenant signifies God's presence (cf. *d) The Ark of the Covenant and God's Presence*, p. 340). The background to this reference is the ark of the covenant that was made according to God's directions to Moses. It was kept in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle and later in the temple. It contained the stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments. Together these tablets were also referred to as the "witness" (cf. **Rev 15:5 ↓**) – or "testimony" (NIV®) – as they "witnessed" to God's covenant to Israel, which was based on the Ten Commandments.

Rev 15:5, 8 *After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent^z of witness in heaven was opened,  ...⁸ and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.* 

^z Or *tabernacle*

This sanctuary appears to denote a/the temple of God (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIRV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

Jonah 2:4, 7 Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.'  ... ⁷When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and *my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.* 

In v. 4, "temple" appears to refer to the temple in Jerusalem, with Jonah speaking of looking towards it. Contrastingly, in v. 7 "temple" may refer to God's heavenly temple, with Jonah speaking of his prayer rising to God and to his "temple". The Israelites closely correlated these two temples. Note that although the following references do not actually mention heaven, like v. 7 here they appear to be speaking of heaven as God's temple.

Ps 18:6 In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. *From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.* 

Mic 1:2 Hear, you peoples, all of you;^a pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and *let the Lord GOD be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.* 

^a Hebrew *all of them*

Hab 2:20 But *the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.* 

† God dwells in heaven but is also present on earth:

Isa 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: *"I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.* 

That God dwells in heaven but is present on earth too is also implied in 66:1a – 'Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool'.

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) God's Glory

See also:

- [God's glory](#) [reasons for which to exalt God], p. 1267

Scripture often speaks of God's glory in reference to his wondrous being. In doing so, it has in view God's essence and/or his attributes. Regarding his essence, God's glory pertains to his essential being itself, such that his presence is on occasions perceived as his glory and spoken of in terms of it. Regarding his attributes, God's glory emanates in part from his attributes – such as his power – which in a sense reflect the glory of God's essence and presence.

Subsections

- Glory is a prominent and key attribute of God
- God's glory is an integral aspect of God's presence
- God's glory manifests his presence . . .
- . . . God's glory is spoken of as manifesting his presence in his temples
- God is resplendent with light
- God has great splendor and majesty
- God's glory is reflected in his powerful deeds
- God's glory is evidenced throughout the earth and the heavens
- God's glory will be explicitly revealed throughout the earth, to all nations

Glory is a prominent and key attribute of God

Ps 24:7-8, 10 Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that *the King of glory* may come in. ⁸*Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!* ¹⁰*Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!* Selah

The mighty God is “the King of glory” (cf. [Acts 7:2b ↓](#); [Eph 1:17 ↓](#)), for his glory far exceeds that of anyone or anything else, and in him glory has its ultimate expression.

Ps 104:31 *May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, ...*

This points to the fact that God's glory will indeed endure forever.

Ps 138:5 ... and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for *great is the glory of the LORD.*

Jer 2:11 Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed *their glory* for that which does not profit.

The phrase “their glory” refers to God – “their Glory [God]” (AMP). Referring to God as such reflects that glory is a prominent and key part of his being.

Hab 2:14 *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*

Acts 7:2b *The God of glory* appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ...

“The God of glory” – as with the similar titles “the King of glory” ([Ps 24:7-8, 10 ↑](#)) and “the Father of glory” ([Eph 1:17 ↓](#)) – appears to indicate one or more of the following: glory is a central attribute of God, permeating or encompassing his entire being; God is the ultimate source of all glory; and God is the one to whom all glory belongs (cf. [Rev 19:1 ↓](#)).

Rom 3:23 ... for *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ...*

In their sinful state, people are not compatible with God's wondrous glory. The fact that it is God's glory that people are measured by or compared to, underlines that glory is a key attribute of God.

2Cor 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

This is speaking of God enabling believers to know his glory through his revelation of himself in Jesus Christ, largely as seen in Jesus Christ's mission. Jesus Christ emulated and revealed God in his person, words and deeds; in a sense Jesus Christ personified God.

Eph 1:17 ... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of glory*, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ...

Heb 1:3a *He is the radiance of the glory of God* and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

In speaking of Jesus Christ being like God, the only attribute of God that is specifically mentioned is his glory (cf. [2Cor 4:6 ↑](#)). This highlights that glory is a prominent and key attribute of God.

Jude 1:25 ... *to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

In ascribing glory to God (cf. [Rev 19:1 ↓](#); [Reasons for which to exalt God:] [God's glory](#), p. 1267) the writer appears to both



acknowledge God's glory and bestow glory on God, the latter being akin to a blessing.

✦ **Glory belongs to God:**

Rev 19:1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and *glory and power belong to our God, ...* 📖

Ultimately glory only truly belongs to God. No other glory is comparable or lasting.

God's glory is an integral aspect of God's presence

See also:

- *Israel's glory will primarily be God, with the glory of his presence*, p. 1017

Ps 26:8 O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and *the place where your glory dwells.* 📖

In speaking of where God's "glory dwells" – and also in view of the earlier reference to "your house" – this correlates God's glory with his presence.

Ps 85:9 *Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.* 📖

The reference to "glory" is likely to God's glory – "his glory" (NCV™, NIV®, NLT, NRSV). The verse may mean that on accomplishing their salvation, God's glorious presence – God himself – would remain with his people in the land (cf. AMP, GNT). Alternatively, or additionally, it could be speaking of God's glory being manifested in effecting his people's salvation.

Isa 58:8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; *the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.* 📖

This appears to allude to the cloud of God's presence, which guided and protected Israel during all their desert travels. The expression "the glory of the LORD" speaks of God himself, his very presence.

Ezek 3:12-13 Then the Spirit^b lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice^c of a great earthquake: "*Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!*"¹³ It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, and the sound of a great earthquake. 📖

^b Or *the wind*; also verse 14

^c Or *sound*

The term "its place" likely denotes God's dwelling place (cf. NIV). The context (cf. [Ezek 1:26-28](#) ↴; [Ezek 3:22-23](#) ↴) further suggests that "the glory of the LORD" is correlated with God's presence.

2Pet 1:17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by *the Majestic Glory*, "This is my beloved Son,^d with whom I am well pleased," ... 📖

^d Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

Peter is speaking of Jesus Christ's transfiguration where God, "the Majestic Glory", spoke from a bright cloud that enveloped Jesus and the disciples with him (cf. Matt 17:5). The reference to God as "the Majestic Glory" speaks of and emphasizes the glory of his presence (cf. ESB).

Jude 1:24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before *the presence of his glory* with great joy, ... 📖

Num 14:21 But truly, as I live, and as all *the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, ...* 📖

As noted earlier, this may be linking God's glory with his presence – which may also be the case in Isaiah 6:3 below.

Isa 6:3 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; *the whole earth is full of his glory!*"^e 📖

^e Or *may his glory fill the whole earth*

Rev 21:2-3, 10-11 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, *the dwelling place^f of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^g and God himself will be with them as their God.^h*" ... ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹*having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.* 📖

^f Or *tabernacle*

^g Some manuscripts *peoples*

^h Some manuscripts omit *as their God*

God will dwell with his people in the new Jerusalem (v. 3). As such God's glory will be there (v. 11).



God's glory manifests his presence . . .

See also:

- *God's presence has been manifested in a cloud*, p. 9
- *God's presence has been manifested with fire*, p. 10

Ex 16:10-11 And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, *the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud*. ¹¹*And the LORD said to Moses, ...* 

Verse 1 indicates that God spoke from the cloud, affirming his presence in it – thus showing his glory to be a manifestation of his presence. Exodus 24:15-17, Numbers 14:10-11, Numbers 20:6-7, Ezekiel 1:26-28 and Ezekiel 8:4-5b below similarly speak of the appearance of God's glory along with God speaking, showing his glory to be indicative of his presence.

Ex 24:15-17 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶*The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.* ¹⁷*Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.* 

Ex 33:18-22 Moses said, *"Please show me your glory."* ¹⁹*And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.* ²⁰*But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."* ²¹*And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²²and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.* 

Verses 19-20, 22b indicate that God's presence is in view. As such God's glory (vv. 18, 22) is here closely associated with God's presence, seemingly manifesting it.

Lev 9:4-6, 23-24 ... and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for today *the LORD will appear to you.*" ⁵And they brought what Moses commanded in front of the tent of meeting, and all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD. ⁶And Moses said, "This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, *that the glory of the LORD may appear to you.*"  ... ²³And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and *the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.* ²⁴*And fire came out from*

before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. 

Verses 4, 6 correlate God's appearance with his glory by speaking of the "LORD" appearing and "the glory of the LORD" appearing as being the same thing. Verses 23, 24 similarly correlate "the glory of the LORD" (v. 23) with his presence (v. 24b; cf. NIV).

Num 14:10-11 Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But *the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.* ¹¹*And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?"* 

Num 20:6-7 Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And *the glory of the LORD appeared to them, ⁷and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ...* 

Ezek 1:26-28 And above the expanse over their heads *there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire;* ⁱ*and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance.* ²⁷*And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him.* ^j²⁸*Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.* 

ⁱ Or lapis lazuli

^j Or it

Ezek 8:4-5a And *behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I saw in the valley.* ⁵*Then he said to me, "Son of man, lift up your eyes now toward the north."* 

Ezek 3:22-23 And the hand of the LORD was upon me there. And he said to me, "Arise, go out into the valley,^k and *there I will speak with you.*" ²³So I arose and went out into the valley, and behold, *the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory that I had seen by the Chebar canal, and I fell on my face.* 

^k Or plain; also verse 23

Acts 7:55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and *saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.* 



Here "the glory of God" is correlated with "God" himself – and so God's presence.

... God's glory is spoken of as manifesting his presence in his temples

1Ki 8:10-12 And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. ¹²Then Solomon said, "The LORD^l has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. 

^l Septuagint *The LORD has set the sun in the heavens, but*

As noted earlier, the "thick darkness" (v. 12) refers to the cloud (vv. 10-11).

Ezek 43:1-5 Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. ²And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. ³And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he^m came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. ⁴As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, ⁵the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. 

^m Some Hebrew manuscripts and Vulgate; most Hebrew manuscripts *when I*

This is from Ezekiel's vision of a future temple in Jerusalem.

Rev 15:8 ... and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. 

God's heavenly temple appears to be in view.

Ex 40:34-35 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 

Prior to Solomon building the first temple of God, the tabernacle was the place of God's sanctuary. (It was a movable structure, which accompanied the Israelites in their travels.) It likewise signified God's presence and here God's glory is spoken of as manifesting his presence in it.

God is resplendent with light

One can infer from the following verses that one aspect or effect of God's glory is that God is resplendent with light.

1Tim 6:15-16 ... which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, *who dwells in unapproachable light*, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 

Ps 104:2 ... covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent. 

The use of "light" here may be figurative (cf. **Ps 18:12** ↓), portraying God's interaction with his creation. But even if this is the case, it probably alludes to the actual light of God's glory and presence.

Isa 60:19-20 The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light;^a but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.^o ²⁰Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. 

^a Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint, Targum add *by night*

^o Or *your beauty*

This speaks of the renewed Jerusalem, and is reflected in Revelation 21:11, 23 below, which speaks of the new Jerusalem of the afterlife.

Ezek 1:27-28a And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him.^p ²⁸Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. 

^p Or *it*

Ezek 43:1-2 Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. ²And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. 

The earth shone "with the dazzling light" (GNT) of God's glory.

Dan 2:22 ... he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. 

The meaning of the final clause is debatable, but it may well be speaking of the light that emanates from God's glory (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).



Luke 2:9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and *the glory of the Lord shone around them*, and they were filled with fear. 

The angel who appeared to the shepherds to announce Jesus Christ's birth was accompanied by a manifestation of God's glory (cf. **Rev 21:23** ↓), indicative of God's presence, which shone around them. Such was the light that, along with the angel, it evoked fear.

Rev 21:23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, *for the glory of God gives it light*, and its lamp is the Lamb. 

Rev 22:5a And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, *for the Lord God will be their light ...* 

Deut 33:2 He said, "*The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us;*^a *he shone forth from Mount Paran*; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire^r at his right hand. 

^a Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate; Hebrew *them*

^r The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

The appearance of God's glory at Sinai is in view (cf. Ex 24:15-17). God "dawned" as in "rose like the sun" (GNT, NCV; cf. **Hab 3:4** ↓). Psalms 50:2 also speaks of God shining forth – "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth."

Ps 18:12 *Out of the brightness before him* hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds. 

As in Habakkuk 3:4 below, the description here appears to be figurative, although quite possibly alluding to the writer's understanding of God's actual presence.

Hab 3:4 *His brightness was like the light*; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. 

✦ God is light:

1Jn 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that *God is light*, and in him is no darkness at all. 

Here "light" appears to be used as a metaphor for God's holiness and truth, but it may also allude to the light of God's presence (cf. ZBC) which would make the verse particularly pertinent here.

God has great splendor and majesty

Verses speaking of God's splendor and/or majesty are reflective of God's glory. Similar to and in conjunction with God's glory, God's splendor and majesty are spoken of as being descriptive of his presence and also on occasions as emanating from his pre-eminent attributes, partly in his exercising of them.

Ps 96:6 *Splendor and majesty are before him*; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. 

Ps 104:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! *You are clothed with splendor and majesty, ...* 

Ps 145:5 *On the glorious splendor of your majesty*, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. 

Isa 2:10, 19 Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the LORD, and from *the splendor of his majesty*.  ... ¹⁹And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground,^s from before the terror of the LORD, and from *the splendor of his majesty*, when he rises to terrify the earth. 

^s Hebrew *dust*

Hab 3:3 *God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens*, and the earth was full of his praise. Selah 

Possibly the appearance of God's glory at Mount Sinai is in view here (cf. Ex 19:16-19). God's splendor is depicted as covering the heavens and bringing him praise and renown throughout the earth.

Deut 33:26 There is none like *God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in his majesty*. 

This poetically depicts the dynamic power and majesty of God.

1Chr 29:11 *Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty*, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. 

Job 37:22 Out of the north comes golden splendor; *God is clothed with awesome majesty*. 

Ps 29:4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; *the voice of the LORD is full of majesty*. 



Ps 93:1a The LORD reigns; *he is robed in majesty*; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.

Heb 1:3b After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of *the Majesty* on high, ...

As well as indicating that God has great majesty, the title "Majesty" alludes to God's supremacy (cf. GNT) and probably also his glory (cf. 2Pet 1:17 ↓).

Ex 15:7, 11 In *the greatness of your majesty* you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. ... ¹¹"Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, *majestic in holiness*, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

Akin to the theme of the following subsection, God's majesty is manifested in his great power (v. 7; cf. *Isa 2:10, 19 ↑; Ps 8:1 ↓*). It is also in part due to his holiness (v. 11). Note that this and the following references speak of God as being "majestic", indicative of his great majesty.

Ps 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, *how majestic is your name in all the earth!* You have set your glory above the heavens.

Ps 76:4 *Glorious are you, more majestic than the mountains of prey.*

2Pet 1:17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by *the Majestic Glory*, "This is my beloved Son,^t with whom I am well pleased,"

^t Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

God's glory is reflected in his powerful deeds

See also:

- *Ps 145:5 ↑; Ex 15:7 ↑; Ps 8:1 ↑*
- *God's judgment evidences his glory – and also brings him glory*, p. 436
- *God's saving of his people reveals God's glory*, p. 924
- *Israel's renewal will bring God glory*, p. 1017

Note that the following two subsections in part also speak of God's glory being reflected in his powerful deeds. God's creation is largely in view in the following subsection and in the subsequent one God's emphatic intervention at the end of the age is prominent.

Ps 24:8 *Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!*

God's power seen in his deeds against enemies, exhibits his glory – pointing to him being the "King of glory".

Ps 66:2-3 ... *sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!* ³Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.

This speaks both of God's glory being evidenced in his power and deeds and of him being glorified in people praising him because of his power and deeds.

Ps 138:5 ... and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.

The "ways" of the LORD are inclusive of what he has done (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIRV) and reflect his great glory.

Ps 145:11-12 *They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,* ¹²*to make known to the children of man your^u mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*

^u Hebrew *his*; also next line

These verses associate the glory and glorious splendor of God's kingdom with God's mighty acts, arguably suggesting that the latter evidences the former.

Ezek 39:6, 13, 21 *I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD.* ... ¹³All the people of the land will bury them, and it will bring them renown *on the day that I show my glory, declares the Lord GOD.* ... ²¹"And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them.

John 11:40-44 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

God's glory was seen or reflected in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, with Jesus effectively calling on his Father in raising Lazarus.

Rom 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as *Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father*, we too might walk in newness of life.



This indicates that God's glory – encompassing his "glorious power" (GNT, NLT; cf. AMP, NCV) – was evident in his raising of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ex 15:6 Your right hand, O LORD, *glorious in power*, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.

Just as God's glory is reflected in his powerful deeds, God's power expressed in his deeds shows him to be glorious.

Luke 9:43 *And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus^v said to his disciples, ...*

^v Greek *he*

Akin to his glory, God's majesty was reflected in Jesus Christ's powerful deeds, which were done with God's power.

✦ **God's dealings with humankind make known "the riches of his glory":**

Rom 9:22-23 *What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—*

Paul may be saying that God makes "the riches of his glory" (v. 23a) known to those who are "vessels of mercy" by bearing with great patience those who are "vessels of wrath". Alternatively, Paul may mean that God makes "the riches of his glory" known by bestowing these riches on the "vessels of mercy" in contrast to the destruction that he will inflict on the "vessels of wrath".

God's glory is evidenced throughout the earth and the heavens

See also:

- [Creation attests to God's greatness and glory](#), p. 219

God's glory is evidenced throughout the earth and the heavens – for God so wonderfully created them, reflecting his glory.

Ps 8:1 *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.*

Ps 19:1-4a *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above^w proclaims his handiwork. ²Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴Their voice^x goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.*

^w Hebrew *the expanse*; compare Genesis 1:6-8

^x Or *Their measuring line*

Ps 97:4-6 *His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles. ⁵The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.*

This may well be simply speaking of dramatic physical occurrences in nature pointing to God's reign, illustrating that with the expression of his power in nature, God's glory is apparent to "all the peoples" (v. 6).

Isa 6:3 And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; *the whole earth is full of his glory!*"^y

^y Or *may his glory fill the whole earth*

God's glory will be explicitly revealed throughout the earth, to all nations

See also:

- [Israel's renewal will bring God glory](#), p. 1017

The following references either refer to or have an application to the end of the age when God will impose his authority over all the earth, unequivocally revealing his glory in his deeds and displaying to all nations the glory of his presence.

Num 14:21 But truly, as I live, and as *all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, ...*

Ps 57:11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! *Let your glory be over all the earth!*

The prayer here and the similar one in 72:19 below are in a sense anticipatory of what would or will happen in the future, expressing the desire that God's glory be revealed throughout all the earth.

Ps 72:19 Blessed be his glorious name forever; *may the whole earth be filled with his glory!* Amen and Amen!

Ps 102:15-16 *Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory. ¹⁶For the LORD builds up Zion; he appears in his glory; ...*

A future time appears to be in view (cf. [Isa 24:23](#) ↓), as reflected in other translations.

Isa 35:1-2 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; ²it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel



and Sharon. *They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.* 

In v. 2b, "they" quite possibly refers to the nations. In the future renewal of Israel, "they" would and/or will see the glory of Israel's God.

Isa 40:5 *And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together,* for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. 

This initially refers to God's deliverance of the Jews from captivity in Babylon. It is also understood to apply to his redemption that would come through Jesus Christ, in his first advent. It likewise is readily applicable to the consummation of this redemption at the end of the age.

Isa 66:18 For I know^z their works and their thoughts, and *the time is coming^a to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, ...* 

^z Septuagint, Syriac; Hebrew lacks *know*

^a Hebrew *and it is coming*

Ezek 39:21 *And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them.* 

Hab 2:14 *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.* 

The revelation of God's glory in the destruction of Babylon (cf. vv. 12-13) may initially be in view, but the verse probably also has a final fulfillment at the end of the age. As such, some commentators assert that this is speaking primarily of the glory of God's presence being manifested throughout the earth.

✦ **God's glory will be evident when he reigns in Jerusalem:**

Isa 24:23 *Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God's Personhood

God is not a "thing" but a personal being that one can interrelate with. God thinks, has a will, has feelings and has character. Furthermore, God is active, communicates and interacts with people.

Subsections

- God has a mind – knowing and comprehending things
- God has a will
- God has feelings and character . . .
- . . . God feels emotional pain
- God is active
- God communicates . . .
- . . . and people can communicate with God
- God interacts with people, responding to their requests and needs

God has a mind – knowing and comprehending things

See also:

- *d) God's Knowledge and Wisdom*, p. 40

1Sam 2:3 Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for *the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.* 

God knows and examines things (cf. [Jer 20:12 ↓](#)).

1Chr 28:9a "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for *the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought.* 

Job 28:23 *God understands the way to it [wisdom], and he knows its place.* 

The suggestion is that God alone knows the way to wisdom (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIRV, NIV).

Job 38:18 *Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this.* 

Here God is speaking to Job. The implication is that, unlike Job, God does know and comprehend the extent of the earth.



Ps 139:1-3 *O LORD, you have searched me and known me! ²You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. ³You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.* 📖

Jer 20:12 *O LORD of hosts, who tests the righteous, who sees the heart and the mind,^b let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.* 📖

^b Hebrew *kidneys*

Jer 29:23 ... because they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. *I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the LORD.* 📖

God has a will

1Cor 1:1 Paul, called by *the will of God* to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, ... 📖

Eph 1:9, 11 ... making known^c to us *the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ* 📖 ... ¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined *according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ...* 📖

^c Or *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known . . .*

Col 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the *knowledge of his will* in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ... 📖

James 1:18 *Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth,* that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. 📖

Isa 14:26-27a *This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth,* and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. ²⁷*For the LORD of hosts has purposed,* and who will annul it? 📖

Isa 55:11 ... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but *it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.* 📖

Eph 3:10-11 ... so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹*This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ...* 📖

Acts 1:24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, *show which one of these two you have chosen ...* 📖

Here the disciples ask God to reveal his choice, and thus his will.

God has feelings and character . . .

See also:

- [2. God's Character](#), p. 53

Ex 20:5-6 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for *I the LORD your God am a jealous God*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but *showing steadfast love to thousands^d of those who love me and keep my commandments.* 📖

^d Or *to the thousandth generation*

Regarding God's jealousy, see the introductory comment on [d\) Jealousy](#), p. 85.

Judg 2:18 Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For *the LORD was moved to pity* by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. 📖

2Chr 36:15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because *he had compassion on his people* and on his dwelling place. 📖

Ps 5:5-6 The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; *you hate all evildoers.* ⁶*You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.* 📖

Isa 5:25 Therefore *the anger of the LORD was kindled* against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this *his anger has not turned away*, and his hand is stretched out still. 📖

Isa 62:4-5 You shall no more be termed Forsaken,^e and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,^f but *you shall be*



called *My Delight Is in Her*,^g and your land Married;^h for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. ⁵For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

^e Hebrew *Azubah*

^f Hebrew *Shemamah*

^g Hebrew *Hephzibah*

^h Hebrew *Beulah*

Jer 31:3b, 20 *I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.* ... ²⁰Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore *my heartⁱ yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD.*

ⁱ Hebrew *bowels*

James 5:11b You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how *the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

... God feels emotional pain

See also:

- *God can be grieved by sin*, p. 366

Judg 10:16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD, and *he became impatient over the misery of Israel.*

This appears to suggest that God was “troubled over Israel’s distress” (GNT).

2Sam 24:16a And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, *the LORD relented from the calamity* and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.”

This may suggest that God “was grieved” (Jer 42:10 NIV®) because of the calamity.

Isa 63:9 *In all their affliction he was afflicted,ⁱ and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

ⁱ Or *he did not afflict*

Hos 11:8 *How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.*

Here God aches over Israel’s looming punishment.

God is active

See also:

- **Isa 46:10**

Ps 22:28 For kingship belongs to the LORD, and *he rules over the nations.*

Ps 75:7 ... but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.

Ps 115:3 Our God is in the heavens; *he does all that he pleases.*

Isa 43:13b *I work, and who can turn it back?*

Dan 2:21 *He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ...*

John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, “*My Father is working until now, and I am working.*”

Acts 14:17 Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for *he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.*

Rom 8:30 *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ...*

Phil 1:6 And I am sure of this, that *he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion* at the day of Jesus Christ.



God communicates . . .

See also:

- Num 7:89 ↓

Gen 35:11, 14a And God said to him, "I am God Almighty:^k be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.^l ...¹⁴And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. 📖

^k Hebrew *El Shaddai*

^l Hebrew *from your loins*

Ex 33:11a Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. 📖

Ex 29:42 It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. 📖

Isa 46:9b-10 I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' ... 📖

Jer 36:2 Take a scroll and write on it *all the words that I have spoken to you* against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from *the day I spoke to you*, from the days of Josiah until today. 📖

Obad 1:1 The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom: We have heard a report from the LORD, and a messenger has been sent among the nations: "Rise up! Let us rise against her for battle!" 📖

Zec 7:12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and *the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets*. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. 📖

Eph 1:9 ...making known^m to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ... 📖

^mOr *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known . . .*

Phil 3:15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 📖

Heb 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 📖

Job 33:14 For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. 📖

Note that this points out that people do not necessarily perceive that God has spoken.

. . . and people can communicate with God

See also:

- Ex 33:11a ↑

Num 7:89 And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and it spoke to him. 📖

Ezra 8:21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. 📖

Ps 5:3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for youⁿ and watch. 📖

ⁿ Or *I direct my prayer to you*

Ps 66:3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. 📖

Dan 6:10-11 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and *prayed and gave thanks before his God*, as he had done previously. ¹¹Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel *making petition and plea before his God*. 📖

Dan 9:3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. 📖

Heb 5:7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus^o offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 📖

^o Greek *he*



God interacts with people, responding to their requests and needs

See also:

- Ps 5:3 ↑

Ex 3:7-8 Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 📖

1Chr 5:20 And when they prevailed over them, the Hagarites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried out to God in the battle, and he granted their urgent plea because they trusted in him. 📖

Ps 91:15 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. 📖

Here God speaks of his care for one who loves him (cf. v. 14) and calls to him for help.

Zec 13:9b They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.' 📖

Isa 58:9a Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' 📖

Rom 10:12-13 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 📖

2Cor 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 📖

Phil 4:19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 📖

James 4:8, 10 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 📖 ... ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God's Eternity

Subsections

- God is alive
- God has always been alive, the first of all things . . .
- . . . God existed before the world began
- God will live forever
- God transcends time
- God is self-existing
- God does not change

God is alive

Num 14:28 Say to them, 'As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ... 📖

1Ki 1:29 And the king swore, saying, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my soul out of every adversity, ... 📖

2Sam 22:47 The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation, ... 📖

Josh 3:10a And Joshua said, "Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you ... 📖

Matt 16:16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 📖

John 6:57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 📖

God has always been alive, the first of all things . . .

See also:

- Ps 90:2 ↓

Ps 93:2 Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting. 📖

God has "always existed" (NIRV®).



Hab 1:12a *Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One?* 

Job 36:26 Behold, God is great, and we know him not; *the number of his years is unsearchable.* 

Isa 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: *“I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.* 

Rev 21:6a And he said to me, *“It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.* 

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They are used here to emphasize that God is the beginning and end of everything – nothing exists or occurs outside or apart from him (cf. [Isa 41:4](#) ↓).

Isa 41:4 Who has performed and done this, *calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.* 

... God existed before the world began

Ps 90:2 *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.* 

Gen 1:1 In the beginning, *God created the heavens and the earth.* 

Prov 8:23 *Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.* 

The speaker here is Wisdom, set up by God before the world began. Thus the verse implies or indicates that God existed before the world began.

John 17:5, 24 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had *with you before the world existed.*  ... ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because *you loved me before the foundation of the world.* 

Eph 1:4a ... even as *he chose us in him before the foundation of the world,* that we should be holy and blameless before him. 

God chose believers “in” Jesus Christ before the world began.

1Pet 1:20 *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world* but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ... 

That Jesus Christ was foreknown by God before the foundation of the world, indicates that God existed and was active before the world began.

God will live forever

See also:

- [Ps 90:2](#) ↑
- [God will reign forever](#), p. 253
- [God’s eternity](#) [reasons for which to exalt God], p. 1268

Rev 4:9-10a And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to *him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,* ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and *worship him who lives forever and ever.* 

Gen 21:33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of *the LORD, the Everlasting God.* 

Deut 32:40 For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, *As I live forever,* ... 

Deut 33:27a *The eternal God is your dwelling place,*^p and underneath are *the everlasting arms.*^q 

^p Or a dwelling place

^q Revocalization of verse 27 yields *He subdues the ancient gods, and shatters the forces of old*

Here “arms” is used figuratively to portray God’s support – as similarly is “rock” in Isaiah 26:4 immediately below. The term “everlasting arms” reflects the fact that God and his traits are everlasting.

Isa 26:4 *Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.* 

Ps 41:13 Blessed be *the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!* Amen and Amen. 

Isa 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? *The LORD is the everlasting God,* the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 

Ps 102:24-27 “O my God,” I say, “take me not away in the midst of my days— *you whose years endure throughout all*



generations!" ²⁵Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ²⁶They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, ²⁷but you are the same, and your years have no end. 

Dan 4:34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and *praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; ...* 

Dan 6:26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for *he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.* 

1Tim 1:17 *To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.† Amen.* 

^r Greek *to the ages of ages*

Rev 15:7 And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of *God who lives forever and ever, ...* 

Isa 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and *I am the last*; besides me there is no god. 

God is "the last" in that no one will outlast God. Nothing will exist beyond him, for he exists forever.

Rev 1:8 "*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*" says the Lord God, "*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*" 

This emphasizes God's eternity. He is the beginning and end (cf. [Rev 21:6a](#) ↓); the one who perpetually exists, who always has been and who always will be – existing as the all-powerful God.

Rev 21:6a And he said to me, "It is done! *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.* 

God transcends time

1Cor 2:7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which *God decreed before the ages for our glory.* 

God was active before time began. As well as operating in the world, in the realm of time, God operates outside of time.

2Pet 3:8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that *with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* 

God dwells outside of the limitations of time, not bound by its finite perspective. From his eternal perspective, diverse periods such as a day and a thousand years are both small, even insignificant (cf. [Ps 90:4](#) ↓). To God the distinction between them is merely relative. Note that with the use of "Lord", Peter may be referring primarily to Jesus Christ.

Ps 90:4 *For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.* 

God is self-existing

John 5:26 For as *the Father has life in himself*, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 

Ex 3:14 *God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."*^s And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, '*I AM has sent me to you.*'" 

^s Or *I AM WHAT I AM, or I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE*

God's name – "I AM WHO I AM" and its shortened form "I AM" – implies that God is self-existent and self-sufficient. This is perhaps more clearly implied by the alternative rendering in the text note.

Acts 17:25 ... nor is he served by human hands, *as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.* 

God is never in need. He is not dependent on anyone for anything, for after all he is the one who gives everything to all people.

God does not change

See also:

- [God's righteousness and justice are great – and everlasting](#), p. 60
- [God's faithfulness lasts forever](#), p. 65
- [God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises](#), p. 65
- [God's love is steadfast](#), p. 75
- [God's love lasts forever](#), p. 76
- [God does not change his purposes and plans . . .](#), p. 268

Ps 102:27 ... but *you are the same*, and your years have no end. 

God stays the same.



Mal 3:6 For *I the LORD do not change*; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. 

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights *with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*^t 

^t Some manuscripts *variation due to a shadow of turning*

Hab 3:6 He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. *His were the everlasting ways.* 

God does not change his ways. They are the same now as they were throughout the past and will be throughout eternity.

Isa 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. *He does not faint or grow weary*; his understanding is unsearchable. 

God does not ever get tired out; his strength and alertness do not vary.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. God's Pre-Eminence

See also:

- *a) Holiness* [God's], p. 54
- *Note: God's word surpasses everything of this world*, p. 309

A failure of many of us in the church today is that we have an inadequate view of God, failing to fully appreciate his pre-eminence. All Christians need to understand and be mindful of God's surpassing greatness and incomparable capabilities – notably his power, knowledge and wisdom.

a) God's Greatness

See also:

- *God's great power is shown in his deeds*, p. 36
- *God's "name" is great*, p. 49
- *God's greatness* [reasons for which to exalt God], p. 1269

Subsections

- God is great and awesome
- God is greater than all others
- God is exalted above all others
- There is no one like God . . .
- . . . Things God does which show that there is no one like him
- God is in fact beyond our comprehension

God is great and awesome

See also:

- *Ps 89:6b-7* ↓
- *God performs great and awesome deeds*, p. 37

2Sam 7:22 Therefore *you are great, O LORD God*. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 📖

Ps 135:5 For *I know that the LORD is great*, and that our Lord is above all gods. 📖

Ps 104:1a Bless the LORD, O my soul! *O LORD my God, you are very great!* 📖

Deut 10:17 For *the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God*, who is not partial and takes no bribe. 📖

Neh 4:14 And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember *the Lord, who is great and awesome*, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes." 📖

Neh 9:32a "Now, therefore, *our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God*, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, ... 📖

Ps 47:2 For *the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.* 📖

Ps 99:3 Let them praise *your great and awesome name!* Holy is he! 📖

Ex 15:11 Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, *awesome in glorious deeds*, doing wonders? 📖

Job 37:22 Out of the north comes golden splendor; *God is clothed with awesome majesty.* 📖

Ps 68:35 *Awesome is God* from his^a sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God! 📖

^a Septuagint; Hebrew *your*

‡ God's glory is great:

Ps 138:5 ... and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for *great is the glory of the LORD.* 📖

God is greater than all others

John 10:29 *My Father, who has given them to me,^b is greater than all*, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 📖

^b Some manuscripts *What my Father has given to me*

Heb 6:13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since *he had no one greater* by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ... 📖



Job 33:12 Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you, for *God is greater than man*. 📖

Ps 77:13 Your way, O God, is holy. *What god is great like our God?* 📖

Ps 95:3 For *the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods*. 📖

Ex 18:11 Now *I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.*^c 📖

^c Hebrew *with them*

1Jn 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for *he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*. 📖

Note that the "he who is in you" could be referring in particular to the Holy Spirit, or possibly Jesus Christ. The "he who is in the world" refers to Satan.

Ps 89:6b-7 Who among the heavenly beings^d is like the LORD, ⁷a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and *awesome above all who are around him?* 📖

^d Hebrew *the sons of God, or the sons of might*

Ps 150:2 Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to *his excellent greatness!* 📖

God has "surpassing greatness" (NIV®, NRSV).

God is exalted above all others

See also:

- [Isa 40:17](#) ↓

God is exalted above all others in greatness and authority. He is also exalted above all others in the sense that he exists beyond the universe, "high above" all things.

1Chr 29:11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and *you are exalted as head above all*. 📖

Ps 97:9 For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are *exalted far above all gods*. 📖

Ps 113:4 *The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens!* 📖

Ps 148:13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for *his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven*. 📖

Mark 5:7a And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of *the Most High God?*" 📖

The title "the Most High God" (cf. [Gen 14:18-20](#) ↓) refers to God's exalted position over all. But perhaps more specifically his superiority over all other "gods" is the primary reference.

Gen 14:18-20a And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of *God Most High*.) ¹⁹And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by *God Most High, Possessor*^e of heaven and earth; ²⁰and blessed be *God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!*" 📖

^e Or *Creator*; also verse 22

‡ God is "on high" forever:

Ps 92:8 ... but you, O LORD, are on high forever. 📖

There is no one like God . . .

See also:

- . . . [He is the one and only God](#), p. 248

2Sam 7:22 *Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.* 📖

Jer 10:6-7 *There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. ⁷Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you.* 📖

Ex 15:11 *Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?* 📖

Deut 32:31 For *their rock is not as our Rock; our enemies are by themselves*. 📖

The gods of Israel's enemies were not like God. Note that "Rock" (cf. [1Sam 2:2](#) ↓; [2Sam 2:32](#) ↓) poetically portrays God as an incredibly strong, mountain-like refuge and support.

1Sam 2:2 *There is none holy like the LORD; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.* 📖

2Sam 22:32 *For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?* 📖



2Chr 6:14 ... and said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ... 

Job 36:22-23 Behold, God is exalted in his power; *who is a teacher like him?* ²³*Who has prescribed for him his way, or who can say, 'You have done wrong'?* 

In addition to there being no one who is a teacher like him (v. 22), unlike all others God has never been subject to direction or correction (v. 23). Similarly Isaiah 40:13-14 below indicates that God has never had anyone instruct or teach him; he has never needed it nor would anyone be capable of doing it.

Ps 71:19 Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. *You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?* 

Ps 89:6-8 For *who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings^f is like the LORD,* ⁷*a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?* ⁸*O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you?* 

^f Hebrew *the sons of God, or the sons of might*

Isa 40:13-18 *Who has measured^g the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?* ¹⁴*Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?* ¹⁵*Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.* ¹⁶*Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.* ¹⁷*All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.* ¹⁸*To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?* 

^g Or *has directed*

Note that "takes up" (v. 15) has the sense "picks up" (NLT).

Isa 46:5 *To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike?* 

Jer 49:19b *For who is like me? Who will summon me? What shepherd can stand before me?* 

... Things God does which show that there is no one like him

See also:

- [Ex 15:11](#) 
- [God's deeds show that he is the only God . . .](#), p. 248

Deut 33:26 *There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in his majesty.* 

One aspect of God's unique greatness is that he "rides through the heavens" to help his people. This imagery implies that God does so swiftly and cannot be impeded.

Ps 35:10 All my bones shall say, "O LORD, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?" 

Ps 40:5 *You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you!* I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told. 

The phrase "your thoughts toward us" appears to refer to – or at least be inclusive of – God's plans for his people (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). The multitude of his wondrous deeds and plans for his people show that there is no one comparable to him.

Ps 113:5-6 *Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, ⁶who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?* 

Isa 40:12, 22-26 *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?*  ... ²²*It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;* ²³*who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.* ²⁴*Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.* ²⁵*To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.* ²⁶*Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.* 



Isa 44:7 *Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.^h Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.*

^h Or *Who like me can proclaim it?*

As well as implying that no one can “tell and explain” (NCV™) all that has happened – and all that will come – this may also be alluding to the fact that no one else could bring all these things about (cf. GNT; [Isa 46:9-10](#) ↓).

Isa 46:9-10 *... remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ ...*

Verse 9 points to what God has done “throughout history” (NLT) as evidence that he is God and there is no other.

Dan 3:29 *Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.*

Mic 7:18a *Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?*

✦ **The Egyptian plagues demonstrated that there is no one like God in all the earth:**

Ex 9:14 *For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself;ⁱ and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.*

ⁱ Hebrew *on your heart*

God is in fact beyond our comprehension

See also:

- *God's deeds are largely incomprehensible*, p. 37
- *God's knowledge and wisdom is far superior to that of people – beyond our comprehension . . .*, p. 44

Job 36:26 *Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable.*

Ps 145:3 *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.*

Job 9:10-11 *... who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number. ¹¹Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him.*

God's deeds cannot be understood or counted (v. 10), nor can his movements or presence be perceived (v. 11).

Job 11:7-9 *Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? ⁸It is higher than heaven!—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know? ⁹Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.*

^j Hebrew *The heights of heaven*

Ps 106:2 *Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD, or declare all his praise?*

No one can adequately either tell of God's acts or praise him. This illustrates that God and what he does are beyond comprehension.

Isa 40:28 *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

Rom 11:33-34 *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”*

Particularly in the light of v. 33, v. 34 implies that not only do we not know God's mind and thoughts, but they are – for the most part at least – beyond our knowledge and understanding.

✦ **The angel of the LORD's name was incomprehensible:**

Judg 13:18 *And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”*

The speaker here is “the angel of the LORD”, who is identified with God in v. 22 and also possibly in v. 19. As in ancient times one's name was correlated with one's person, this verse arguably implies that God was “too wonderful” (NRSV) to comprehend.

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) God's Power (I): Ultimate Power

See also:

- *God made all things with his power*, p. 214
- *Creation attests to God's power*, p. 220
- *7. God's Sovereignty*, p. 245
- *a) God's Capacity to Save His People*, p. 902

Subsections

- God is mighty in power . . .
- . . . God is Almighty
- God can do all things – nothing is too hard
- God does whatever pleases him
- God's power is far superior to that of anyone else . . .
- . . . No being can do what God can do
- Power in fact belongs to God

God is mighty in power . . .

Josh 22:22a *"The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD!"*

Job 9:19a *If it is a contest of strength, behold, he is mighty!*

Ps 24:8 *Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!*

Ps 89:8 *O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you?*

Ps 93:4 *Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!*

Ps 106:8 *Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.*

Isa 1:24 *Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: "Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes."*

Jer 32:18 *You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, ...*

Eph 1:19-21 *... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his*

great might ²⁰*that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ...*

God's power is so mighty that he is able to do "much more than anything we can ask or imagine" (NCV™).

Col 1:11 *May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ...*

In this context the phrase "all power" points to God as being all-powerful and having ultimate power, in accordance with "his glorious might".]

Rev 18:8 *For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.*

Ps 147:5 *Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.*

. . . God is Almighty

The words translated as "Almighty" convey God's all-surpassing, infinite power (or omnipotence) and his sovereignty.

Gen 17:1 *When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty;^k walk before me, and be blameless, ...*

^k Hebrew *El Shaddai*

Gen 28:3 *God Almighty^l bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.*

^l Hebrew *El Shaddai*

Gen 49:25 *... by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty^m who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb.*

^m Hebrew *Shaddai*

Job 21:20 *Let their own eyes see their destruction, and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty.*



Job 37:23 *The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate.* 

2Cor 6:18 ... and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says *the Lord Almighty.* 

Rev 11:17 ...saying, “We give thanks to you, *Lord God Almighty*, who is and who was, for *you have taken your great power and begun to reign.*” 

Note that the reference appears to be to God imposing his rule on all, with the manifestation of his kingdom (cf. v. 15).

Rev 15:3b “*Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!* Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!” 

ⁿ Some manuscripts *the ages*

✦ God's power is eternal:

Rom 1:20 For his invisible attributes, namely, *his eternal power* and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 

God can do all things – nothing is too hard

Job 42:2 I know that *you can do all things*, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 

Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them and said, “*With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.*” 

Mark 14:36 And he said, “*Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.* Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” 

Gen 18:13-14 *The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’* ¹⁴*Is anything too hard^o for the LORD?* At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” 

^o Or *wonderful*

The fulfillment of this promise is recounted in 21:1-2.

Jer 32:17, 27 Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! *Nothing is too hard for you.*  ...²⁷“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. *Is anything too hard for me?*” 

Luke 1:36-37 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷*For nothing will be impossible with God.* 

Num 11:21-23, 31 But Moses said, “*The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, ‘I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!’* ²²*Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, and be enough for them?’* ²³*And the LORD said to Moses, “Is the LORD’s hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not.”*  ... ³¹*Then a wind from the LORD sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day’s journey on this side and a day’s journey on the other side, around the camp, and about two cubits^p above the ground.* 

^p A cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

“Is the LORD’s hand shortened?” (v. 23) is a rhetorical question asking if the LORD’s power is limited (cf. GNT, NASB, NLT, NRSV).

Zec 8:4-6 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. ⁵And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. ⁶*Thus says the LORD of hosts: If it is marvelous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvelous in my sight, declares the LORD of hosts?* 

God’s wonderful renewal of Jerusalem (vv. 4-5) may have seemed “impossible” (CEV, GNT, NLT) and so “too difficult” (NCV™) to the Jews of Zechariah’s day – but not to God.

✦ The seemingly impossible is easy for God:

2Ki 3:17-18, 20 For thus says the LORD, ‘*You shall not see wind or rain, but that streambed shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, you, your livestock, and your animals.*’ ¹⁸*This is a light thing in the sight of the LORD.* He will also give the Moabites into your hand,  ... ²⁰The next morning, about the time of offering the sacrifice, *behold, water came from the direction of Edom, till the country was filled with water.* 

God does whatever pleases him

See also:

▪ [Isa 14:26-27](#) ↓

Job 23:13 But he is unchangeable,^a and *who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does.* 



^q Or *one*

Ps 135:6 *Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.* 

Isa 46:10 ... declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, *'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'* ... 

Dan 4:34-35 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; ³⁵all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and *he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"* 

Jer 27:5 It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and *I give it to whomever it seems right to me.* 

Dan 4:25 ... that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that *the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.* 

✦ **God has the power to do what he promises:**

Rom 4:21 ... fully convinced that *God was able to do what he had promised.* 

God's power is far superior to that of anyone else . . .

See also:

- **Job 23:13** ; **Dan 4:35** 
- *Creation and God's control over it show his power and wisdom to be incomparable . . .*, p. 220
- *c) God Has Power over All Things*, p. 255

2Chr 20:6 ... and said, "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? *You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.* 

2Chr 32:7-8 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and *all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him.* ⁸*With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.*" And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. 

Ps 66:3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! *So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.* 

Ps 76:7 But *you, you are to be feared! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused?* 

Isa 14:26-27 This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. ²⁷*For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?* 

Note that the title "the LORD of hosts" speaks of God's power or authority over all things or all forces, though some understand "hosts" to refer in particular to Israel's army or angels.

Isa 43:13 Also henceforth I am he; *there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?* 

2Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that *the surpassing power belongs to God* and not to us. 

Eph 1:19-21 ... and what is *the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might* ²⁰*that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,* ²¹*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* 

Verse 21 reflects God's power over all other powers, in accordance with "the immeasurable greatness of his power" (v. 19).

Job 41:1-5, 8-10 ^r "Can you draw out Leviathan^s with a fishhook or press down his tongue with a cord? ²Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? ³Will he make many pleas to you? Will he speak to you soft words? ⁴Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant forever? ⁵Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your girls?  ... ⁸Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again! ^{9a}Behold, the hope of a man is false; he is laid low even at the sight of him. ¹⁰No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before me? 



^r Ch 40:25 in Hebrew

^s A large sea animal, exact identity unknown

^t Ch 41:1 in Hebrew

If no one is able to control (vv. 1-5) or challenge (vv. 8-10a) the leviathan (cf. text note), then no one has the capacity to stand against God (v. 10b).

Ps 89:8 *O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you?*

Isa 31:4 For thus the LORD said to me, “As a lion or a young lion growls over his prey, and when a band of shepherds is called out against him he is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise, so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight^u on Mount Zion and on its hill.

^u The Hebrew words for *hosts* and *to fight* sound alike

Like a mighty lion, God's supreme power is such that he is unconcerned by any forces that futilely gather against him.

... No being can do what God can do

See also:

- ... *Things God does which show that there is no one like him*, p. 30

Deut 3:24 O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. *For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?*

Deut 4:32-34 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and *ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of.*³³Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? ³⁴Or *has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?*

The incomparably great event referred to in v. 32 would appear to be either or both of the glorious revelation of God at Mount Sinai (v. 33) or God's miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (v. 34).

Ps 72:18 Blessed be *the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.*

Ps 136:4 ... to *him who alone does great wonders*, for his steadfast love endures forever; ...

Ps 86:8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, *nor are there any works like yours.*

Job 40:9-13 *Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?* ¹⁰Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor. ¹¹*Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.* ¹²*Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand.* ¹³*Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below.*^v

^v Hebrew *in the hidden place*

Power in fact belongs to God

Verses which speak of power as belonging to or being with God, point to him as having ultimate power and being all-powerful (or omnipotent). Possibly they also allude to God as ultimately being the source of all power, in part due to him being creator of all creatures and their power.

Rev 19:1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and *power belong to our God*, ...

1Chr 29:11 *Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.*

Job 12:13 *With God^w are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.*

^w Hebrew *him*

Rev 4:11 “*Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power*, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

In line with the assertion that power belongs to God, he is worthy to “receive” power or to have ultimate power attributed to him.

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) God's Power (II): His Deeds

See also:

- . . . *No being can do what God can do*, p. 35
- *b) Jesus Christ's Power from God*, p. 542
- *God does many good and great things for his people*, p. 1288

Subsections

- God's great power is shown in his deeds
- God performs great and awesome deeds
- God's deeds are largely incomprehensible
- God's deeds are uncountable
- God's deeds are glorious
- God is exalted and glorified in his powerful deeds

God's great power is shown in his deeds

See also:

- Ps 66:3 ↴
- *God's judgment shows his might and his sovereignty . . .*, p. 435
- *God raised Jesus from the dead, by his power . . .*, p. 579
- *God's saving of his people reveals God's great power*, p. 923

Ex 9:16-18 But for this purpose I have raised you up, *to show you my power*, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. ¹⁷You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go. ¹⁸Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. 

Ex 14:27-31 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and *the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw^x the Egyptians into the midst of the sea.* ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. ²⁹But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the

LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses. 

^x Hebrew *shook off*

Ex 15:6 *Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.* 

Deut 3:24 O Lord GOD, you have only *begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?* 

Josh 4:23-24 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, ²⁴so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."^y 

^y Or *all the days*

Ps 77:14 *You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples.* 

Ps 106:8 *Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.* 

Ps 111:6 *He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the inheritance of the nations.* 

Ps 145:6 *They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.* 

Isa 33:13 *Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge my might.* 

Jer 32:18b-21 O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, ¹⁹great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. ²⁰*You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day.* ²¹*You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror.* 

In v. 21, "a strong hand and outstretched arm" refer to God's "great power and strength" (NCV™), shown in performing "signs and wonders" (vv. 21-22).



God performs great and awesome deeds

See also:

- Ps 77:14 [↑](#); Ps 145:6 [↑](#); Jer 32:20 [↑](#)
- ... *Things God does which show that there is no one like him*, p. 30
- ... *God can perform awesome deeds to save his people*, p. 903
- *God's great deeds* ... [why God should be feared], p. 1150
- *God does many good and great things for his people*, p. 1288
- *God and Jesus Christ at times confirm the gospel message by miracles* ... , p. 1772

Ps 66:3, 5 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. [📖](#) ...
⁵Come and see what God has done: *he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.* [📖](#)

Ps 86:10 For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. [📖](#)

Ps 107:24 ... they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. [📖](#)

Ps 111:2-4 Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. ³Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. [📖](#)

Isa 29:14 ... therefore, behold, *I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder*; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden. [📖](#)

Isa 64:3 When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. [📖](#)

God did awesome things that the people "did not expect" (AMP, GNT, NCV, NASB, NIV, NRSV).

Dan 4:3a How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! [📖](#)

Joel 2:21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things! [📖](#)

Acts 19:11-12 And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. [📖](#)

Rev 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant^z of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"^a [📖](#)

^z Greek *bondservant*

^a Some manuscripts *the ages*

✦ What God does is perfect:

Deut 32:4 The Rock, *his work is perfect*, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. [📖](#)

God's deeds are largely incomprehensible

See also:

- Job 5:9 [↓](#); Ps 106:2 [↓](#)

Job 36:29 Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? [📖](#)

Job 37:5, 15-16 God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend. [📖](#) ... ¹⁵Do you know how God lays his command upon them and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine? ¹⁶Do you know the balancings^b of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge, ... [📖](#)

^b Or *hoverings*

Ecc 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that *he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.* [📖](#)

People cannot ever fully understand what God does.

Ecc 8:17 ... then *I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.* [📖](#)

The phrase "the work that is done under the sun" alludes to the earlier phrase "all the work of God". God has so worked that man cannot find out or understand much of what he has done.



Ecc 11:5 *As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb^c of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.* 📖

^c Some Hebrew manuscripts, Targum; most Hebrew manuscripts *As you do not know the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb*

Job 26:7, 11-14 He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing. 📖 ... ¹¹The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke. ¹²By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab. ¹³By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent. ¹⁴*Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?* 📖

In v. 14 Job says that the awesome deeds previously mentioned are only a glimpse of what God does, and in fact the actual extent of his power is beyond our comprehension. One can infer from this that God's deeds – like his power that is expressed in his deeds (v. 14) – is beyond our comprehension. Note that Rahab (v. 12) and “the fleeing serpent” (v. 13) refer to a mythical monster/s or force/s of the sea, associated with chaos and evil.

Prov 20:24 *A man's steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?* 📖

God directs people's lives, making the course of their lives incomprehensible to them.

Hab 1:5 Look among the nations, and see; *wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.* 📖

Akin to doing things beyond our comprehension, God is able to do things that we find difficult to believe.

✦ **God can do immeasurably more than all we can imagine:**

Eph 3:20 Now to *him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think*, according to the power at work within us, ... 📖

God's deeds are uncountable

See also:

- *God does many good and great things for his people*, p. 1288

Ps 40:5 *You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.* 📖

Job 5:8-9 As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause, ⁹who does great things and unsearchable, *marvelous things without number:* ... 📖

Ps 104:24-25 *O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.* ²⁵*Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.* 📖

God's works of creation are innumerable.

Ps 71:15 *My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.* 📖

Ps 106:2 *Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD, or declare all his praise?* 📖

The reason why the psalmist says we cannot tell of the mighty acts of the LORD is probably either because there are too many (cf. GNT, NLT) or because they are beyond our comprehension. Possibly both reasons are in view.

✦ **God's deeds are incomparable:**

Ps 86:8 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, *nor are there any works like yours.* 📖

The fact that God's deeds are incomparable is borne out earlier, in . . . *No being can do what God can do*, p. 35.

God's deeds are glorious

Ps 78:4 We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation *the glorious deeds of the LORD*, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. 📖

Ex 15:1, 6, 11 Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, *"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider^d he has thrown into the sea.* 📖 ... ⁶*Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.* 📖 ... ¹¹*"Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"* 📖

^d Or *its chariot*; also verse 21

In speaking of God being “glorious in power” in conjunction with his deeds, v. 6 reflects the fact that God's deeds are glorious – a fact shown in v. 1 and explicitly indicated in v. 11.

Isa 12:5 Sing praises to the LORD, for *he has done gloriously*; let this be made known^e in all the earth. 📖

^e Or *this is made known*



Ps 111:3 *Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.* 📖

✦ **God's power is glorious:**

Ps 90:16 Let your work be shown to your servants, and *your glorious power* to their children. 📖

God is exalted and glorified in his powerful deeds

See also:

- *God's deeds show that he is the only God . . .*, p. 248
- *God's judgment evidences his glory – and also brings him glory*, p. 436
- *God's saving of his people reveals God's glory*, p. 924
- *Israel's renewal will bring God glory*, p. 1017
- *c) What God Does in the World* [reasons for which to exalt God], p. 1274
- *d) What God Does for His People* [reasons for which to exalt God], p. 1280

Job 36:22 Behold, *God is exalted in his power*; who is a teacher like him? 📖

Ps 46:8-10 *Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. ⁹He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. ¹⁰Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"* 📖

Isa 2:11 *The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.* 📖

God's awesome acts of judgment are in view (cf. vv. 12-18).

Isa 12:4 And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, *make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted.*" 📖

Isa 63:11b-14 Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, ¹²who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, *who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name*, ¹³who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. ¹⁴Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. *So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.* 📖

Ex 14:17-18, 28 And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and *I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen.* ¹⁸*And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."* 📖
 ... ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. 📖

Ps 66:2-3 *... sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!* ³*Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.*" 📖

This speaks both of: God's glory being evidenced in his power and deeds; and God being glorified in people praising him because of his power and deeds.

Ps 86:9-10 *All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.* ¹⁰*For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.* 📖

Ex 9:16 But for this purpose I have raised you up, *to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.* 📖

God would show his power in (further) great plagues amongst the Egyptians, so that his name would be proclaimed throughout the earth (cf. **Jer 32:20** ↓) – thus bringing him glory.

Jer 32:20 *You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) God's Knowledge and Wisdom

See also:

- *God's wisdom and knowledge* [reasons for which to exalt God], p. 1270
- ... *For it is God who gives wisdom*, p. 1637

Subsections

- God knows everything
- God sees all people, seeing and knowing all that they do . . .
- . . . No one can hide themselves or what they do from God
- God knows all people's "hearts" and minds
- God knows the future
- God has incredible wisdom
- God's knowledge and wisdom is far superior to that of people – beyond our comprehension . . .
- . . . God knows much that people do not know
- Note: God can frustrate and take away worldly wisdom – and bring down the wise

God knows everything

See also:

- Job 28:24 ↓
- *God knows all his people's needs and troubles*, p. 810

1Jn 3:20 ... for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and *he knows everything*. ☞

Job 37:16 Do you know the balancings^f of the clouds, the wondrous works of *him who is perfect in knowledge*, ... ☞

^f Or *hoverings*

1Sam 2:3 Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for *the LORD is a God of knowledge*, and by him actions are weighed. ☞

The clause "the LORD is a God of knowledge" implies that God knows all things (cf. CEV, NCV).

Dan 2:22 ... *he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him*. ☞

In this context "light" may in part allude to knowledge or insight – as per God's knowledge of all things, illustrated in the first two clauses.

Ps 50:11 *I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine*. ☞

Matt 10:30 *But even the hairs of your head are all numbered*. ☞

This illustrates that God knows every minute detail.

Heb 4:13 *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account*. ☞

‡ **God's wisdom and knowledge is of an amazing depth:**

Rom 11:33a *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!* ☞

God sees all people, seeing and knowing all that they do . . .

See also:

- Heb 4:13 ↑
- Job 34:21 ↓; Jer 16:17 ↓
- *Note: God is aware of all sins . . .*, p. 370
- *God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds*, p. 429

Gen 16:13 So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "*You are a God of seeing*,"^g for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."^h ☞

^g Or *You are a God who sees me*

^h Hebrew *Have I really seen him here who sees me? or Would I have looked here for the one who sees me?*

Here Hagar appears to allude to God as the one who sees all people (cf. text notes).

Ps 33:13-15 The LORD looks down from heaven; *he sees all the children of man*; ¹⁴from where he sits enthroned *he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth*, ¹⁵he who fashions the hearts of them all and *observes all their deeds*. ☞

Prov 15:3 *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good*. ☞

Job 23:10 *But he knows the way that I take*; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold. ☞

Job was confident that God knew that he lived righteously.

Job 31:4 *Does not he see my ways and number all my steps?* ☞



Ps 119:168 I keep your precepts and testimonies, for *all my ways are before you*.

Ps 139:2-3, 15-16 *You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.* ³*You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.* ... ¹⁵*My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.* ¹⁶*Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

Prov 5:21 *For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondersⁱ all his paths.*

ⁱ Or makes level

Matt 6:4, 18 ... so that your giving may be in secret. And *your Father who sees in secret* will reward you. ... ¹⁸*that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret* will reward you.

The phrase "sees in secret" may well be speaking of God seeing what is done in secret (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV).

2Ki 19:27 *But I know your sitting down and your going out and coming in, and your raging against me.*

God knew Sennacherib's every movement.

Job 28:24 *For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.*

Jer 29:23 ... because *they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the LORD.*

... No one can hide themselves or what they do from God

Ps 139:11-12 *If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"¹²even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.*

Jer 23:24 *Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.*

Amos 9:3 *If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them; and if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them.*

Job 34:21-23 *For his eyes are on the ways of a man, and he sees all his steps.* ²²*There is no gloom or deep darkness where evildoers may hide themselves.* ²³*For God^b has no need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment.*

^b Hebrew *he*

Verse 23 asserts that God does not need to examine men any further, as he already knows all about them. For God sees – and evaluates – all their deeds as they are being carried out.

Isa 29:15 *Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?"*

The Hebrew translated here as "Ah" is sometimes translated as "Woe" (AMP, NASB, NIV, NKJV). It points with a sense of alarm to coming grave trouble and misery.

Jer 16:17 *For my eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes.*

† Even the dead and the realm of death lie open before God:

Job 26:5-6 *The dead tremble under the waters and their inhabitants.* ⁶*Sheol is naked before God,^k and Abaddon has no covering.*

^k Hebrew *him*

Verse 5 appears to imply that the dead "tremble" as they and their deeds are exposed before God (v. 6). In v. 6 "Sheol" is a name used for the place of the dead; and "Abaddon" denotes destruction or the place thereof. Note that Proverbs 15:11 in the following subsection reflects the teaching of v. 6.

God knows all people's "hearts" and minds

See also:

- [God takes into account thoughts and motives](#), p. 429

Bear in mind that in the Bible "heart" is often used to refer to a person's thoughts and feelings.

Acts 15:8 *And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ...*



1Ki 8:39 ... then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render *to each whose heart you know*, according to all his ways (for *you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind*), ...

Ps 44:21 ... would not God discover this? *For he knows the secrets of the heart.*

Prov 15:11 *Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD; how much more the hearts of the children of man!*

Ezek 11:5 And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the LORD: So you think, O house of Israel. For *I know the things that come into your mind.*

Gen 6:5 *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

2Sam 7:20 And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God!

God knew David so well that there was no thought of his that he could voice that God did not already know (cf. **Ps 38:9 ↓**; **Ps 139:4 ↓**).

Ps 38:9 *O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you.*

Prov 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.

God examines and evaluates people's hearts, knowing them fully.

Deut 31:21 And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For *I know what they are inclined to do* even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give.

Effectively God is saying: "I know their strong desire and the purposes which they are forming even now..." (AMP)

Job 11:11 For *he knows worthless men*; when he sees iniquity, will he not consider it?

God knows which people are deceitful and evil, knowing all people's "hearts" and minds.

Ezek 20:32 *What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, 'Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.'*

Whether or not they had verbalized this thought, God still knew it.

† God knows us completely:

Ps 139:1-2, 4-5 *O LORD, you have searched me and known me!*
²*You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.* ... ⁴*Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.* ⁵*You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.*

Verse 5b may allude to God's care or protection (cf. CEV, GNT), but in keeping with the context it seems to primarily be speaking of people being unable to get away from God, along with his awareness and discernment of them. Note that God's complete knowledge of people is also alluded to in 1 Corinthians 13:12, with Paul saying, "I have been fully known."

God knows the future

Isa 42:9 *Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.*

The "former things" that "have come to pass" were things that God had "said would happen" (NIRV®).

Isa 44:7-8 Who is like me? Let him proclaim it!¹ Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. *Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.* ⁸*Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.*

¹ Or *Who like me can proclaim it?*

Note that in the first part of v. 7 God appears to be challenging anyone to be able to declare all that has happened since he "appointed an ancient people", referring either to his creation of Israel or of humankind. However, the Hebrew is unclear (cf. GNT text note) and it may be that God's knowledge of the future is in view, as per the last statement in v. 7 and the subsequent verse (v. 8).

Isa 46:9b-10 *I am God, and there is none like me,* ¹⁰*declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'*

Like most of the other references in this subsection, this implies that God knows what will happen in the future because he himself has ordained it.

Isa 48:5-8 *I declared them to you from of old, before they came to pass I announced them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol did them, my carved image and my metal image commanded them.'* ⁶*"You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I announce to*



you new things, hidden things that you have not known. ⁷They are created now, not long ago; before today you have never heard of them, lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them.' ⁸You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For *I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel.* 

The final clause, particularly in light of the preceding clause, suggests that God knew from before the nation of Israel was born that it would be rebellious.

Jer 1:5 *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."* 

Dan 2:28-29, 45b ... but there is a *God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days.* Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: ²⁹To you, O king, *as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be.*  ... ⁴⁵ ... A great *God has made known to the king what shall be after this.* The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure. 

Dan 8:26 The vision of the evenings and the mornings that has been told is true, but seal up *the vision, for it refers to many days from now.* 

Daniel was given a vision from God, about the distant future.

Mark 13:32 *But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.* 

This is speaking of the time of Jesus Christ's return.

Acts 2:23 ... this *Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* 

Acts 15:17-18 ... that the remnant^m of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says *the Lord, who makes these things* ¹⁸*known from of old.* 

^mOr *rest*

Verse 18 indicates that God made known "these things" (v. 17) long ago (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Rom 8:29 *For those whom he foreknew* he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 

Here "foreknew" may mean more than just prior knowledge, quite possibly implying foreordination. (The same applies to "foreknowledge" in Acts 2:23 above.)

God has incredible wisdom

Job 9:4 *He is wise in heart and mighty in strength —who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?—* 

Job 11:5-6a But oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you, ⁶*and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding.*ⁿ 

ⁿ The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

Job 36:5 Behold, God is mighty, and does not despise any; *he is mighty in strength of understanding.* 

Ps 147:5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; *his understanding is beyond measure.* 

One can infer from this that God's "wisdom cannot be measured" (GNT).

Isa 28:29 This also comes from *the LORD of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom.* 

Jer 32:18b-19 O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, ¹⁹*great in counsel* and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. 

Rom 11:33a *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!* 

Rom 16:27 ... to *the only wise God* be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. 

This intimates that God "alone is all-wise" (GNT; cf. NLT).

Eph 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸*which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ...* 

Commentators and translations differ over whether "wisdom and insight" (v. 8) are referring to: (a) God's comprehensive wisdom and understanding, with which he has lavished his grace on us; or (b) wisdom and understanding that he has given to us along with his grace. If the former is the case, this would be speaking of God having "all wisdom and insight".



Eph 3:10 ... so that through the church *the manifold wisdom of God* might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 

God's "manifold" wisdom has a "rich variety" (NLT, NRSV) of forms or aspects.

Job 12:16 *With him are strength and sound wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are his.* 

Ps 92:5 How great are your works, O LORD! *Your thoughts are very deep!* 

Ps 139:17-18a *How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!* ¹⁸*If I would count them, they are more than the sand.* 

The Hebrew translated here as "precious" (v. 17a) has also been translated "difficult" (GNT) and "weighty" (NASB). As such it implies that God's thoughts are beyond the psalmist's understanding (cf. CEV), such is God's wisdom and intelligence. Moreover, God's thoughts are innumerable (vv. 17b-18a).

✦ God is the ultimate source and possessor of wisdom:

Job 12:13 *With God^o are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.* 

^o Hebrew *him*

God's knowledge and wisdom is far superior to that of people – beyond our comprehension . . .

See also:

- [Ps 139:17-18a](#) 
- *Creation and God's control over it show his power and wisdom to be incomparable . . .*, p. 220
- *. . . God made this point very clear to Job*, p. 221
- *Worldly wisdom is flawed and inferior to the wisdom of God*, p. 1633

Job 21:22 *Will any teach God knowledge, seeing that he judges those who are on high?* 

The second clause indicates that God judges even the greatest of people (cf. CEV, NCV) – or beings (cf. NIV). He is in a position to do this as he knows and understands everything about them, including what they do and know. The point of the verse as a whole is that no one can teach God anything that he does not already know (cf. [Isa 40:13-14](#) 

Ps 94:11 ... *the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.*^p 

^p Septuagint *they are futile*

Isa 40:13-14 *Who has measured^q the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? ¹⁴Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?* 

^q Or *has directed*

The first clause (v. 13) appears to be speaking of no one being able to direct (cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV, NRSV) God, or more particularly his Spirit. As such, like the rest of vv. 13-14, it is implying that God's knowledge and wisdom is far superior to anyone else's.

Isa 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.* 

Jer 10:7 Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for *among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you.* 

Dan 1:20 *And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.* 

The wisdom that God gave to Daniel and his friends was far superior to the wisdom of the wise men of the kingdom, illustrating that God's wisdom is far superior to that of people. This is also shown by the wisdom that God gave to Solomon, who was "wiser than all other men" (1Ki 4:31).

1Jn 3:20 ... for whenever our heart condemns us, *God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.* 

God's knowledge is superior to our perception, even our perception of ourselves.

Ps 139:6 *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.* 

Here David speaks of God's knowledge (cf. vv. 1-5) as being beyond him and his comprehension.

Isa 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; *his understanding is unsearchable.* 



Rom 11:33b-34 *How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* ³⁴*“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”*

... God knows much that people do not know

Gen 41:15-16 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, *“I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.”* ¹⁶Joseph answered Pharaoh, *“It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”*^r

^r Or (compare Samaritan, Septuagint) *Without God it is not possible to give Pharaoh an answer about his welfare*

Joseph indicates that God can interpret dreams (v. 16) – even if no one else can (v. 15).

Deut 29:29 *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

There is much that God has kept secret from us, and the things people know are in a sense at least only what God has revealed to them. Here the “secret things” probably primarily refers to the future. The “things ... revealed” appears to primarily be speaking of God’s law – then unknown to nations other than Israel.

1Ki 8:39 ... then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind), ...

Job 38:16-18 *Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?* ¹⁷*Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?* ¹⁸*Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this.*

The rhetorical questions (cf. v. 37a ↓) imply that God is the only one who has done or can do these things – and thus the only one who knows and understands such things.

Job 38:37a *Who can number the clouds by wisdom?*

Job 42:3 *‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*

Here Job begins by quoting God’s earlier question in 38:2, which indicated that Job had detracted from God’s counsel without having any comparable knowledge or wisdom to be able to do so. Job then responds to God’s question by acknowledging that he was in no position to question or

interpret God’s counsel, particularly regarding the matters at hand which were in fact beyond his comprehension and knowledge.

Mark 13:32 *But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

2Cor 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—*whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.* ³*And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—* ⁴*and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.*

Paul is speaking of an experience of his own, the exact nature of which he did not know – in contrast to God, who did know. In this experience he was caught up to heaven where he was given revelations from God that were unknown to humans, even inexpressible.

† People do not know what is best for them in life:

Ecc 6:12a *For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow?*

This illustrates the fact that people’s knowledge and wisdom is markedly inferior to that of God.

Note: God can frustrate and take away worldly wisdom – and bring down the wise

Job 5:12-13 *He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success.* ¹³*He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end.*

Job 12:17, 20, 24 *He leads counselors away stripped, and judges he makes fools.* ... ²⁰*He deprives of speech those who are trusted and takes away the discernment of the elders.* ... ²⁴*He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander in a pathless waste.*

Isa 19:11-14 *The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the wisest counselors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel. How can you say to Pharaoh, “I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings”?* ¹²*Where then are your wise men? Let them tell you that they might know what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt.* ¹³*The princes of Zoan have become fools, and the princes of Memphis are deluded; those who are the cornerstones of her tribes have made Egypt stagger.* ¹⁴*The LORD has mingled within her a spirit of confusion, and they will*



make Egypt stagger in all its deeds, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit. 

Egypt's officials and supposed wise counselors were rendered as fools by God, as v. 11a clearly implies. As such they not only knew nothing of his plans against Egypt (v. 12) but they also caused Egypt to stumble (vv. 13-14).

Isa 44:24b-25 I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, ²⁵*who frustrates the signs of liars and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish, ...* 

Jer 8:9 *The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken;* behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD, so what wisdom is in them? 

Here "taken" refers to being taken captive (cf. AMP, NLT); the exile is in view.

Jer 51:57 *I will make drunk her officials and her wise men, her governors, her commanders, and her warriors; they shall sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, declares the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.* 

Obad 1:8 *Will I not on that day, declares the LORD, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of Mount Esau?* 

1Cor 1:19-21, 25-27 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." ²⁰*Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?* ²¹*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.*  ... ²⁵*For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* ²⁶For consider your calling, brothers: *not many of you were wise according to worldly standards,*^s not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷*But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ...* 

^s Greek *according to the flesh*

The context indicates that Paul is showing how the wisdom of man is hopeless as a means of salvation. In regard to this, God renders worldly wisdom as foolish (vv. 19-20) – useless as a means of knowing him (v. 21a). In conjunction, God's way of salvation that appears to man as folly or foolishness (v. 21b), is actually wiser than man's wisdom (v. 25). God has further shamed the wise of this world by choosing mostly

people who are not seen as wise by human standards (vv. 26-27).

✦ **God has hidden the truths of the kingdom from the wise and learned:**

Matt 11:25 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that *you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding* and revealed them to little children; ... 

The "things" probably primarily refers to the significance of Jesus' mission and other matters of the kingdom. God chooses to reveal these things to those who are humble and open like "little children", rather than to those who are "wise and understanding" by the standards of this world – particularly those who see themselves as such.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Addendum: God's 'Name'

In biblical times, a person's name represented or embodied their whole person – including their nature, authority and even their purpose or significance. This is highlighted by references to the "name" of the person.

Thus when used in regard to such things as God's interaction with his people, references to God's "name" are understood as being synonymous with God himself. For example, God's "name" is used in expressing God's presence amongst his people and also his care of them. Furthermore, God's people are said to do such things as trust in, fear, love and praise his "name".

Subsections

- God's "name" is synonymous with God himself
- God's "name" is synonymous with his presence
- God's "name" is synonymous with God in him helping his people
- God's "name" is synonymous with God in people relating to him
- God's "name" is correlated with his authority and power
- God's "name" is holy
- God's "name" is great



- God's "name" is glorious and exalted
- God's "name" is praised and blessed
- God acts for the sake of his "name"
- Note: God declared his actual name to be the "LORD"

God's "name" is synonymous with God himself

In this subsection God's "name" is shown to be synonymous with God himself by what are virtually the same things being said in regard to God and also to his "name".

Ps 18:49 For this *I will praise you*, O LORD, among the nations, *and sing to your name*. 

Ps 44:5 *Through you we push down our foes; through your name we tread down those who rise up against us*. 

Isa 50:10 Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light *trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God*. 

The terms "trust" and "rely" are virtually identical. Here God's "name" and God himself are both spoken of as the object of one's trust (or reliance), illustrating that God and his "name" are synonymous.

Isa 48:9, 11a "*For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off*.  ... ¹¹*For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name^t be profaned?* 

^t Hebrew lacks *my name*

The virtually identical use of "my name's sake" (v. 9) and "my own sake" (v. 11a) points to God's "name" being synonymous with God himself.

Jer 10:6 There is none like you, O LORD; *you are great, and your name is great in might*. 

Ezek 36:23 *And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes*. 

God's "name" is synonymous with his presence

Deut 12:5, 11 But you shall seek *the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation^u there*. There you shall go,  ... ¹¹*then to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name*

dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the LORD. 

^u Or *name as its habitation*

God would choose a place to put his "name", signifying his presence, where the people were to "come into his presence and worship him." (GNT)

1Ki 5:5 And so I intend to build *a house for the name of the LORD my God*, as the LORD said to David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build *the house for my name*.' 

Solomon tells of his intention to fulfill God's words that David's son would build a house/temple for "My Name and Presence" (AMP).

1Ki 8:29 ... that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, *the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place*. 

The reference to God hearing prayer prayed toward the temple indicates his presence there, in accordance with the statement: "My name shall be there."

1Ki 9:3 And the LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, *by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time*. 

Ps 75:1 We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for *your name is near*. We^v recount your wondrous deeds. 

^v Hebrew *They*

Isa 30:27 Behold, *the name of the LORD comes from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke;^w his lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire; ...* 

^w Hebrew *in weight of uplifted clouds*

Similar to the references to God's eyes and heart in 1 Kings 9:3 above, the references to God's lips and tongue emphasize that "the name of the LORD" speaks of God himself and his actual presence.

God's "name" is synonymous with God in him helping his people

Ps 20:1 *May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you!* 



Ps 44:5 *Through you we push down our foes; through your name we tread down those who rise up against us.* 

Ps 54:1 *O God, save me by your name, and vindicate me by your might.* 

Although the phrase “by your name” could well also be a reference to God’s “might” (GNT, NLT), more precisely David may be calling on God to save him in accordance with his character or nature – “because of who you are” (NCV™).

Ps 124:8 *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* 

Prov 18:10 *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.* 

God's “name” is synonymous with God in people relating to him

Ps 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that *those who love your name* may exult in you. 

Ps 33:21 For our heart is glad in him, because *we trust in his holy name.* 

Ps 52:9 I will thank you forever, because you have done it. *I will wait for your name*, for it is good, in the presence of the godly. 

Ps 61:5 For you, O God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of *those who fear your name.* 

Ps 106:47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations, *that we may give thanks to your holy name* and glory in your praise. 

Ps 116:13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and *call on the name of the LORD*, ... 

God's “name” is correlated with his authority and power

Note that most of the verses in the previous two subsections similarly associate God’s “name” with his power.

Ex 23:21 Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for *my name is in him.* 

The final phrase appears to refer to God’s authority (“I am giving him complete authority” – CEV) and power (“my power is in him” – NCV). While it certainly encompasses God’s authority and power, note that some commentators think it has a deeper meaning, believing it to quite likely indicate that the angel to whom it refers (cf. v. 20) is in fact the pre-incarnate Christ.

Deut 10:8 At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD to stand before the LORD to minister to him and *to bless in his name*, to this day. 

In pronouncing blessings “in his name”, the priests were acting on God’s behalf and on his authority. The same applies to the prophets who spoke in God’s “name” in Daniel 9:6 immediately below.

Dan 9:6 We have not listened to your servants *the prophets, who spoke in your name* to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 

1Sam 17:45 Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but *I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts*, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 

David came as one acting on God’s authority (cf. **Ps 118:26a** ↓) – with and in reliance on God’s power.

Ps 118:10-12 All nations surrounded me; *in the name of the LORD I cut them off!* ¹¹They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; *in the name of the LORD I cut them off!* ¹²They surrounded me like bees; they went out like a fire among thorns; *in the name of the LORD I cut them off!* 

Ps 118:26a Blessed is *he who comes in the name of the LORD!* 

This verse and Micah 5:4 below have messianic significance, telling of the Messiah coming with God’s authority and power.

Mic 5:4 *And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.* And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. 

John 10:25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. *The works that I do in my Father’s name* bear witness about me, ... 

Jesus performed his miracles in the “name” of his Father – i.e. by the “authority” (CEV, GNT) or “power” (AMP) of God.



John 17:11-12 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. *Holy Father, keep them in your name*, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, *I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them*, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 📖

These verses may be referring to God keeping his people by the power of his name (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV), hence their inclusion here. Alternatively, they may be speaking of God keeping them "in" himself. For further comment on v. 12 see *Note: God has given Jesus Christ a name that is superior to all others*, p. 110.

Jer 10:6 There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and *your name is great in might*. 📖

God's "name" is holy

1Chr 29:16 O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for *your holy name* comes from your hand and is all your own. 📖

Ps 111:9 He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. *Holy and awesome is his name!* 📖

Isa 57:15a For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, *whose name is Holy*: ... 📖

Ezek 36:22-23a "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but *for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came*. ²³*And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name*, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. 📖

Ezek 39:7 And *my holy name* I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and *I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore*. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. 📖

Luke 1:49 ... for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and *holy is his name*. 📖

God's "name" is great

See also:

▪ **Ps 111:9** ↑; **Ezek 36:23a** ↑

1Ki 8:42a ... (for they shall hear of *your great name* and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm) ... 📖

Ps 99:3 Let them praise *your great and awesome name!* Holy is he! 📖

Ps 76:1 In Judah God is known; *his name is great in Israel*. 📖

Jer 10:6 There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and *your name is great in might*. 📖

Mal 1:11 *For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations*, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. *For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts*. 📖

^x Or is (three times in verse 11; also verse 14)

The greatness of God's "name" will be acknowledged amongst the nations – not just amongst his own people (cf. **Ps 76:1** ↑).

Judg 13:18 And the angel of the LORD said to him, "*Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?*" 📖

If there is a correlation here between "the angel of the LORD" and God (cf. vv. 19, 22), then this would point to the greatness of God's "name" in saying that it is "wonderful" or "beyond understanding" (NIV®). Psalm 135:13 below likewise points to its greatness by saying that it "endures forever".

† **God's name endures forever:**

Ps 135:13 *Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages*. 📖

^y Or *remembrance*

God's "name" is glorious and exalted

Deut 28:58 If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear *this glorious and awesome name*, the LORD your God, ... 📖

Here "name" appears to refer to "LORD", or at least "the LORD your God".

Neh 9:5b Blessed be *your glorious name*, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. 📖



Ps 66:2 ... sing *the glory of his name*; give to him glorious praise! 

Ps 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, *how majestic is your name in all the earth!* You have set your glory above the heavens. 

Similarly Micah 5:4 refers to "the majesty of the name of the LORD".

Ps 138:2 I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for *you have exalted above all things your name and your word.*^z 

^z Or *you have exalted your word above all your name*

Ps 148:13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for *his name alone is exalted*; his majesty is above earth and heaven. 

Ex 9:16 But for this purpose I have raised you up, *to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.* 

God's name would be exalted by being proclaimed throughout all the earth (cf. [Ps 48:10](#) ↓).

Ps 48:10 *As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.* Your right hand is filled with righteousness. 

This implies that God's "name" is renowned throughout the earth.

Luke 11:2 And he said to them, "*When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.*" 

The clause "hallowed be your name" (v. 9) means may your name "be honored" (GNT, NIRV, NLT, cf. CEV) or "always be kept holy" (NCV™). Such a prayer that God's "name" be honored also exalts his "name", implying that it is worthy of such honor.

† The LORD's name will be the only name:

Zec 14:9 And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day *the LORD will be one and his name one.* 

The final phrase appears to refer to the LORD's name being "the only one" (NASB; cf. NCV, NIV) – the only name that will be worshipped (cf. CEV, NLT).

God's "name" is praised and blessed

See also:

▪ [Neh 9:5b](#) ↑; [Ps 66:2](#) ↑; [Ps 148:13](#) ↑

Ps 99:3 *Let them praise your great and awesome name!* Holy is he! 

Ps 113:1-3 Praise the LORD! *Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD!* ²*Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore!* ³*From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!* 

Ps 145:1-2 I will extol you, my God and King, and *bless your name forever and ever.* ²*Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.* 

† People give thanks to God's name:

Ps 30:4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and *give thanks to his holy name.*^a 

^a Hebrew *to the memorial of his holiness* (see Exodus 3:15)

God acts for the sake of his "name"

1Sam 12:22 *For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself.* 

God was reluctant to reject his people (cf. [Isa 48:9](#) ↓), for to have done so would have brought dishonor to his "name", God having made them his own.

Ps 23:3 He restores my soul. *He leads me in paths of righteousness^b for his name's sake.* 

^b Or *in right paths*

What God's people do is in a sense a reflection on God and his "name", as they are his. Hence he guides them to live in a way that honors him – and punishes them when they act to the contrary (cf. [Isa 48:9-11](#) ↓; [Ezek 43:8](#) ↓).

Ps 106:8 *Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.* 

Isa 48:9-11 *For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off.* ¹⁰*Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried^c you in the furnace of affliction.* ¹¹*For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name^d be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.* 

^c Or *I have chosen*



^d Hebrew lacks *my name*

For his "name's" sake God disciplined his rebellious people (vv. 10-11) rather than cut them off completely in his wrath (v. 9).

Isa 52:3, 5-6 For thus says the LORD: "You were sold for nothing, and *you shall be redeemed* without money." ...⁵Now therefore what have I here," declares the LORD, "seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail," declares the LORD, "and *continually all the day my name is despised*.⁶*Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I.*"

Being in captivity, God's people brought ridicule to his "name", with their enemies mocking God (v. 5b) – presumably for supposedly not being able to protect his people (cf. **Ezek 36:20** ↓). So God swore to redeem his people (v. 3; cf. **Ezek 36:22-25** ↓; **Ezek 39:25** ↓) so that they would know his "name" (v. 6a) – who he is. As such they would realize his power and character – and that he was the one who foretold their redemption (v. 6b), all along having the power to implement his will.

Ezek 36:20-25 But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, "These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land." ²¹But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came. ²²"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

Ezek 39:7, 25 And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. ...²⁵"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name.

† God destroyed Israelites who defiled his holy "name":

Ezek 43:8b They have defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed, so I have consumed them in my anger.

Note: God declared his actual name to be the "LORD"

Bear in mind that references to God's "name" – at times at least – may be an allusion to God's actual name, the "LORD".

Ex 3:12-15 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."¹³Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"¹⁴God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."^e And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"¹⁵God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD,^f the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

^e Or I AM WHAT I AM, or I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE

^f The word LORD, when spelled with capital letters, stands for the divine name, YHWH, which is here connected with the verb *hayah*, "to be" in verse 14

"LORD" (v. 15) can be derived from "I AM" (v. 14) (cf. text notes on vv. 14, 15). For the actual Hebrew that is rendered as "LORD" is "YHWH" (most likely pronounced "Yahweh") and it "is derived from the verb HAYAH, to be" (NASB, text note) to which "I AM" is also related. Note that "I AM WHO I AM" (v. 14) – or "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE" (v. 14 text note) – and its shortened form "I AM" (v. 14) appear to express God's unchanging nature, self-existence, self-determination and omnipresence. In regard to the last aspect – God being ever-present – God's name may well allude to his promise in v. 12 – "I will be with you."

Ex 6:3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty,^g but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.

^g Hebrew *El Shaddai*

Ex 33:19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Some commentators see this verse as indicating that God's name the "LORD" (v. 19a) points to his graciousness and mercy (v. 19b; cf. **Ex 34:6** ↓). If this is so, the usages of "I will"



in the second sentence may well allude to the primary form of God's name, "I AM".

Ex 34:5-7 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and *proclaimed the name of the LORD*. ⁶The LORD passed before him and *proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands,^h forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."* 

^h Or *to the thousandth generation*

Similar to the previous reference from Exodus 33:19, the characteristics listed immediately following "The LORD, the LORD" may be elaborating on the meaning of "LORD".

Isa 42:8 *I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.* 

✦ Sometimes God's name is stated as "the LORD of hosts":

Isa 47:4 Our Redeemer—*the LORD of hosts is his name*— is the Holy One of Israel. 

The phrase "the LORD of hosts is his name" occurs in 15 verses in the ESV. It points to God's sovereign power over all things.

Pray for persecuted Christians



CHAPTER 2

God's Character

I. Holy Characteristics

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I. Holy Characteristics

A good understanding of God requires a balanced understanding of his character, including the fundamental attribute of holiness. To obtain such an understanding, we must "take to heart" all aspects of his character. As well as the many characteristics that we find consoling, we also need to appreciate those that inspire godly fear.

a) Holiness

See also:

- *II. God's Pre-Eminence*, p. 28
- *God's "name" is holy*, p. 49

God's holiness involves his moral purity. It concerns God's separateness from and his intolerance of that which is morally impure. Holiness is basic to the other characteristics that follow in the first half of this chapter.

Subsections

- God is holy
- There is nothing bad in God – and he cannot tolerate evil
- There is no one holy like God
- God shows himself to be holy by what he does
- Places where God dwells are also holy . . .
- . . . and God only dwells with those who are holy
- Things of God are likewise holy
- Note: God and his ways are perfect

God is holy

Isa 6:3 And one called to another and said: "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!*"^a 

^a Or *may his glory fill the whole earth*

The threefold cry of "holy" (cf. **Rev 4:8** ↓) emphasizes God's perfect holiness.

Rev 4:8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!*" 

Lev 19:2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for *I the LORD your God am holy.* 

Ps 111:9 He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. *Holy and awesome is his name!* 

Isa 43:15 *I am the LORD, your Holy One*, the Creator of Israel, your King. 

Similarly, in Habakkuk 1:12 the prophet calls God "my Holy One".

John 17:11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. *Holy Father*, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 

Rev 6:10 They cried out with a loud voice, "*O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*" 

There is nothing bad in God – and he cannot tolerate evil

See also:

- *. . . and God only dwells with those who are holy*, p. 57
- *. . . God does no wrong*, p. 62
- *Sin is hated by God*, p. 365
- *God turns away from those who persist in sin . . .*, p. 1835
- *. . . God rejects them and thrusts them from his presence*, p. 1835

Ps 92:15 . . . to declare that the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and *there is no unrighteousness in him.* 

1Jn 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* 

As is often the case in the Bible, "light" here is a metaphor for holiness and truth, while "darkness" represents evil and falseness.

Deut 32:4b A God of faithfulness and *without iniquity*, just and upright is he. 

Ps 5:4 For *you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.* 



Psa 94:20 *Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute?*

The fact that God will not allow the wicked to be associated with him illustrates that he cannot tolerate them.

Hab 1:13a *You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong ...*

Because God is holy he cannot do such things as stand evil and tolerate wrongdoing.

Josh 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD, for *he is a holy God*. He is a jealous God; *he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.*

God’s holiness means that he will not tolerate apostasy – “rebellion” (NIV®, NKJV, NLT; cf. CEV, NCV).

2Chr 19:7 Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for *there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.*

God does no wrong and correspondingly he does not “tolerate” (NLT, GNT) such things as “injustice... or partiality or... bribes”.

✦ God cannot be tempted by evil:

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for *God cannot be tempted with evil*, and he himself tempts no one.

In addition to the fact that God cannot be tempted by evil, note that the last clause points out that neither does God tempt anyone to do evil.

There is no one holy like God

1Sam 2:2 *There is none holy like the LORD*; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

Rev 15:4a Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? *For you alone are holy.*

Ex 15:11 Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? *Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?*

Rev 16:5 And I heard the angel in charge of the waters^b say, “Just are you, *O Holy One*, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.

^b Greek *angel of the waters*

This suggests that God is the “Holy One” – the only one who is perfectly holy.

✦ There is no one good like God:

Mark 10:18b *No one is good except God alone.*

Here “good” is a reference to perfection, including being sinless.

God shows himself to be holy by what he does

See also:

- *God’s judgment reveals his holiness*, p. 437
- *God’s saving of his people shows God’s holiness and righteousness . . .*, p. 925

Isa 5:15-16 *Man is humbled, and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the haughty^c are brought low.* ¹⁶But the LORD of hosts is exalted^d in justice, and *the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.*

^c Hebrew *high*

^d Hebrew *high*

God would show himself to be holy (v. 16) by his righteous judgment on evil doers (v. 15).

Isa 29:23 [God:] For *when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob* and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

God’s holiness would be recognized in his restoration of his people, fulfilling his promises and proving his faithfulness and righteousness. Consequently the people would “sanctify” God, i.e. acknowledge his holiness and relate to him accordingly.

Ezek 36:22-26 Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that *I am about to act*, but *for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.* ²³*And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name*, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when *through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.* ²⁴*I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.* ²⁵*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.* ²⁶*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

God’s name had been disgraced when Israel, his people, had been conquered and dispersed throughout the nations.



Israel's rebellion – the reason for its exile – had also very much contributed to the dishonoring of God. So God would take action to demonstrate his holiness, by re-gathering and cleansing his people (vv. 24-26; cf. [Ezek 39:25, 27](#) ↓).

Ezek 39:25-27 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: *Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name.* ²⁶They shall forget their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid, ²⁷when *I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations.*

Luke 1:46-49 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for *he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;* ⁴⁹for *he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*

This may well be implying that God's holiness was apparent in the great blessing he had bestowed upon his "humble... servant" (v. 48), Mary.

Ps 18:25-26 With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man *you show yourself blameless;* ²⁶with the purified *you show yourself pure;* and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.

✦ **God's way is holy:**

Ps 77:13a *Your way, O God, is holy.*

Places where God dwells are also holy . . .

See also:

▪ [Eph 2:21-22](#) ↓

Places must be holy for God in his holiness to dwell in them. God is primarily spoken of as dwelling in: heaven; places containing the Ark of the Covenant (cf. comment on [Ex 26:33](#) ↓); and his people (as reflected in the following subsection).

2Chr 30:27 Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to *his holy habitation in heaven.*

Isa 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: *"I dwell in the high and holy place,* and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Zec 2:13 Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for *he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.*

Ex 26:33 And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you *the Holy Place from the Most Holy.*

The tabernacle, a tent-like structure, preceded the temple as the centre of worship of God. In the tabernacle and later in the temple was a section called "the Holy Place", which had an inner section called "the Most Holy" or "the Most Holy Place". In the latter was the Ark of the Covenant, which signified God's very presence (cf. [d\) The Ark of the Covenant and God's Presence](#), p. 340). It was the reason why the places in which it was contained were deemed holy places. In fact, even places where the Ark had been were considered holy: "...the places to which the ark of the Lord has come are holy" (2Chr 8:11).

Ps 65:4 Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, *the holiness of your temple!*

Joel 3:17 So you shall know that *I am the LORD your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy,* and strangers shall never again pass through it.

Just as the temple was holy because it contained the Ark of the Covenant which signified God's presence, in turn Jerusalem was considered holy as within it was the temple and so God's presence. Note that "Zion", God's "holy mountain", originally denoted the mountain or hill in Jerusalem on which the temple was built. It was later used to refer to the whole of Jerusalem.

Rev 21:2-3 And I saw *the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,* prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, *"Behold, the dwelling place^e of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^f and God himself will be with them as their God.^g"*

^e Or *tabernacle*

^f Some manuscripts *peoples*

^g Some manuscripts omit *as their God*

The holy city known as the new Jerusalem (v. 2) is where God will dwell, with his people (v. 3) throughout eternity.



Ex 3:2-6 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, *God called to him out of the bush*, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵Then he said, "*Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.*" ⁶And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. 

God's presence in the burning bush meant that the ground before it was holy.

... and God only dwells with those who are holy

See also:

- *Because God is holy, his people must be holy – which included avoiding uncleanness*, p. 401
- *Uncleanness would defile God's dwelling place amidst his people – and so required isolation and cleansing*, p. 405
- *God turns away from those who persist in sin . . .*, p. 1835
- *. . . God rejects them and thrusts them from his presence*, p. 1835
- *The godly, blameless and pure are accepted by God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1874

Ezek 37:27-28 *My dwelling place shall be with them*, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸*Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.* 

The term "sanctify" basically means to make holy. This passage and Ephesians 2:21-22 below demonstrate that God dwells with those who are holy and it can be inferred from these passages that he only dwells with those who are holy.

Eph 2:21-22 ... in whom *the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* ²²*In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^h the Spirit.* 

^h Or *in*

Here the church, God's people, is described as "a holy temple" (v. 21) – "a dwelling place for God" (v. 22).

Ps 15:1-2 *O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?* ²*He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; ...* 

Verse 2 effectively describes one who is holy (cf. [Ps 24:4 ↓](#); [Heb 10:22 ↓](#)). As God only dwells with those who are holy, only those who are holy can dwell with or approach him (cf. [Ps 24:3-4 ↓](#); [Heb 10:19-22 ↓](#)) – or see him (cf. [Heb 12:14 ↓](#); [Matt 5:8 ↓](#)).

Ps 24:3-4 *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?* ⁴*He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.* 

Heb 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers,ⁱ since *we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus*, ²⁰*by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh*, ²¹*and since we have a great priest over the house of God*, ²²*let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* 

ⁱ Or *brothers and sisters*

Heb 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for *the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* 

Note that here "Lord" may be referring to God rather than to Jesus Christ. The implication here and in Matthew 5:8 immediately below is that only those who are holy will see God (and Jesus Christ) and dwell with him in the afterlife.

Matt 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* 

✦ **The Israelite soldiers' camps had to be kept holy so that God would not turn away from them:**

Deut 23:14 Because *the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp*, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, *therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.* 

Things of God are likewise holy

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .*, p. 142
- *God's word is holy, righteous and good*, p. 305
- *Being God's, the church is holy*, p. 777

All things belong to God, but not all things are holy. However, things that are his in a more exclusive or dedicated sense are holy.

Luke 1:49 ... for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and *holy is his name.* 



Isa 52:10 The LORD has bared *his holy arm* before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

God's "holy arm" denotes his "holy power" (GNT, NCV, NLT).

Psa 5:7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward *your holy temple* in the fear of you.

As shown earlier, heaven (cf. **Psa 20:6** ↓) and God's temple are holy due to his presence. They are holy also because they belong to him.

Psa 20:6 Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from *his holy heaven* with the saving might of his right hand.

Psa 47:8 God reigns over the nations; God sits on *his holy throne*.

Psa 77:13 *Your way, O God, is holy.* What god is great like our God?

Jer 23:9 Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and because of *his holy words*.

Note that Jeremiah is speaking of being overcome by the LORD and his holy words against the false prophets.

Dan 9:16 O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, *your holy hill*, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us.

Deut 7:6 *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.* The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

The people of God – "his treasured possession" – are holy.

Lev 6:25 Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall *the sin offering* be killed before the LORD; *it is most holy*.

Lev 27:9, 14-15, 28 If the vowⁱ is an animal that may be offered as an offering to the LORD, *all of it that he gives to the LORD is holy*. ... ¹⁴"When a man *dedicates his house as a holy gift to the LORD*, the priest shall value it as either good or bad; as the priest values it, so it shall stand. ¹⁵And if the donor

wishes to redeem his house, he shall add a fifth to the valuation price, and it shall be his. ... ²⁸"But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the LORD, of anything that he has, whether man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; *every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD*.

ⁱ Hebrew *it*

Things given to God become holy. In the OT this included things dedicated to him – which could be redeemed or bought back (vv. 14b-15) – and particularly things devoted to him (cf. text note) – which could not be redeemed, being deemed "most holy to the LORD" (v. 28).

† God's Holy Spirit:

Psa 51:11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not *your Holy Spirit* from me.

Note: God and his ways are perfect

See also:

- **Psa 77:13** ↑

Matt 5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as *your heavenly Father is perfect*.

In Leviticus 19:2b God says: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." Jesus' statement here is based on this, with "perfect" being used in place of "holy".

Psa 18:30 *This God—his way is perfect*,^k the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

^k Or *blameless*

Rom 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world,^l but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern *what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*.^m

^l Greek *age*

^m Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

Deut 32:4 The Rock, *his work is perfect*, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

God's works being perfect reflect that his ways are perfect. The same applies to his law being perfect, as stated in Psalms 19:7a below.

Job 37:16 Do you know the balancingsⁿ of the clouds, the wondrous works of *him who is perfect in knowledge*, ...

ⁿ Or *hoverings*



Ps 19:7 *The law of the LORD is perfect,*^o reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; ... 

^o Or *blameless*

Similarly, James refers to “the perfect law” (James 1:25).

Isa 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways* and my thoughts than your thoughts. 

In keeping with his ways being perfect, God’s ways are infinitely better than our ways.

✦ God has excellence:

2Pet 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to^p *his own glory and excellence,*^q ... 

^p Or *by*

^q Or *virtue*

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Righteousness and Justice

Subsections

- God is righteous
- God is just
- God’s righteousness and justice are great – and everlasting
- God’s ways are right and just . . .
- . . . Examples of God’s righteous and just ways
- All God does is right and just . . .
- . . . God does no wrong
- God is truthful
- God does not show favoritism
- Note: God loves righteousness and justice

God is righteous

See also:

- **Ps 89:14** ; **Isa 5:16** 

Job 34:17 Shall one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn *him who is righteous* and mighty, ... 

Ps 50:6 *The heavens declare his righteousness*, for God himself is judge! Selah 

The heavens are depicted as witnesses to God’s righteousness – possibly because they have been present during his righteous acts as judge.

Ps 97:6 *The heavens proclaim his righteousness*, and all the peoples see his glory. 

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

Ps 116:5 *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous*; our God is merciful. 

Ps 119:137 *Righteous are you, O LORD*, and right are your rules. 

Jer 12:1a *Righteous are you, O LORD*, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. 

John 17:25 *O righteous Father*, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 

Ps 25:8 *Good and upright is the LORD*; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. 

God is just

Ezra 9:15a O LORD, the God of Israel, *you are just*, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. 

Isa 30:18b For *the LORD is a God of justice*; blessed are all those who wait for him. 

Ps 9:7 But the LORD sits enthroned forever; *he has established his throne for justice*, ... 

Prov 29:26 Many seek the face of a ruler, but *it is from the LORD that a man gets justice*. 

Justice ultimately comes from God, who therefore should be the focus of one’s petitions for justice.



Ps 89:14 *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.*

Isa 5:16 But the LORD of hosts is exalted^r in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.

^r Hebrew *high*

Isa 28:5-6 In that day the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory,^s and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people, ⁶and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

^s The Hebrew words for *glory* and *hosts* sound alike

The first clause in v. 6 speaks of God leading judges to make decisions justly (cf. GNT, NCV, NIRV, NLT).

Isa 51:4 Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law^t will go out from me, and *I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.*

^t Or *for teaching*; also verse 7

The last clause suggests that God's justice will become a "guiding light" (NIRV®) to the nations, possibly in part due to the prevalence of God's aforementioned law. Additionally, God's salvation (cf. v. 5) may be in view as securing the nations' welfare, turning the darkness of their circumstances to light.

Heb 6:10 For *God is not unjust* so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.

Gen 18:25 *Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?*

Here Abraham points out that injustice is outside of the sphere of God's actions.

‡ **God guards the paths of justice:**

Prov 2:7b-8 ... *he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice* and watching over the way of his saints.

God's righteousness and justice are great – and everlasting

Ps 36:6 *Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD.*

The greatness of God's righteousness is paralleled with the greatness of the awesome mountains that he has created.

Job 4:17 *Can mortal man be in the right before^u God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?*

^u Or *more than*; twice in this verse

Particularly if the rendering in the text note is taken (cf. NIV), this indicates that God's righteousness surpasses that of all others.

Job 37:23 The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; *justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate.*

This indicates that God's righteousness – and justice (cf. NKJV, NRSV) – is abundant.

Ps 48:10 As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. *Your right hand is filled with righteousness.*

Ps 71:19a *Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens.*

Ps 111:3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and *his righteousness endures forever.*

Ps 119:142 *Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true.*

Isa 51:6, 8 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;^v but *my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.* ... ⁸For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but *my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.*

^v Or *will die like gnats*

God's righteousness is associated with his salvation, for in bringing salvation God is doing what is right (cf. NCV).

Zeph 3:5 The LORD within her is righteous; he does no injustice; *every morning he shows forth his justice*; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame.



God's ways are right and just . . .

See also:

- *God's saving of his people shows God's holiness and righteousness . . .*, p. 925

Hos 14:9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for *the ways of the LORD are right*, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them. 

Rev 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant^w of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! *Just and true are your ways*, O King of the nations!^x 

^w Greek *bondservant*

^x Some manuscripts *the ages*

Ps 99:4b *You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.* 

Ps 85:10-13 Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; *righteousness and peace kiss each other.* ¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and *righteousness looks down from the sky.* ¹²Yes, *the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.* ¹³Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way. 

This attests to God's righteousness – along with his love and faithfulness – in his dealings with his people.

Ps 103:6 *The LORD works righteousness and justice* for all who are oppressed. 

Ps 111:7-8 *The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; ⁸they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.* 

At the start of v. 8, "they" may refer to God's works (v. 7a) – the things he does – or alternatively his precepts (v. 7b).

Jer 9:24 ...but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that *I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.* For in these things I delight, declares the LORD. 

. . . Examples of God's righteous and just ways

See also:

- **Ps 85:12** 

Neh 9:8b *And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.* 

Ps 129:4 *The LORD is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked.* 

Isa 28:17 *And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter.* 

God states that he will make justice and righteousness the standards by which he will judge the evil doers in view here.

Isa 51:5 *My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.* 

"My righteousness draws near," means that God will soon show his righteousness by what he does – here in bringing salvation and judgment/justice.

Luke 18:7-8a *And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?⁸I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.* 

Rom 3:25 ... [Jesus Christ] *whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.* 

In the NT "propitiation" means to turn away or appease the wrath of God against sinners in their guilt. The second sentence means that God's justice requires that sins be dealt with – with the implication that sins committed under the old covenant were not satisfactorily dealt with, and could not remain as such. God dealt with them through Jesus Christ, thus showing his righteousness.

1Jn 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 

2Chr 12:5-6 Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, "*Thus says the LORD, 'You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.'*" ⁶*Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, 'The LORD is righteous.'* 

God is shown to be just even in his punishment of people (cf. **Neh 9:33** ).



All God does is right and just . . .

See also:

- [Deut 32:4b](#) ↴

Deut 32:4a "The Rock, his work is perfect, for *all his ways are justice*. 📖

Ps 145:17 *The LORD is righteous in all his ways* and kind in all his works. 📖

Dan 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for *all his works are right and his ways are just*; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble. 📖

Dan 9:14, 16 Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for *the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done*, and we have not obeyed his voice. 📖 ... ¹⁶"O Lord, according to *all your righteous acts*, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us. 📖

In v. 16a, "all your righteous acts" (cf. [1Sam 12:7](#) ↴) does not necessarily mean that all of God's acts are righteous, but particularly in light of v. 14 saying, "God is righteous in everything he does", it does suggest this.

Neh 9:33 Yet *you have been righteous in all that has come upon us*, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly. 📖

In all that God had caused to happen to the Israelites, he had been just (cf. CEV, NLT).

1Sam 12:7 Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning *all the righteous deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your fathers*. 📖

. . . God does no wrong

See also:

- *There is nothing bad in God – and he cannot tolerate evil*, p. 54

Deut 32:4b A God of faithfulness and *without iniquity*, just and upright is he. 📖

Zeph 3:5a The LORD within her is righteous; *he does no injustice* ... 📖

Job 8:3 *Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right?* 📖

This implies that God definitely does not do such things.

Job 34:10, 12 Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding: *far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong*. 📖 ... ¹²Of a truth, *God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice*. 📖

2Chr 19:7 Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for *there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes*. 📖

God "will have no part in" (NASB) nor "tolerate" (NLT, GNT) such things as "injustice... or partiality or... bribes".

✦ It is impossible for God to do wrong:

Heb 6:18 ... so that by two unchangeable things, in which *it is impossible for God to lie*, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 📖

This illustrates that it is impossible for God to do wrong, for him to do anything incompatible with his holiness.

God is truthful

See also:

- [Heb 6:18](#) ↑
- *God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises*, p. 65
- *God's word is true . . .*, p. 306

Isa 45:19, 23 I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.'^y *I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right*. 📖 ... ²³By myself I have sworn; *from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.'*^z 📖

^y Hebrew *in emptiness*

^z Septuagint *every tongue shall confess to God*

1Ki 17:24 And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that *the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth*." 📖

Ps 43:3 Send out your light and *your truth*; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! 📖



The use here of “truth” quite possibly alludes to God’s promises to his people and his faithfulness to his promises.

Isa 65:16 So that he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by *the God of truth*, and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by *the God of truth*; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my eyes. 

As “the God of truth” God will fulfill his promises and will carry out what he has stated he will do. This verse appears to imply that when all this has come to fruition, God’s truthfulness in fulfilling his word will be reflected by people who invoke a blessing or take an oath doing so by “the God of truth”, in order to emphasize the truthfulness of what they have said. (cf. BBC)

John 3:33 Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that *God is true*. 

In saying that God is “true” (cf. 7:28) Jesus could well be implying that God is truthful (cf. CEV, GNT, NIV). Alternatively, he may be meaning that God is real – the true God – and/or that God is faithful. Note that Jesus refers here to his testimony of what he had seen and heard from God (cf. vv. 31-32).

Rom 3:4 By no means! *Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”* 

God will remain true and faithful (cf. v. 3) even if or when every person is false. The contrast with men being liars implies that God is always truthful. Paul may be using the subsequent quotation to show that God is justified in what he says and does (in particular in his judgments) or possibly that he is faithful to his word, carrying out threatened judgment for sin.

God does not show favoritism

See also:

- *God does not show favoritism in his judgment*, p. 429

Deut 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome *God, who is not partial* and takes no bribe. 

Acts 10:34-35 So Peter opened his mouth and said: “*Truly I understand that God shows no partiality*,³⁵ *but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*” 

Rom 2:11 For *God shows no partiality*. 

Gal 2:6 And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; *God shows no partiality*)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. 

Eph 6:9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master^a and yours is in heaven, and that *there is no partiality with him*. 

^a Greek *Lord*

Job 34:17b-19 Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty, ¹⁸who says to a king, ‘Worthless one,’ and to nobles, ‘Wicked man,’ ¹⁹*who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?* 

Note: God loves righteousness and justice

Ps 33:5 *He loves righteousness and justice*; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. 

Ps 37:28 For *the LORD loves justice*; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. 

Ps 11:7 For the LORD is righteous; *he loves righteous deeds*; the upright shall behold his face. 

Ps 99:4a *The King in his might loves justice*.^b 

^b Or *The might of the King loves justice*

Isa 61:8 For *I the LORD love justice*; I hate robbery and wrong;^c I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. 

^c Or *robbery with a burnt offering*

Jer 9:24 ... but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, *justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight*, declares the LORD. 

Prov 11:1 A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but *a just weight is his delight*. 

‡ **God is displeased when there is no justice:**

Isa 59:14-15 Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. ¹⁵Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. *The LORD saw it, and it displeased him^d that there was no justice.* 



^d Hebrew *and it was evil in his eyes*

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Faithfulness

See also:

- *d) God Is Faithful to His People*, p. 820

Subsections

- God is faithful
- God's faithfulness is great
- God's faithfulness lasts forever
- God never forsakes
- God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises

God is faithful

Deut 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, *the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ...*

2Cor 1:18 As *surely as God is faithful*, our word to you has not been Yes and No.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for *he who promised is faithful*.

1Pet 4:19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to *a faithful Creator* while doing good.

Ps 40:10 I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of *your faithfulness* and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and *your faithfulness* from the great congregation.

Ps 89:8, 14 O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, *with your faithfulness all around you?* ...
¹⁴Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and *faithfulness go before you*.

Ps 89:24 *My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him*, and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

Ps 111:7-8 *The works of his hands are faithful* and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; ⁸*they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness* and uprightness.

Verse 7a means that God is "faithful and right in everything he does" (NirV®; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT). As noted earlier, "they" (v. 8) may refer to God's works (v. 7a) – i.e. the things he had done in saving and caring for Israel – or to his precepts (v. 7b).

Isa 25:1 O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for *you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure*.

† God is true:

Rev 6:10 They cried out with a loud voice, "*O Sovereign Lord, holy and true*, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

As noted earlier regarding John 3:33, the description of God as being "true" could have in view one or more of the following: God is faithful; God is truthful (cf. CEV, GNT); and/or God is real, the true God.

God's faithfulness is great

See also:

- **Ps 89:8**

Ps 36:5 *Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds*.

Ps 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and *abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*.

Lam 3:22-23 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;^e his mercies never come to an end; ²³*they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness*.

^e Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off*



Gen 32:10 I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and *all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant*, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.

Ps 25:10 *All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness*, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

The great extent of his faithfulness is reflected in the fact that God is faithful in all he does (cf. **Ps 3:4** ↓; **Ps 111:7** ↑).

Ps 33:4 For the word of the LORD is upright, and *all his work is done in faithfulness*.

God's faithfulness lasts forever

See also:

- *God faithfully maintains his covenants with his people forever*, p. 824

Ps 100:5 For the LORD is good; *his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations*.

Ps 117:2 For great is his steadfast love toward us, and *the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever*. Praise the LORD!

Ps 146:6 ... who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, *who keeps faith forever*; ...

Ps 119:90 *Your faithfulness endures to all generations*; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

Ps 89:2 For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever; *in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness*."

This appears to be implying that God's faithfulness is "as enduring as the heavens" (NLT; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) – i.e. that it is "unchangeable and perpetual" (AMP).

Ps 89:30-33 If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules,^f ³¹if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, ³²then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ³³but *I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness*.

^f Or *my just decrees*

Jer 31:3 ... the LORD appeared to him^g from far away. *I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you*.

^g Septuagint; Hebrew *me*

God never forsakes

Josh 1:5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. *I will not leave you or forsake you*.

Ps 9:10 And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, *O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you*.

Ps 37:28 For the LORD loves justice; *he will not forsake his saints*. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

Ps 94:14 For the LORD will not forsake his people; *he will not abandon his heritage*; ...

Isa 42:16 And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. *These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them*.

Jer 51:5 For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the LORD of hosts, but the land of the Chaldeans^h is full of guilt against the Holy One of Israel.

^h Hebrew *their land*

1Chr 28:20 Then David said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. *He will not leave you or forsake you*, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.

David promised Solomon that God would not fail or forsake him throughout all the work in building the temple.

✦ **God does not fail his people:**

Zeph 3:5 The LORD within her is righteous; he does not injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; *each dawn he does not fail*; but the unjust knows no shame.

The reference appears to be in particular to God not failing to bring forth his justice.

God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises

See also:

- *God is truthful*, p. 62
- *God does not change his purposes and plans . . .*, p. 268



- ... *though God may have reason to alter something he did – or relent from something he proposed*, p. 269
- *So, God was faithful to his covenants and promises with Abraham and Israel*, p. 351
- *God fulfills his promises through Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 532
- *God faithfully keeps his promises to his people*, p. 823

Num 23:19 *God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?* 📖

1Sam 15:29 *And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.* 📖

Titus 1:2 ... in hope of *eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began*ⁱ ... 📖

ⁱ Greek *before times eternal*

Although not specifically stated, this and 2 Samuel 7:28 immediately below imply that God, "who never lies", will keep the promises referred to.

2Sam 7:28 *And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.* 📖

Ps 89:35 *Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David.* 📖

Ps 145:13 *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. [The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.]* 📖

^j These two lines are supplied by one Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint, Syriac (compare Dead Sea Scroll)

Isa 31:2 *And yet he is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.* 📖

As well as keeping promises regarding blessings, God does not change his mind and take back his words regarding promised judgments (cf. [Jer 4:28](#) ↓).

Jer 4:28 *"For this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be dark; for I have spoken; I have purposed; I have not relented, nor will I turn back."* 📖

Heb 6:17-18 *So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie,*

we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 📖

God's promise and oath (v. 17) are "two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie".

Heb 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* 📖

✚ **The Lord is not slow to keep his promises:**

2Pet 3:8-9 *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,^k not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* 📖

^k Some manuscripts *on your account*

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Anger

Although we usually view anger in a negative light, this is not how the Bible depicts God's anger, or wrath. God's anger is always justified and righteous, consistent with his holiness. Moreover, it arises in response to that which is contrary to his holiness. Unlike human anger, God's anger is never uncontrolled, wayward or spasmodic – and is tempered by his mercy, notably where his own people are concerned.

Subsections

- [God's anger and its consequences are awesome . . .](#)
- [. . . This has been and will be evident upon all nations and the whole earth](#)
- [God's anger cannot be quenched](#)
- [God's anger cannot be withstood](#)
- [God is slow to anger and often holds it back](#)
- [God does not stay angry](#)
- [God's anger arises in response to sin and disobedience](#)
- [God's anger arises in response to people forsaking him](#)
- [Other things that arouse God's anger](#)



God's anger and its consequences are awesome . . .

Ps 18:7-8, 15 *Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry. ⁸Smoke went up from his nostrils,¹ and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. ... ¹⁵Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.*

¹ Or in his wrath

Verse 8 poetically portrays God's readiness to potently express his anger (cf. text note), consuming his enemies. Verse 15 may have in view God's devastation of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea.

Ps 90:7, 11 *For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. ... ¹¹Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?*

Isa 5:25 *Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.*

The LORD's anger burned against his people because they had rejected his law and spurned his word (cf. v. 24).

Isa 9:19 *Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire; no one spares another.*

Jer 21:5-6 *I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath. ⁶And I will strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast. They shall die of a great pestilence.*

Jer 33:4-5 *For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and against the sword: ⁵They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill them^m with the dead bodies of men whom I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil.*

^mThat is, the torn-down houses

The Hebrew in parts is not clear, but it is clear that there would be numerous dead bodies of men struck down due to God's anger and wrath.

Jer 25:38 *Like a lion he has left his lair, for their land has become a waste because of the sword of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.*

Jer 50:25-26 *The LORD has opened his armory and brought out the weapons of his wrath, for the Lord GOD of hosts has a work to do in the land of the Chaldeans. ²⁶Come against her from every quarter; open her granaries; pile her up like heaps of grain, and devote her to destruction; let nothing be left of her.*

Lam 2:1-4 *How the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud! He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger. ²The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers. ³He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel; he has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around. ⁴He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire.*

Ezek 13:13 *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath, and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to make a full end.*

Rev 14:9-10 *And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.*

... This has been and will be evident upon all nations and the whole earth

See also:

- ... *The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God's judgment of the wicked*, p. 727

More so than the surrounding subsections, metaphorical or figurative language features prominently in this subsection. There are also a number of references that are generally



understood to be eschatological (e.g. Isa 34:2-3; 63:3, 6; 66:15-16; Zeph 3:8; Rev 14:17-20).

Deut 32:22 For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. 

Isa 13:9, 13 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.  ... ¹³Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger. 

Isa 30:27-28, 30 Behold, the name of the LORD comes from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke;ⁿ his lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire; ²⁸his breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck; to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction, and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray.  ... ³⁰And the LORD will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst and storm and hailstones. 

ⁿ Hebrew in weight of uplifted clouds

The final illustration in v. 28 implies that God leads the nations "off to their destruction" (NLT, cf. CEV).

Isa 34:2-3 For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host; he has devoted them to destruction,^o has given them over for slaughter. ³Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. 

^o That is, set apart (devoted) as an offering to the Lord (for destruction); also verse 5

Isa 63:3, 6 "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood^p spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.  ... ⁶I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth." 

^p Or their juice; also verse 6

Isa 66:15-16 For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. ¹⁶For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many. 

Jer 4:23-26 I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. ²⁴I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. ²⁵I looked, and behold, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled. ²⁶I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger. 

Jer 25:15-16 Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. ¹⁶They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them." 

Ezek 38:18-20 But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. ¹⁹For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. ²⁰The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. 

The final statement – in view of the preceding one – may well be referring to the effect on the whole earth rather than just in Israel.

Hab 3:12 You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. 

Zeph 3:8 "Therefore wait for me," declares the LORD, "for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed." 

Rev 14:17-20 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." ¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.^q 

^q About 184 miles; a stadion was about 607 feet or 185 meters



This is quite possibly speaking of the final judgment, although some suggest that end-time judgments preceding Jesus Christ's return may be in view.

✦ God regularly feels indignation:

Ps 7:11 God is a righteous judge, and *a God who feels indignation every day.* 

God's anger cannot be quenched

2Ki 22:17 Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore *my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched.* 

Jer 7:20 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: behold, *my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place,* upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; *it will burn and not be quenched.* 

Jer 21:12 O house of David! Thus says the LORD: “Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed, *lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it,* because of your evil deeds.” 

Jer 17:4 You shall loosen your hand from your heritage that I gave to you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for *in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.* 

Note that “burn forever” may be hyperbole, indicating that God's anger would burn against Judah until that generation had been destroyed.

God's anger cannot be withstood

See also:

- *... and irresistible* [characteristics of God's Judicial Retribution], p. 446

Jer 10:10 But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and *the nations cannot endure his indignation.* 

Nah 1:5-6 The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it. *Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him.* 

The final statement reinforces the implication of the preceding rhetorical questions, i.e. God's anger cannot be withstood or endured.

Rev 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave^r and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for *the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*” 

^r Or *servant*; Greek *bondservant*

Ps 76:7 But you, you are to be feared! *Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused?* 

Joel 2:11 The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. *For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?* 

This speaks of the day of God's judgment, with the manifestation of his wrath.

Lam 2:22 You summoned as if to a festival day my terrors on every side, and *on the day of the anger of the LORD no one escaped or survived;* those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed. 

✦ God's anger does not relent until he fully accomplishes his purposes:

Jer 23:20 *The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart.* In the latter days you will understand it clearly. 

God is slow to anger and often holds it back

Ex 34:6-7 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, *slow to anger,* and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands,^s forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.” 

^s Or *to the thousandth generation*

This description of God is often quoted in some form throughout the OT (cf. **Num 14:18 ↓**; **Nah 1:3 ↓**). The phrase “slow to anger” occurs nine times in the ESV. Note that v. 7b appears to mean that the ongoing effects of severe



punishment would still be felt by future generations. Some commentators think that it also alludes to the sin itself filtering through to later generations, and so being accompanied by appropriate punishment – although this would not apply to any repentant children.

Num 14:18 *‘The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.’* 

Nah 1:3 *The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.* 

Ps 78:38 Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; *he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath.* 

The latter part of the verse suggests that, in accordance with restraining or holding back his anger, God is generally reluctant to express it to its full extent.

Isa 48:9 For my name's sake *I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off.* 

Here “defer” may have the sense of “restrain” (NKJV, NRSV; cf. NLT).

Hos 11:8-9 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹*I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.*^t 

^t Or into the city

‡ God is always acting justly when he expresses his wrath:

Rom 3:5-6 But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)* ⁶*By no means! For then how could God judge the world?* 

God does not stay angry

Ps 103:9-10 He will not always chide, *nor will he keep his anger forever.* ¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. 

Note that v. 10 suggests that God's people do not suffer the full extent of God's anger.

Ps 30:5 For *his anger is but for a moment*, and his favor is for a lifetime.^u Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. 

^u Or *and in his favor is life*

Expressions of God's anger are only temporary. In contrast to his continual, lifelong kindness (cf. [Isa 54:8 ↓](#)), they last only “a moment” (cf. [Isa 54:8 ↓](#)).

Ps 85:3 *You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.* 

Isa 12:1 You^v will say in that day: “I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me.” 

^v The Hebrew for *you* is singular in verse 1

Isa 26:20 Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while *until the fury has passed by.* 

The reference is to God's fury.

Isa 54:8 *In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,* says the LORD, your Redeemer. 

Isa 57:16 For I will not contend forever, *nor will I always be angry;* for the spirit would grow faint before me, and the breath of life that I made. 

Mic 7:18 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? *He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.* 

God's anger arises in response to sin and disobedience

See also:

- [God's jealousy arises in response to his people's sin](#), p. 86
- [God's jealousy arises particularly in response to unfaithfulness](#), p. 86
- [Sin makes one subject to God's wrath](#), p. 379
- [God's wrath against sinners is manifested in punishment](#), p. 380



1Ki 16:2 Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins, ...

2Ki 17:11b, 17-18 And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, ... ¹⁷And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings^w and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. ¹⁸Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only.

^w Or made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire

2Ki 22:13 “Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”

Isa 5:24-25a Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. ²⁵Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets.

Isa 42:24-25 Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey? ²⁵So he poured on him the heat of his anger and the might of battle; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him up, but he did not take it to heart.

Isa 57:17 Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart.

Isa 64:5 You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?^x

^x Or in your ways is continuance, that we might be saved
God's anger was due to the people's sin.

Mic 5:15 And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.

Mic 7:9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.

Rom 2:5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Those who stubbornly do not repentant of sin and disobedience will experience the ultimate expression of God's wrath on the final judgment day.

Eph 5:5-6 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

The phrase “because of these things” is here referring to the sinful characteristics listed in v. 5, rather than the “empty words” (v. 6) that excuse them (although it is applicable to the latter).

Heb 3:8-10, 17 ... do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ ... ¹⁷And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

Verses 8-9 speak of the people hardening themselves and rebelling against God, testing his patience. As such they went astray from God's ways (v. 10), and so sinned (v. 17). The final clause in v. 10 refers to a willful ignorance of God's ways; they had not “understood” (NCV™, cf. CEV) them, although they had had ample opportunity. The result of the people's sinfulness was that God “was provoked” to anger.



God's anger arises in response to people forsaking him

See also:

- *God's jealousy arises particularly in response to unfaithfulness*, p. 86

Deut 29:24-26 ... all the nations will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land? *What caused the heat of this great anger?*' ²⁵*Then people will say, 'It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, ²⁶and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them.* ￼

Judg 2:12-14a, 19-20a *And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. ¹⁴So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. ￼ ... ¹⁹But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. ²⁰So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, ... ￼*

Judg 10:6-7 The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. *And they forsook the LORD and did not serve him. ⁷So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites, ... ￼*

1Ki 11:9 *And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice ... ￼*

Ezra 8:22b "The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him." ￼

✦ God's anger arises in response to acts of unfaithfulness to him:

Josh 7:1 *But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel. ￼*

Although it would appear to be not as serious as being unfaithful to the point of actually turning away from God (as in the above passages), acting unfaithfully to God in regard to any matter can arouse his anger, as was the case here.

Other things that arouse God's anger

Num 11:1 *And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. ￼*

Num 32:10-11 *And the LORD's anger was kindled on that day, and he swore, saying, ¹¹'Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me, ... ￼*

2Chr 36:16 *But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy. ￼*

Ps 2:2, 5 *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ￼ ... ⁵Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ... ￼*

Those who oppose God face his anger.

Ps 78:21-22 *Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel, ²²because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power. ￼*

Rom 2:8 ... but for those who are self-seeking^y and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ￼

^y Or contentious



✦ **God's wrath remains on whoever disobeys Jesus Christ:**

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; *whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.* 

Because of their sin every person is under God's wrath. Those who believe in Jesus Christ are saved from God's wrath, but

those who do not believe and disobey the Son remain under it.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Loving Characteristics

God's love is one of the two primary characteristics from which his other personal characteristics emanate, the other primary one being his holiness. Comprehending and persistently being mindful of God's love and his associated characteristics provides great encouragement for believers.

a) Love

See also:

- c) *God Loves His People*, p. 814

Subsections

- God is love – as epitomized in him giving his only Son, to save us
- God's love is great
- God's love is steadfast
- God's love lasts forever

God is love – as epitomized in him giving his only Son, to save us

1Jn 4:7-10, 16 Beloved, let us love one another, for *love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God*.⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because *God is love*.⁹ *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him*.¹⁰ *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*.¹¹ ...¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. *God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*.¹²

The phrase "God is love" (vv. 8, 16) implies that God's nature is fundamentally love, rather than that love is simply a characteristic of God. It is also indicative of God being the sole source of love; love does not exist apart from him. This correlation of God with love is further reflected: by the fact that "love is from God" (v. 7); and in that one who loves "has been born of God and knows God" (v. 7) and "abides in God, and God abides in him" (v. 16).

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world,^a that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*.¹³

^a Or *For this is how God loved the world*

Rom 5:7-8 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*.¹⁴

Titus 3:4-5 *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ...*¹⁵

God's goodness and loving kindness "appeared" (v. 4) in the coming of Jesus Christ, in whom God's goodness and loving kindness were manifested – in particular by God saving us (v. 5a) through him, and by the Holy Spirit.

Eph 2:4-5 *But^b God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—*¹⁶

^b Or *And*

Because of his great love for us, God has saved us by grace through Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:4b-5 *In love⁵ he predestined us^c for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ...*¹⁷

^c Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

In essence this speaks of God in his love saving his people by adopting them as his children through Jesus Christ.

‡ He is "the God of love":

2Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers,^d rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another,^e agree with one another, live in peace; and *the God of love and peace will be with you*.¹⁸

^d Or *brothers and sisters*

^e Or *listen to my appeal*

God's love is great

See also:

- **Eph 2:4-5** ↑
- *God loves his people greatly*, p. 815



Ps 103:11 *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ...* 

Ps 108:4 *For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.* 

In addition to 103:11 above, other references to the extent of God's great love being comparable to the height of the heavens include: "Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens..." (36:5a); and "For your steadfast love is great to the heavens..." (57:10a).

Ex 34:6-7a The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and *abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands,*^f forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin ... 

^f Or *to the thousandth generation*

Ps 145:8 The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and *abounding in steadfast love.* 

Ps 5:7a But I, through *the abundance of your steadfast love,* will enter your house. 

Despite the current threat, David was confident that because of God's steadfast love he would again be able to go into God's presence (with the tabernacle probably in view).

Isa 63:7 *I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.* 

Jer 32:18a *You show steadfast love to thousands ...* 

Ps 33:5 He loves righteousness and justice; *the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.* 

Similarly Psalms 19:64a says: "The earth, O LORD, is full of your steadfast love..." One aspect of the greatness of God's love is that it is seen all over the world, as evidenced by his care of his creatures and all creation.

Matt 5:44-45 But I say to you, *Love your enemies* and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵*so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.* 

By loving our enemies (v. 44) we are to be like God, who shows love to all people (v. 45b). This illustrates the magnitude and greatness of God's love.

1Jn 3:1a *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.* 

The greatness of God's love is seen in such blessings to his people.

God's love is steadfast

Ps 17:7 Wondrously show^g *your steadfast love,* O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. 

^g Or *Distinguish me by*

Ps 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but *steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.* 

Ps 36:7 *How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.* 

Ps 62:11-12a Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, ¹²*and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.* 

The opening phrases appear to be a literary technique designed to emphasize that which follows. Their meaning may be that God has spoken of the following and the psalmist has heard of this more than once (cf. NASB, NCV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

Ps 63:3 Because *your steadfast love is better than life,* my lips will praise you. 

Ps 69:16 Answer me, O LORD, for *your steadfast love is good;* according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. 

Isa 55:3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, *my steadfast, sure love* for David. 

Jer 9:24 ...but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that *I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.* 

Mic 7:18b He does not retain his anger forever, because *he delights in steadfast love.* 



God's love lasts forever

See also:

- [Isa 55:3](#) ↑
- [God's love is with his people forever](#), p. 816

Ps 89:2 For I said, "*Steadfast love will be built up forever*; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness."

The reference is to God's covenant with David, in which God's steadfast love will be maintained forever (cf. [Ps 89:28](#) ↓).

Ps 89:28 *My steadfast love I will keep for him forever*, and my covenant will stand firm^h for him.

^h Or *will remain faithful*

Ps 103:17-18 But *the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him*, and his righteousness to children's children,¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

Ps 100:5 For the LORD is good; *his steadfast love endures forever*, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Ps 118:1-4, 29 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for *his steadfast love endures forever!* ²Let Israel say, "*His steadfast love endures forever.*" ³Let the house of Aaron say, "*His steadfast love endures forever.*" ⁴Let those who fear the LORD say, "*His steadfast love endures forever.*" ... ²⁹Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for *his steadfast love endures forever!*

Lam 3:22 *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;*ⁱ his mercies never come to an end; ...

ⁱ Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off*

Ps 25:6 Remember your mercy, O LORD, and *your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.*

God's steadfast love and mercy have always existed. Moreover, the verse appears to imply that they will always continue.

‡ **Nothing can separate us from God's love:**

Rom 8:38-39 For *I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹*nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Mercy

Subsections

- God is merciful
- God's mercy is great and never ending
- Along with being merciful, God is gracious
- God is compassionate
- Due to his mercy, graciousness and compassion: God is long-suffering; . . .
- . . . and God is forgiving
- Note: God is patient – allowing people to repent

God is merciful

Ps 116:5b *God is merciful.*

Deut 4:31 For *the LORD your God is a merciful God.* He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

Jer 3:12 Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, "Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for *I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever.*

Luke 6:36 Be merciful, even as *your Father is merciful.*

Ps 18:25 *With the merciful you show yourself merciful;* with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; ...

Ps 40:11 As for you, *O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me;* your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!

Ps 103:4 ... who redeems your life from the pit, *who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,* ...

Hos 14:3b *In you the orphan finds mercy.*

Rom 11:30-32 For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but *now have received mercy* because of their disobedience, ³¹so they too have now been disobedient in



order that *by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy*. ³²For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

^j Some manuscripts omit *now*

Note that v. 32 is not generally interpreted to mean that God made all people become disobedient, but rather that “God has imprisoned all people in their own disobedience” (NLT, cf. CEV). For further comment on these verses see *Despite Israel's current state – which has benefited the Gentiles – Israel will be saved*, p. 636.

2Cor 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of mercies* and God of all comfort, ...

The description of God as “the Father of mercies” may simply be speaking of him as being very merciful, or more specifically as being the source of all mercy (cf. NLT), in keeping with the subsequent description of him as the God of “all comfort”.

Phil 2:27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But *God had mercy on him*, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

God's mercy is great and never ending

2Sam 24:14 Then David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of *the LORD*, for *his mercy is great*; but let me not fall into the hand of man.”

Ps 119:156 *Great is your mercy, O LORD*; give me life according to your rules.

Luke 1:57-58 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and *she bore a son*. ⁵⁸And her neighbors and relatives heard that *the Lord had shown great mercy to her*, and they rejoiced with her.

Elizabeth had been barren (cf. v. 7), hence God had shown her great mercy in enabling her to conceive.

1Pet 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, ⁴*to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you*, ...

Eph 2:4-5 But^k *God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us*, ⁵*even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ*—by grace you have been saved—

^k Or *And*

Lam 3:22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;¹ *his mercies never come to an end*; ...

¹ Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off*

God's “mercies” are his acts for his people that are prompted by and manifest his mercy.

Ps 23:6 *Surely^m goodness and mercyⁿ shall follow me all the days of my life*, and I shall dwell^o in the house of the LORD forever.^p

^m Or *Only*

ⁿ Or *steadfast love*

^o Or *shall return to dwell*

^p Hebrew *for length of days*

Ps 25:6 *Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old*.

The last clause indicates that God's mercy and love have been expressed since time began.

Luke 1:50, 54-55 *And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation*. ... ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, *in remembrance of his mercy*, ⁵⁵*as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever*.

In keeping with v. 50, vv. 54-55 speak of God being merciful to his people forever.

✦ **God is merciful toward all:**

Ps 145:9 The LORD is good to all, and *his mercy is over all that he has made*.

Along with being merciful, God is gracious

See also:

▪ *e) God Shows Grace to His People*, p. 825

Ex 34:6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “*The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*, ...

Ps 111:4 He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; *the LORD is gracious and merciful*.

Ps 116:5 *Gracious is the LORD*, and righteous; *our God is merciful*.

Isa 30:18 *Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you*. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.



Gen 33:11 Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because *God has dealt graciously with me*, and because I have enough." Thus he urged him, and he took it. 

Ps 119:132 Turn to me and *be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name*. 

Ps 67:1-2 *May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us*, Selah ²that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. 

This implies that God's graciousness to his people brings his blessing and kindness to them (v. 1), making known his ways and saving power to all people (v. 2).

Ex 33:19b *And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy*. 

This shows that the expressing of his mercy and graciousness is God's prerogative. The fact that God chooses whom to be gracious and have mercy on does not mean that he is unfair in not showing such graciousness and mercy to others. His expression of graciousness and mercy is consistent with his righteousness.

God is compassionate

James 5:11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how *the Lord is compassionate and merciful*. 

Ex 22:27 ... for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? *And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate*. 

Ps 103:13-14 *As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him*. ¹⁴For he knows our frame;⁹ he remembers that we are dust. 

⁹ Or *knows how we are formed*

Ps 135:14 For the LORD will vindicate his people and *have compassion on his servants*. 

Isa 49:13 Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and *will have compassion on his afflicted*. 

Isa 54:7-8 For a brief moment I deserted you, but *with great compassion I will gather you*. ⁸In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but *with everlasting love I will have compassion on you*,^r says the LORD, your Redeemer. 

Isa 63:7, 9 I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them *according to his compassion*, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.  ... ⁹*In all their affliction he was afflicted,^r and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old*. 

^r Or *he did not afflict*

Verse 9 speaks of both God's empathy (v. 9a) – which is not unrelated to his compassion – and his "pity" (v. 9b), a term akin to compassion.

Hos 11:8 *How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender*. 

Luke 15:20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, *his father saw him and felt compassion*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 

In the parable of the prodigal son, the father is identified with God. As such, this illustrates God's compassion.

Due to his mercy, graciousness and compassion: God is long-suffering; . . .

See also:

- [Ps 78:38](#) ↓
- [God is slow to anger and often holds it back](#), p. 69

Neh 9:17-19, 26-31 *They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them*. ¹⁸Even when they had made for themselves a golden^s calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies,¹⁹you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. 



...²⁶“Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. ²⁷Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies. ²⁸But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies. ²⁹And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. ³⁰Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. ³¹Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God. 

^s Hebrew metal

2Ki 13:23 But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now. 

Because of his graciousness and compassion God was long-suffering regarding his people, unwilling to promptly execute the punishments entailed in his covenant with them, allowing them time to turn back to him (cf. NSB).

2Chr 36:15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. 

Because of his compassion, God warned his people again and again.

Jer 7:24-25 But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. ²⁵From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. 

This and the following reference do not specifically mention God's compassion, mercy or graciousness – or like qualities

– but have been included here as further clear examples of God being long-suffering.

Acts 13:18 And for about forty years he put up with^t them in the wilderness. 

^t Some manuscripts *he carried* (compare Deuteronomy 1:31)

... and God is forgiving

See also:

- [Neh 9:17](#) 
- [d\) God's Response to Repentance](#), p. 1847

Ex 34:6-7 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands,^u forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” 

^u Or to the thousandth generation

Note that v. 7b shows that God's grace is balanced: he does punish the guilty, the effects of which are borne for a few generations “of those who hate me” (20:5) (cf. ZBC).

Num 14:19-20 Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.” ²⁰Then the LORD said, “I have pardoned, according to your word. 

Ps 51:1 Have mercy on me,^v O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. 

^v Or Be gracious to me

Ps 78:38 Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath. 

Ps 99:8 O LORD our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings. 

Ps 103:8-14 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. ¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is



his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²*as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.* ¹³*As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.* ¹⁴*For he knows our frame;^w he remembers that we are dust.*

^w Or *knows how we are formed*

God's removal of our sins is here largely attributed to his compassion (vv. 8, 13-14) and great love (vv. 8, 11-12; cf. [Mic 7:18](#) ↓), with the latter term also translated as "mercy" (NKJV). Note that v. 14 is speaking of moral weakness.

[Isa 55:7](#) ...let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; *let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

[Dan 9:9, 18b-19a](#) *To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him* ... ¹⁸ ... For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but *because of your great mercy.* ¹⁹*O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act.*

[Mic 7:18-19](#) *Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.* ¹⁹*He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our^x sins into the depths of the sea.*

^x Hebrew *their*

[Jonah 3:10; 4:1-2, 11](#) *When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.* ^{4:1}But it displeased Jonah exceedingly,^y and he was angry. ²And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that *you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.* ... ¹¹[God:] *And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"*

^y Hebrew *it was exceedingly evil to Jonah*

Jonah was angry (2:1) that God had decided to spare – effectively forgive – the repentant city of Nineveh from his judgment (3:10). God's decision reflected the fact that he is "a gracious God and merciful" (2:2) who cares and has "pity" or compassion toward all he has made (2:11; cf. Ps 145:9).

[Luke 1:77-79](#) ... to give knowledge of *salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,* ⁷⁸*because of the tender mercy of our God,* whereby the sunrise shall visit us^z from on high ⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

^z Or *when the sunrise shall dawn upon us; some manuscripts since the sunrise has visited us*

‡ **A notable expression of God's grace to his sinful people:**

[Isa 57:17-18](#) Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart. ¹⁸*I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, ...*

The contrite amongst God's wayward people (cf. v. 15) may be primarily in view.

Note: God is patient – allowing people to repent

[2Pet 3:9, 15](#) The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but *is patient toward you,^a not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* ... ¹⁵*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ...*

^a Some manuscripts *on your account*

Here the "Lord" most likely is referring to God, although Jesus Christ may be in view. The "promise" (v. 9) is that of Jesus Christ's return (cf. v. 4) – and probably also encompasses the other events of the day of the Lord (cf. vv. 7, 10).

[Rom 2:4](#) Or do you presume on *the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

Here "forbearance and patience" are associated with God's kindness, and so appear to be linked with it in leading people to repentance – "He has been very kind and patient, waiting for you to change" (NCV™).

[1Pet 3:20](#) ... because^b *they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited* in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

^b Or *when*

This appears to be referring to God waiting patiently for the wicked of Noah's day to repent (cf. CEV, NCV, NIRV).

[Neh 9:30a](#) *Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets.*



In his patience over many years, God admonished the people through his prophets, exhorting them to repent.

Isa 30:15, 18 For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, “*In returning^c and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.*” But you were unwilling,  ... ¹⁸Therefore *the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.* 

^c Or *repentance*

God “waits” (v. 18) – indicative of his patience – longing for his people’s repentance (v. 15).

Jer 15:15 O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In *your forbearance* take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach. 

The reference may be to God’s “forbearance” or patience with Jeremiah’s enemies rather than to with Jeremiah himself (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV). Note that God’s “forbearance” (cf. [Rom 2:4 ↑](#)) is also referred to in Romans 3:25, for which some translations use “patience” (CEV, GNT, NCV) – “...in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins”.

✦ God has great patience:

Rom 9:22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, *has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ...* 

For comment on the phrase “prepared for destruction”, see the comment on [Rom 9:10-24](#) – under *Note: God’s mercy and people’s destiny*, p. 764.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Benevolence

See also:

- *e) Epilogue: God’s Vast Blessing of His People*, p. 1287

God’s benevolence encompasses his goodness, kindness and generosity – as the following subsections indicate. However, it should be noted that “goodness” and “kindness” are quite general concepts and as such pertain to other character traits as well (cf. introductory comment below in *God is good...*).

Subsections

- God is good
- God shows great goodness
- God exercises kindness
- God is generous
- God gives good gifts . . .
- . . . God is the ultimate source of all gifts

God is good

See also:

- *God’s goodness* [reasons for which to exalt God], p. 1274

When the Bible says that God is good, arguably there are two concepts in view. God is good in that he is: (a) morally upright; and (b) generous and kind towards his people (and all his creatures). The first concept reflects God’s holiness (and so is pertinent to the first half of this chapter). The latter concept is plainly indicative of his benevolence. It is more predominant in the following subsection, while both concepts are apparent in this subsection. The two concepts themselves are by no means unrelated, as God’s upright character produces his generous and kind actions.

Ps 119:68 *You are good and do good; teach me your statutes.* 

Ps 25:7-8 Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of *your goodness, O LORD!* ⁸*Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.* 

Ps 34:8 *Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!* Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! 

Ps 69:16 Answer me, O LORD, for *your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.* 

Ps 73:1 *Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.* 

Ps 86:5 For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you. 

Ps 100:5 For *the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.* 

Ps 107:1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for *he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!* 



Very similar statements occur some ten times in the OT (cf. [Ps 100:5](#) ↑) – though not always with the first clause, “Give thanks to the LORD...”.

[Ps 27:13](#) *I believe^d that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!* 📖

^d Other Hebrew manuscripts *Oh! Had I not believed*

Despite his foes, David is confident he will see the evidence of God's goodness in his lifetime.

[Acts 14:17](#) Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for *he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.* 📖

[Titus 3:4-5](#) But when *the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared*, ⁵*he saved us*, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ... 📖

God's goodness and loving kindness was manifested in him saving us through Jesus Christ.

[Ex 33:19](#) And he said, “I will make *all my goodness* pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. 📖

Bear in mind that this is not speaking of God's “goodness” in reference to his benevolence nor simply his uprightness. The LORD's statement is in response to Moses' request to be shown his glory. Thus “splendor” (GNT) and “glory” (CEV) have also been used to express the Hebrew rendered here as “goodness”. The phrase “all my goodness” really refers to his divine nature as a whole.

[Neh 2:8b](#) And the king granted me what I asked, for *the good hand of my God* was upon me. 📖

God shows great goodness

See also:

- [God gives good gifts . . .](#), p. 84

[Neh 9:25](#) And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and *delighted themselves in your great goodness.* 📖

[Isa 63:7](#) I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and *the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them* according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. 📖

[Ps 31:19](#) *Oh, how abundant is your goodness*, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind! 📖

[Ps 145:7](#) They shall pour forth the fame of *your abundant goodness* and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. 📖

[Ex 18:9](#) And Jethro rejoiced for *all the good that the LORD had done to Israel*, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. 📖

[Josh 21:45](#) *Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.* 📖

[Jer 33:9](#) And this city^e shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of *all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.* 📖

^e Hebrew *And it*

[Ezra 8:22](#) For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, “*The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him*, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.” 📖

God is good to all (cf. [Ps 145:9](#) ↓) who seek him.

[Ps 145:9](#) *The LORD is good to all*, and his mercy is over all that he has made. 📖

[Ps 23:6](#) *Surely^f goodness and mercy^g shall follow me all the days of my life*, and I shall dwell^h in the house of the LORD forever.ⁱ 📖

^f Or *Only*

^g Or *steadfast love*

^h Or *shall return to dwell*

ⁱ Hebrew *for length of days*

David speaks of God's goodness and love (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) being with him all his life (cf. [Jer 32:40](#) ↓).

[Jer 32:40-41](#) I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that *I will not turn away from doing good to them.* And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from



me. ⁴¹*I will rejoice in doing them good*, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul. 

✦ **Only God is truly good:**

Mark 10:18b *No one is good except God alone.* 

Here “good” refers to perfection, including being sinless.

God exercises kindness

2Sam 9:3a And the king said, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show *the kindness of God* to him?” 

Ps 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. [The LORD is faithful in all his words and *kind in all his works.*]^j 

^j These two lines are supplied by one Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint, Syriac (compare Dead Sea Scroll)

Hos 11:4 *I led them with cords of kindness,*^k with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. 

^k Or *humaneness*; Hebrew *man*

Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of *the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.* 

Rom 2:4 Or do you presume on *the riches of his kindness* and forbearance and patience, not knowing that *God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?* 

The expression “the riches of his kindness” highlights that God shows “great kindness” (GNT, Nlrv).

Rom 11:22 Note then *the kindness and the severity of God:* severity toward those who have fallen, but *God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness.* Otherwise you too will be cut off. 

Eph 2:6-7 ... and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show *the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.* 

Titus 3:4-5 But when the goodness and *loving kindness of God our Savior* appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ... 

Ruth 2:19-20 And her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.” ²⁰And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by *the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!*” Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.” 

In v. 20, “the dead” refers to either Ruth’s dead husband (NLT) or Naomi’s – or both. Redeemers (v. 20) – “family redeemers” (NLT) – had a responsibility to care for any needy amongst their extended family. Coming into contact with one gave real hope of provision for Ruth and Naomi, a sign that God had not stopped showing his kindness to them and so also in a sense to their dead husbands. Additionally, Naomi could also have had in mind that the redeemer could preserve the name of the dead father and son by marrying Ruth.

God is generous

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask *God, who gives generously to all without reproach*, and it will be given him. 

The phrase “without reproach” may be implying that God “won’t correct you for asking” (CEV) or possibly that God will not use any fault in a person as a reason or excuse not to give them what they have asked. In any case, the verse points to the fact that God gives “ungrudgingly” (AMP, NRSV; cf. NLT).

Matt 20:8-15 And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ ⁹And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹²saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go. *I choose to give to this last*



worker as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?¹ 

¹ Or is your eye bad because I am good?

God is generous and has the right to exercise his generosity however he sees fit, irrespective of whether there is a correlation with human evaluation. The workers who had worked the longest were not unfairly treated, being paid the agreed amount (cf. v. 2); the owner of the vineyard (representative of God) had simply shown great generosity towards those who had worked less hours.

Rom 8:32 *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* 

Given the context, this may well have our salvation primarily in view; i.e. if God gave up his son to save us – the greatest possible gift – surely he will give us everything else needed to secure our salvation. However “all things” may also encompass our inheritance that believers will receive on entry into God’s kingdom. Regardless, the verse illustrates God’s superlative generosity – as do the following passages.

Eph 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to *the riches of his grace*, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ... 

Titus 3:5-6 ... he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of *the Holy Spirit*, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ... 

2Pet 1:3 *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to^m his own glory and excellence,ⁿ ...* 

^m Or by

ⁿ Or virtue

God gives good gifts . . .

See also:

- [James 1:17](#) 

Matt 7:11 *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!* 

Ps 85:12 *Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.* 

Deut 8:7-10 *For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.* 

Likewise 1:25b says, “It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us.”

Deut 26:11 And you shall rejoice in *all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house*, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you. 

Josh 23:14 And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that *not one word has failed of all the good things^o that the LORD your God promised concerning you*. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. 

^o Or words; also twice in verse 15

Not dissimilarly, 2 Peter 1:4 speaks of God having “given us his very great and precious promises”.

2Sam 7:28 And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and *you have promised this good thing to your servant.* 

Neh 9:20 *You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.* 

Ps 103:5 ... *who satisfies you with good* so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. 

Ps 107:9 For he satisfies the longing soul, and *the hungry soul he fills with good things.* 

2Cor 9:15 *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!* 

The “inexpressible gift” refers to his gift of his own Son.

Heb 9:11 But when *Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come*,^p then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ... 

^p Some manuscripts *good things to come*



The “good things that have come” appear to be the good blessings that God has already given to his people, which have come to fruition through Jesus Christ.

... God is the ultimate source of all gifts

See also:

- *Ultimately, God gives his people all things*, p. 1291

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.[¶]

[¶] Some manuscripts *variation due to a shadow of turning*

John 3:27 John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.”

Acts 17:25 ... nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since *he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

Rom 11:35-36 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Note that v. 36 is not just referring to gifts God has given, but to everything God has created, including people themselves.

1Cor 4:7 For who sees anything different in you? *What do you have that you did not receive?* If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

We only have what God has given us. God is the ultimate source of all that we have, including our abilities and assets.

1Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, *the God of all grace*, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

The ascription of God has “the God of all grace” speaks of him as the one who “imparts all blessing and favor” (AMP).

Eccl 2:24-25 There is nothing better for a person than that he should *eat and drink and find enjoyment^r in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God,*²⁵*for apart from him^s who can eat or who can have enjoyment?*

^r Or *and make his soul see good*

^s Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts *apart from me*

The fundamental, essential things of life are gifts from God (cf. Eccl 3:13 ↓).

Eccl 3:13 ... also *that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.*

Eccl 5:19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.

Deut 8:17-18 Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’¹⁸You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

God was the ultimate source of the wealth that the people would produce, as it was he who gave them the ability to produce it.

Hos 14:8b It is I who answer and look after you.[†] I am like an evergreen cypress; *from me comes your fruit.*

[†] Hebrew *him*

As with Deuteronomy 8:17-18 above, God is portrayed as the ultimate source of Israel’s prosperity and blessings.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Jealousy

The Hebrew and Greek words translated as “jealousy” convey a very forceful passion. When used of God, “jealousy” is spoken of in a positive light, as a virtuous attribute aligned with his profound commitment to and love for his people. God’s jealousy in regard to his people is comparable to that of a husband or wife. Their jealousy is a product of their intense love for each other and evoked by anything that poses a threat to their relationship. As such God’s jealousy is expressed in action against whatever threatens his people or his relationship with them. Thus it is expressed both against hostile forces – bringing salvation to his people – and in punishing any unfaithfulness of his people, leading them back to him.

Subsections

- God is a jealous God
- God’s jealousy arises in response to his people’s sin
- God’s jealousy arises particularly in response to unfaithfulness



- God is jealous for his people and their well-being . . .
- . . . and God is zealous in working for his people's cause
- Note: In his jealousy and zeal God punishes his enemies and the ungodly

God is a jealous God

Ex 34:14 ... (for you shall worship no other god, for *the LORD*, whose name is *Jealous*, is a jealous God), ...

The description of God as one whose "name is Jealous" emphasizes that jealousy is an innate part of his character. This is enforced by the subsequent reference to God being a "jealous God".

Deut 4:24 For *the LORD* your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

God's jealousy is sometimes compared to fire devouring or destroying that which has aroused it.

Josh 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. *He is a jealous God*; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

Far from it being an ungodly attribute, here God's jealousy is mentioned alongside his holiness. Having these attributes, God will not tolerate rebellion and persistence in sin.

God's jealousy arises in response to his people's sin

See also:

- *God's anger arises in response to sin and disobedience*, p. 70

1Ki 14:22 And Judah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and *they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed*, more than all that their fathers had done.

Ps 79:5, 9 How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever? *Will your jealousy burn like fire?* ... ⁹Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for *our sins*, for your name's sake!

As is implied by v. 9, the people's sin was the reason for God's jealousy and anger (v. 5).

Ezek 23:25-27 And *I will direct my jealousy against you*, that they may deal with you in fury. They shall cut off your nose and your ears, and your survivors shall fall by the sword. They shall seize your sons and your daughters, and your survivors shall be devoured by fire. ²⁶They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels.

²⁷*Thus I will put an end to your lewdness and your whoring begun in the land of Egypt*, so that you shall not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.

Zeph 1:17-18 I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because *they have sinned against the LORD*; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. ¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. *In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed*; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Prior to the last sentence, the sin of God's people and his judgment on them is the subject. Some commentators see the inclusion of the "all the earth" (v. 18) – in being punished along with Israel – to be a result of its detrimental influence on Israel and her relationship with God. The same could possibly apply to the following passage, also from Zephaniah, where again Judah's sin is spoken of prior to reference to punishment of the "all the earth". Note that with such references to "all the earth", these passages may well have a more literal future fulfillment or application.

Zeph 3:7b-8 But *all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt*. ⁸"Therefore wait for me," declares the LORD, "for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for *in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed*."

God's jealousy arises particularly in response to unfaithfulness

See also:

- *God's anger arises in response to people forsaking him*, p. 72

Ex 20:4-6 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵*You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me*, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands^u of those who love me and keep my commandments.

^u Or *to the thousandth generation*

Verses 5b, 6 show two results of God's deep jealousy for his people (v. 5a): punishment for those who hate and reject him; and lasting love for those who love and follow him.



Deut 6:14-15 *You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you—¹⁵for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.* 📖

Deut 32:16, 20-21 *They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. ...²⁰And he said, 'I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.²¹They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are no people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.* 📖

Ps 78:58 *For they provoked him to anger with their high places; they moved him to jealousy with their idols.* 📖

Ezek 8:3 *He put out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head, and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.* 📖

God's jealousy is provoked by his people's devotion to any idol, but this one is especially noted – perhaps because it was actually in the temple. It was apparently an idol of Asherah, the Canaanite goddess of fertility.

Ezek 16:38 *And I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy.* 📖

Israel had committed spiritual adultery against God (cf. vv. 15-37) and in doing so had shed the blood of children in sacrifices to idols (cf. vv. 20-21), thus incurring God's "wrath and jealousy".

✦ God jealously longs for our devotion:

James 4:5 *Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?* 📖

There are different interpretations of this verse, but it may well be meaning that God jealously longs for our devotion (cf. NCV, NLT).

God is jealous for his people and their well-being . . .

See also:

- [Ex 20:5-6](#) ↑
- [2Ki 19:31](#) ↓
- *Note: In his jealousy and zeal God punishes his enemies and the ungodly, p. 88*

Ezek 36:6-7 *Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I have spoken in my jealous wrath, because you have suffered the reproach of the nations.⁷Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer reproach.* 📖

In his jealousy for Israel's well-being, God would crush their enemies (v. 7), so that Israel would no longer bear the scornful disdain of the nations (v. 6b). Probably oppression by the other nations is also view.

Joel 2:18-19 *Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people.¹⁹The LORD answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.* 📖

This suggests that God's jealousy for his land (v. 18) extended to his people and their well-being.

Nah 1:2 *The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.* 📖

Here the cause of God's jealousy (for his people) and wrath appears to be attacks on his people by Assyria, on whom he determined to take vengeance.

Zec 1:14-17 *So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion.¹⁵And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster.¹⁶Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.¹⁷Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'* 📖

This and the following passage speak of God's jealousy for his people's well-being partly being expressed in God's renewal of: Israel (vv. 16-17; [Zec 8:4-5](#) ↓); and his relationship with his people ([Zec 8:3](#) ↓).



Zec 8:2-5 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.* ³Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain. ⁴Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. ⁵And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. 

God's jealousy for Jerusalem (v. 2) has in view her restoration (vv. 3-5; cf. GNT) and expressing wrath towards her enemies (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT).

... and God is zealous in working for his people's cause

In both ancient Hebrew and ancient Greek, the word that is translated as "jealousy" is also the one which is translated as "zeal" – depending on the context; hence God's jealousy and his zeal are related. God's zeal in the cause of his people – the subject of this subsection – is also reflected in the verses in the preceding subsection which speak of his jealousy for them, and is shown by Isaiah 42:13, Ezekiel 36:5, 38:18-19, 22 in the following subsection.

2Ki 19:30-31 And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. ³¹For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. *The zeal of the LORD will do this.* 

Note that these verses are repeated verbatim in Isaiah 37:31-32.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. *The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.* 

God's zeal would ensure the introduction of the Messiah's reign, with the associated blessings for his people.

Isa 26:11 O LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see *your zeal for your people*, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them. 

The expression "your zeal for your people" speaks of God's eagerness to defend his people (cf. NLT).

Isa 63:15 Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful^v habitation. *Where are your zeal and your might?* The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me. 

^v Or *holy and glorious*

Isaiah knows of God's zeal for his people (and his might) – presumably from what he has done for them in the past and by what he has promised. So in this time of great trial for God's people, Isaiah appeals to God to show this zeal (cf. [Isa 26:11](#) ↑) and his might in working for his people's cause.

† God is always at his work:

John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, "*My Father is working until now, and I am working.*" 

This verse suggests that God is zealous in all his work, being always at his work (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). The following subsection further illustrates God's zeal in aspects of his work.

Note: In his jealousy and zeal God punishes his enemies and the ungodly

Ezek 36:5 ... therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Surely *I have spoken in my hot jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave my land to themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, that they might make its pasturelands a prey.* 

In his burning jealousy God pronounced prophecies of punishment against the nations who had plundered Israel.

Ezek 38:18-19, 22 But *on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel*, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. ¹⁹*For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.*  ... ²²*With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur.* 

The earthquake (v. 19) may primarily signify God's presence, with him poised to destroy the invaders; or it may be one he uses to nullify their attack and begin their destruction.

Deut 29:20 The LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and *his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.* 



Ezek 5:13 Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. And *they shall know that I am the LORD—that I have spoken in my jealousy—when I spend my fury upon them.* 

Num 25:11 Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that *he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.* 

Israel had faced annihilation by God in his jealousy (cf. vv. 1-9). However, in contrast to the cases in the previous verses, God's wrath was appeased so that he did not consume the people in his jealousy. This was largely due to Phinehas sharing God's jealousy, and in this jealousy executing one of the main provocateurs (cf. vv. 6-8).

Isa 42:13 The LORD goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war *he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.* 

Isa 59:17-18 He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; *he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.* ¹⁸*According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment.* 

✦ **God is also jealous for his name:**

Ezek 39:25 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and *I will be jealous for my holy name.* 

God is jealous for his holy name, that it not be dishonored or despised. Similarly Numbers 25:11 above refers to God being jealous for his honor.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Jesus Christ

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I. General

See also:

- *b) Jesus Christ's Humanity*, p. 516
- *c) Jesus Christ's Personality* [as shown in his mission], p. 524

The NT makes remarkable claims about aspects of Jesus Christ's being and his character. In doing so it shows Jesus Christ's nature to mirror that of God, and so points to his deity (his "God nature"). The NT also often refers to Jesus Christ's "name", making it a further concept that is important to grasp.

a) Jesus Christ's Eternity

Subsections

- Jesus Christ is alive
- Jesus Christ existed in the beginning . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ was before all things
- Further references to Jesus Christ existing prior to his advent
- Jesus Christ will be alive forever
- Jesus Christ is self-existing – he is "the life"
- Jesus Christ remains the same

Jesus Christ is alive

See also:

- *d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension*, p. 579

Acts 1:3 *He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.* 📖

Rom 6:10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but *the life he lives he lives to God.* 📖

2Cor 13:4 For *he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God.* For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will *live with him* by the power of God. 📖

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but *Christ who lives in me.* And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 📖

1Pet 2:4 As you come to *him, a living stone* rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ... 📖

This portrays Jesus as God's chosen "stone" (v. 4), the chosen "cornerstone" on which believers depend (cf. v. 6). These terms are references to OT prophecy (cf. vv. 6-8).

Jesus Christ existed in the beginning . . .

See also:

- [2Tim 1:9](#) ↓

John 1:1-2 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God.* 📖

"In the beginning" has the sense "before all time" (AMP). The title "the Word" refers to Jesus Christ (cf. [1Jn 1:1](#) ↓).

1Jn 1:1 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—* 📖

As made clear by the remainder of the verse, the first clause refers to Jesus Christ, speaking of him as being "from the beginning". For further comment see *Jesus Christ is self-existing – he is "the life"*, p. 95.

1Jn 2:13a I am writing to you, fathers, because you know *him who is from the beginning.* 📖

Heb 1:10 And, "*You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ...*" 📖

This quotation from Psalm 102:25 – where it refers to God – is here applied to Jesus Christ.

Heb 7:3 He [Melchizedek] is without father or mother or genealogy, *having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God* he continues a priest forever. 📖

This indicates that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had no beginning, indicative of the fact that he existed in the beginning.

Rev 22:13 [Jesus Christ:] *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.* 📖



Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, here used together to depict Jesus Christ as spanning all time – as do the subsequent pairings in the verse.

... Jesus Christ was before all things

See also:

- [Rev 22:13](#) ↑

Col 1:17 And *he is before all things*, and in him all things hold together. 📖

The first clause appears to mean that Jesus Christ existed before all things (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

John 17:5, 24 [Jesus:] And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that *I had with you before the world existed*. 📖 ... ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because *you loved me before the foundation of the world*. 📖

John 1:15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because *he was before me*.”) 📖

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” 📖

2Tim 1:9 ... who saved us and called us to^a a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us *in Christ Jesus before the ages began*,^b ... 📖

^a Or *with*

^b Greek *before times eternal*

This suggests that Jesus Christ existed “before the ages began”.

✦ Jesus Christ is from ancient times:

Mic 5:2 ^c But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, *whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days*. 📖

^c Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

The reference is understood by some to be to an eternal origin of the Messiah.

Further references to Jesus Christ existing prior to his advent

See also:

- [God sent Jesus Christ into the world](#), p. 508

John 6:38, 62 For *I have come down from heaven*, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 📖 ... ⁶²Then what if you were to *see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before*? 📖

John 16:28 *I came from the Father and have come into the world*, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father. 📖

John 12:41 Isaiah said these things because *he saw his glory and spoke of him*. 📖

The preceding verse quotes Isaiah 6:10 and suggests that here John may be correlating Isaiah seeing Jesus’ glory with the vision of God’s glory that Isaiah had when he recorded these words (cf. Isa 6:1-10). As such it can be inferred that this verse is implying Jesus Christ existed in Isaiah’s day. For further comment see ... [Other OT references to God are applied to Jesus Christ](#), p. 123.

1Cor 10:4b, 9 For *they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ*. 📖 ... ⁹*We must not put Christ^d to the test, as some of them did* and were destroyed by serpents, ... 📖

^d Some manuscripts *the Lord*

Particularly if the rendering in the text – “Christ” (CEV, NCV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) – is to be preferred to that in the text note – “the Lord” (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NIV) – v. 9 would be speaking of the Israelites testing Christ in Numbers 21:4-6. Thus along with v. 4b this would appear to indicate that Christ accompanied the Israelites during their journey through the desert (cf. [Jude 1:5](#) ↓), perhaps as the angel closely associated with God (cf. Ex 23:20-23; [Gen 16:9-10](#) ↓). (For further comment on v. 4 see [God satisfies his people’s spiritual hunger and thirst](#), p. 931.)

2Cor 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though *he was rich*, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. 📖

Heb 11:26 *He [Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward*. 📖

On face value this suggests that Moses was conscious of Christ’s existence – hence its inclusion here. However, it may simply be meaning that Moses acted with the Messiah in



view. A further possibility is that the writer is identifying Christ with the people of Israel.

Jude 1:5 Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that *Jesus, who saved^e a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.* 📖

^e Some manuscripts *although you fully knew it, that the Lord who once saved*

Most other modern translations follow the alternative translation in the text note which uses “Lord” instead of Jesus (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

✦ The “angel of the LORD”:

Gen 16:9-10 *The angel of the LORD* said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her.” ¹⁰*The angel of the LORD* also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.” 📖

A number of times in the OT an angel is closely identified with God (cf. *Note: “The angel of the LORD” is identified with God*, p. 172). This is such an occurrence, with the angel speaking on behalf of God in the first person (v. 10). These occurrences may concern the same angel – particularly as the title “the angel of the LORD” is often used. Some commentators think this angel may be the pre-incarnate Christ.

Jesus Christ will be alive forever

See also:

- 1Jn 1:2 ↴
- *Jesus Christ was appointed by God as high priest forever, in the superior priestly order of Melchizedek*, p. 672
- *God will establish the Messiah as ruler over all, forever*, p. 718

Rom 6:9 We know that *Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.* 📖

Here Paul asserts that Jesus Christ cannot die again because he has already died and risen from death. In conjunction, as he is without sin, death has no claim on Jesus Christ. Note that death’s previous “claim” on him was only due to Jesus Christ taking upon himself the sins of the world.

Eph 3:21 ... to him be glory in the church and *in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.* Amen. 📖

This implies that Jesus Christ will exist forever.

Heb 1:8, 10-12 *But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.* 📖 ... ¹⁰And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹*they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹²like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed.*^f But you are the same, and *your years will have no end.”* 📖

^f Some manuscripts omit *like a garment*

Heb 7:3, 15-17, 24-25 He is without father or mother or genealogy, *having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he [Melchizedek] continues a priest forever.* 📖 ... ¹⁵This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an *indestructible life.* ¹⁷*For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”* 📖 ... ²⁴*but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.* ²⁵Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost^g those who draw near to God through him, since *he always lives to make intercession for them.* 📖

^g That is, completely; or *at all times*

Melchizedek was king of Salem – probably Jerusalem – and a “priest of God Most High” (Gen 14:18; cf. v. 1). There is no record of his genealogy, birth or death. The writer uses this absence of any information about his death to suggest that his priesthood continues forever, and as such prefigures the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Rev 1:17-18 When I saw him [Jesus Christ], I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, *I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*” 📖

The significance of the title “the living one” (v. 18a) is explained by the rest of the sentence (cf. comment on [John 1:25](#) ↴).

Rev 22:13 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.* 📖

Ps 72:5 *May they fear you^h while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!* 📖

^h Septuagint *He shall endure*

This is understood to be messianic, speaking of Jesus Christ, as is Isa 9:6-7 immediately below. This suggests that like fear of him should endure forever, so shall he endure (cf. NIV).



Isa 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be uponⁱ his shoulder, and his name shall be called^j Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, *Everlasting Father*, Prince of Peace. ⁷*Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.* The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

ⁱ Or *is upon*

^j Or *is called*

Note that the use of “Father” (v. 6) in reference to the Messiah, probably points to his paternal care of his people.

Jesus Christ is self-existing – he is “the life”

See also:

- [Rev 1:18](#)

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

The Father has enabled Jesus Christ “to have life in Himself and be self-existent” (AMP). The implication in this verse’s context is that – like the Father – Jesus is “the source of life” (GNT) with “the power to give life” (CEV). (This implication is reflected in the following references, as commented below.)

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “*I am the resurrection and the life.*”^k Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ...

^k Some manuscripts omit *and the life*

Descriptions of Jesus Christ as “the life” (cf. [John 14:6](#) ; [1Jn 1:2](#)) reflect that he has life inherent (cf. [John 5:26](#)) as part of his essential nature, and so is self-existing. Primarily they point to Jesus Christ as the source of life – the one who gives life – as the latter part of this verse suggests.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.* No one comes to the Father except through me.

1Jn 1:1-3 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning *the word of life*—²*the life* was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you *the eternal life*, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The references to it being seen (vv. 1, 3) and “touched” (v. 1) along with being heard, imply that “the word of life” (v. 1) refers to Jesus Christ. In conjunction, he is “the life” that was “made manifest, and ... seen” (v. 2). Being the manifestation of this life, he is the one in whom it is revealed. The suggestion is that through him this life may be partaken of by us, involving fellowship not only with others who share in this life but also with the Father and Christ himself (v. 3).

‡ Jesus lives because of the Father:

John 6:57 As the living Father sent me, and *I live because of the Father*, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

Possibly Jesus is referring to his life as a man on earth; but he could be speaking more generally. One could conclude that Jesus “has life in himself” (5:26), but he has it because of the Father.

Jesus Christ remains the same

Heb 1:12 ... like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed.¹ *But you are the same*, and your years will have no end.

¹ Some manuscripts omit *like a garment*

Heb 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

2Tim 2:13 ... if we are faithless, *he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.*

Jesus Christ remains the same not only in his ongoing existence but also in his character. He cannot be but “true to himself” (NirV®).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Christ’s Pre-Eminence

See also:

- [Jesus Christ is holy](#), p. 102
- [Note: God has given Jesus Christ a name that is superior to all others](#), p. 110



- c) *Jesus Christ Is Identified with God*, p. 119
- d) *Jesus Christ as Lord of All*, p. 684

Subsections

- Jesus Christ is greater than all people
- Jesus Christ is greater than all things
- Jesus Christ has divine glory
- Visions of Jesus Christ, indicative of his surpassing greatness and glory
- Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power
- Jesus Christ has superlative knowledge and wisdom
- Jesus Christ is everywhere

Jesus Christ is greater than all people

See also:

- Eph 1:19-21 ↓; Col 1:15-19 ↓

John 3:31 *He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.* ☞

"He who comes from above" refers to Jesus Christ, who came from heaven above. The phrase "above all" is akin to "greater than all" (GNT, NCV; cf. NLT).

Ps 89:27 *And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.* ☞

This is understood to be messianic, as is Micah 5:4 below.

Mic 5:4 *And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.* ☞

This suggests that the Messiah's greatness will surpass that of all others, with all people all over the earth acknowledging his greatness (cf. GNT).

Matt 12:41-42 *The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.* ⁴²The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, *something greater than Solomon is here.* ☞

The comparisons with people – Jonah (v. 41) and Solomon (v. 42) – suggest that the "something" is in part at least a

reference to "someone" (cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NLT), i.e. Jesus himself.

Luke 1:32a *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.* ☞

Being called "the Son of the Most High" suggests that his aforementioned greatness would be far more than that of all others.

John 1:15, 27 *(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.')* ☞ ... ²⁷even he who comes after me, *the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.*" ☞

John refers to the concept – more marked in ancient times – that an older person was considered worthy of more honor than a younger one, and so generally considered to be greater. In saying that Jesus – who was younger than John – was "before" him and so ranked before him (v. 15), John appears to be pointing to the fact that Jesus existed before him, from all eternity. Jesus seems to make a similar point about himself in regard to Abraham in John 8:53, 57-58 below.

John 8:53, 57-58 *Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"* ☞ ... ⁵⁷So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"^m ⁵⁸*Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."* ☞

^mSome manuscripts has *Abraham seen you?*

Quite possibly Jesus' reply (v. 58) to the Jews' skepticism may have also been alluding to their earlier questions (v. 53), implying that he indeed was greater than Abraham.

Rom 8:29 *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* ☞

Here the term "firstborn" (cf. **Ps 89:27 ↑**; **Col 1:15 ↓**; **Heb 1:6 ↓**) most likely refers to Christ's pre-eminence "among" God's people and/or to him being the firstborn from the dead (cf. Rev 1:5).

Heb 3:3-6 *For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.* ⁴(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵Now *Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant*, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶*but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.* And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.ⁿ ... ☞

ⁿ Some manuscripts insert *firm to the end*



This implies that Jesus Christ is the builder of God's house, which probably refers to the household of God's people. Thus he is greater even than Moses who was just a servant in the house.

Jesus Christ is greater than all things

Matt 12:6 I tell you, *something greater than the temple is here.* 

As per the comment on vv. 41-42 in the previous subsection, Jesus may be referring to himself as the "something". If so, he may well have meant that he had authority higher than that of the temple and the regulations associated with it and the Sabbath (cf. vv. 1-8). Another possible implication was that as the center and focus for worship of God, the temple had been superseded by the coming of God's kingdom with its King, Jesus himself.

Eph 1:19-21 ... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and *seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,* ²¹*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* 

Verse 21 speaks of Christ's authority and power (cf. CEV, GNT) over all other powers – spiritual as well as human – as pointed to by his position of authority at God's right hand (v. 20).

Col 1:15-19 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* ¹⁶*For by^o him all things were created,* in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷*And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* ¹⁸*And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.* ¹⁹*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ...* 

^o That is, by means of; or in

In v. 15, "firstborn" (cf. [Ps 89:27](#) ; [Rom 8:29](#) ; [Heb 1:6](#) ) points to Christ's existence before creation and in particular to his supremacy over it, alluding to the privileged status of a firstborn son in a Jewish family. In v. 18 the term has a different usage, speaking of him being the first to be raised from the dead.

Heb 1:3-9, 13 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he

sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴*having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.* ⁵*For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?* ⁶And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." ⁷Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." ⁸*But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.* ⁹You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, *has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.*"  ... ¹³*And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?* 

In regard to "name" (v. 4), see comment on v. 4 in [Note: God has given Jesus Christ a name that is superior to all others](#), p. 110. In vv. 5-6 Paul applies OT passages to Jesus Christ to illustrate Christ's supremacy; the first two are clearly messianic. In v. 9, "loved righteousness and hated wickedness" quite possibly has Jesus' life on earth in view, with the latter part of the verse then probably speaking of his exaltation to God's right hand, with the joy associated with this "anointing". In the context, "companions" (v. 9) may well refer to angels, though some consider that his people are in view. In v. 9, "has anointed you... beyond your companions" implies that God set Jesus Christ above these companions (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV).

↳ "Christ is all, and in all":

Col 3:11 *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,^p free; but Christ is all, and in all.* 

^p Greek bondservant

"Christ is all" indicates that Jesus Christ surpasses all other things or matters in importance. The phrase "in all" may simply refer to him being in all believers (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT) – but it may have a more far-reaching sense, meaning that Christ permeates everything everywhere (cf. AMP).

Jesus Christ has divine glory

See also:

- ... *and Jesus was glorified by God*, p. 558
- *Because he had willingly suffered death, God exalted and glorified Jesus Christ*, p. 584
- *Jesus Christ will come in great glory*, p. 702



Matt 25:31 *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.* 📖

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and *we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father*, full of grace and truth. 📖

John and others saw Jesus' glory demonstrated through his miracles (cf. [John 2:11 ↓](#)), his transfiguration, and his death and resurrection.

John 2:11 *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory.* And his disciples believed in him. 📖

In turning water into wine (cf. vv. 1-10) Jesus "manifested his glory". As such Jesus "displayed His greatness and His power openly" (AMP), pointing to his divine nature.

John 12:41 Isaiah said these things because *he saw his [Jesus'] glory* and spoke of him. 📖

For comment on this verse see the comment on [John 12:37-41](#) – under . . . *Other OT references to God are applied to Jesus Christ*, p. 123.

John 17:5, 24 [Jesus:] And now, *Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.* 📖 ... ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see *my glory that you have given me* because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 📖

In v. 5 Jesus has in view his return to the Father and the glorified state that he had before his incarnation. In v. 24 Jesus is speaking of his followers being with him in the afterlife, where they will see his glory.

1Cor 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified *the Lord of glory.* 📖

The title as "the Lord of glory" points to Jesus' glory being far above that of all others. Note that the phrase is also used in [James 2:1](#) – "... our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory."

2Cor 4:4, 6 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of *the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* 📖 ... ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of *the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* 📖

Jesus Christ's glory is such that he reflects the glory of God (cf. [Heb 1:3a ↓](#)).

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, *the Lord Jesus Christ*, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like *his glorious body*, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. 📖

2Thes 1:9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from⁹ the presence of the Lord and from *the glory of his might*, ... 📖

⁹ Or *destruction that comes from*

Heb 1:3a *He is the radiance of the glory of God* and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. 📖

Heb 7:26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and *exalted above the heavens.* 📖

This points to the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ in his glory, speaking of him being set apart from sinful people and exalted above all things – "given the highest place of honor" (NLT; cf. CEV).

2Pet 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of *our Lord Jesus Christ*, but we were *eyewitnesses of his majesty.* 📖

Jesus Christ's majesty is indicative of and can be associated with his glory. Note that Peter is referring to Jesus' transfiguration (cf. [Luke 9:28-32, 34-35 ↓](#)).

John 16:14 [Jesus:] *He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.* 📖

This is speaking of Jesus Christ being glorified or receiving glory, rather than to the glory that is an essential aspect of his nature (this subsection's theme and which appears to be in view in the above verses). However, in a sense, it does at least point to his glory. The verse speaks of the Holy Spirit bringing glory by taking Jesus Christ's "message" (CEV, cf. GNT, NCV) – particularly that regarding his person and work – and making it (and Jesus Christ) known to Jesus Christ's followers. Such revelation – and the manifestation of it in the lives of his followers – is glorifying to Jesus Christ.

✦ Jesus' transfiguration, manifesting his glory:

Luke 9:28-32, 34-35 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And as he was praying, *the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.* ³⁰And behold, two men were talking with him, *Moses and Elijah*, ³¹who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure,^r which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with



sleep, but when they became fully awake *they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.* ☞ ...³⁴As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵*And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One;^s listen to him!"* ☞

^r Greek *exodus*

^s Some manuscripts *my Beloved*

Moses and Elijah's appearance with Jesus "in heavenly glory" (CEV, GNB) supplemented and reflected Jesus' own glory. Note that the parallel passage in Mark 9 further emphasizes the brightness of Jesus' appearance: "And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them."

Visions of Jesus Christ, indicative of his surpassing greatness and glory

Acts 7:55-56 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and *Jesus standing at the right hand of God.* ⁵⁶*And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."* ☞

God's right hand side is the ultimate "place of honor and power" (CEV text note; cf. NLT).

Acts 26:13-16, 19 At midday, O king, *I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.* ¹⁴*And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language,^t 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'* ¹⁵And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶*But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,* ☞ ...¹⁹"Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ... ☞

^t Or the Hebrew dialect (that is, Aramaic)

The "light from heaven, brighter than the sun" (v. 13) was a manifestation of Jesus Christ's glory.

Rev 1:12-18 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands *one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.* ¹⁴*The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,* ¹⁵*his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.* ¹⁶*In his right hand he held seven stars, from his*

mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, *I am the first and the last,* ¹⁸*and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*" ☞

In v. 16, the "seven stars" are "angels" of the churches (cf. vv. 20; 2:1) that Jesus Christ subsequently addresses (cf. chs 2-3). The "sharp two-edged sword" (v. 16; cf. [Rev 19:15](#) ↓) represents Jesus Christ's power to execute judgment. Holding the keys of death and the place of the dead (v. 18b), is indicative of Jesus Christ's total authority over their domain.

Rev 5:1-14 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; *behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.*" ⁶*And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.* ⁷*And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.* ⁸*And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* ⁹*And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,* ¹⁰*and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."* ¹¹*Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,* ¹²*saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* ¹³*And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"* ¹⁴*And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.* ☞



The “Lamb” (vv. 6, 8, 12, 13) is a name for Jesus Christ, alluding to his sacrificial death which in a number of aspects mirrored the offering of a lamb at Passover and/or as a sin offering. For further comment see Revelation 5:1-7 in *God works in all eras through Jesus Christ, impacting all things everywhere*, p. 530.

Rev 19:11-16 *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in^u blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

^u Some manuscripts *sprinkled with*

This depicts Jesus Christ on his return. Note that a “diadem” (cf. v. 12) is a jeweled headpiece signifying sovereignty, e.g. a crown.

Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power

See also:

- [Rev 5:12](#)
- [Isa 9:6](#) ; [1Cor 1:24](#)
- [b\) Jesus Christ's Power from God](#), p. 542
- [a\) Jesus Christ's Miracles](#), p. 559
- [d\) Jesus Christ as Lord of All](#), p. 684
- [I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment](#), p. 692

Mark 13:26 And then they will see *the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.*

Eph 6:10 Finally, *be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.*

2Thes 1:9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from^v the presence of the Lord and from *the glory of his might, ...*

^v Or *destruction that comes from*

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and *no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

No one has the power to snatch Jesus Christ's followers away from him. This illustrates that his authority and power is supreme or sovereign, which is also indicated by Philipians 3:20-21, Hebrews 1:3 and Isaiah 11:4b below – and reflected at least by the other references below.

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, *the Lord Jesus Christ,*²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, *by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

Heb 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and *he upholds the universe by the word of his power.* After making purification for sins, *he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ...*

Jesus Christ's power over all things is evident in him upholding or sustaining all things. In conjunction, his position at the right hand of God is one of surpassing power and influence.

2Pet 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you *the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,* but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Various other passages indicate that this power Jesus Christ will display on his return will be an all-surpassing power.

Ps 45:3-4 Gird your sword on your thigh, *O mighty one,* in your splendor and majesty! *⁴In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!*

This psalm is understood to be messianic, which Isaiah 11:4b below clearly is. Particularly in view of what proceeds it, the last clause appears to speak of the Messiah performing awesome deeds – in conjunction with victory over forces opposed to “truth and meekness and righteousness” (v. 4a) and indicative of his great might (v. 3).

Isa 11:4 ... but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and *he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*

✦ **Opposing or resisting Jesus Christ is detrimental:**

Acts 26:14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language,^w *'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'*

^w Or *the Hebrew dialect* (that is, Aramaic)

The final statement was apparently a common saying alluding to oxen, speaking of how detrimental and futile it is



to oppose God. Here it is applied by Jesus Christ to one opposing himself.

Jesus Christ has superlative knowledge and wisdom

See also:

- c) *Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God*, p. 548

Isa 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon^x his shoulder, and *his name shall be called*^y *Wonderful Counselor*, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

^x Or *is upon*

^y Or *is called*

The term “Wonderful Counselor” points to the Messiah’s wisdom as being superb, even supreme.

Luke 21:15 [Jesus:] ... for *I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.*

Jesus Christ has wisdom far superior to that of any adversary that believers may encounter.

John 16:30 Now *we know that you know all things* and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.

Acts 1:24 And they prayed and said, “*You, Lord, who know the hearts of all*, show which one of these two you have chosen ...

Note that an earlier reference to the “Lord Jesus” (v. 21) makes it most likely that Jesus Christ is being referred to here as “Lord”, rather than God.

Col 2:2-3 ... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is *Christ*, ³*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

This is often understood to indicate that Jesus Christ himself possesses all the treasures of divine wisdom and spiritual knowledge. Paul may more specifically be saying that these things can be found in the message about him, the mystery of God revealed in the gospel. But even so, this is still suggestive of Christ possessing these things.

Rev 2:10, 19, 23b Do not fear what you are about to suffer. *Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation.* Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the

crown of life. ... ¹⁹*“I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.* ... ²³ ... And all the churches will know that *I am he who searches mind and heart*, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

Verse 10 illustrates Jesus Christ’s knowledge of the future – in addition to his knowledge of all people’s deeds (v. 19) and thoughts (v. 23b).

Rev 5:12 ... saying with a loud voice, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!*”

In saying that Jesus Christ – “the Lamb” – is worthy to receive the things listed, the implication may be that the worshippers are also ascribing or attributing to him these things – including marvelous wisdom.

✦ **Jesus Christ is the power and wisdom by which God saves:**

1Cor 1:24 ... but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, *Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

Through or in Jesus Christ, God’s power and wisdom to bring salvation (cf. v. 21) has been realized.

Jesus Christ is everywhere

Matt 18:20 [Jesus:] For *where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*

Matt 28:20b And behold, *I am with you always*, to the end of the age.

Jesus Christ is with all believers everywhere (cf. **Matt 18:20** ↑) – always.

Eph 1:23 ... which is his body, *the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

The last clause quite possibly points to Jesus Christ’s omnipresence, as the one who fills “everything everywhere with his presence” (NLT). But there are other possible translations and interpretations. One is that it means Jesus Christ “completes” (GNT) all things – either referring to his headship or to his sufficiency for the needs or wholeness of all things.

Eph 4:10 *He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.*)

Here “all things” encompasses “the whole universe” (CEV, GNT, NIV; cf. NLT).

John 3:13 No one has ascended into heaven except *he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.*^z



^z Some manuscripts add *who is in heaven*

The appropriateness of the inclusion of this verse – spoken by Jesus during his time on earth – is dependent on the additional phrase in the text note (cf. AMP, NKJV). It appears to point to Jesus Christ’s omnipresence – suggesting that even while he was on earth, he was at least in some sense also in heaven.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Jesus Christ’s Character

See also:

- c) *Jesus Christ’s Personality*, p. 524

This section largely does not include references speaking specifically about Jesus’ character during his time on earth. These can be found in *Jesus Christ’s Personality* (cross-referenced above) in 11. *God’s Promised Messiah*.

Subsections

- Jesus Christ is holy
- Jesus Christ is righteous . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ judges in righteousness and with justice
- Jesus Christ is faithful
- Jesus Christ is loving
- Jesus Christ shows grace . . .
- . . . and Jesus Christ is merciful
- Jesus Christ can display anger and jealousy

Jesus Christ is holy

See also:

- . . . *Jesus is the messianic Holy One of God*, p. 491
- *Jesus Christ was an unblemished offering – being without sin*, p. 590

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; *therefore the child to be born^a will be called holy—the Son of God.* 

^a Some manuscripts add *of you*

As well as in the latter part of the verse, Jesus Christ’s holiness is reflected in the key role of the Holy Spirit in his conception as a human being.

Acts 3:14 But you denied *the Holy and Righteous One*, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ... 

Acts 4:27 ... for truly in this city there were gathered together against *your holy servant Jesus*, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ... 

Heb 7:26-28 For it was indeed fitting that *we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners*, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷*He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.* ²⁸For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints *a Son who has been made perfect forever.* 

Along with the earlier descriptions of him in vv. 26-27a, being “made perfect forever” (v. 28) further underlines Jesus Christ’s holiness. Note that references to Jesus Christ being made perfect (cf. 2:10; 5:9) are not indicating that Jesus Christ was ever in any way imperfect. A common view is that they are speaking of him being perfectly molded for his high priestly role – in fully experiencing humanity through his suffering. Alternatively such references may be speaking of Jesus Christ as being perfected in the sense of maturing in his incarnation, through his suffering. When he was very young he was not disobedient, but on the other hand he was still to learn to obey, or to obey in the most trying circumstances.

1Jn 3:3, 5 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as *he is pure.*  ... ⁵You know that he appeared to take away sins, and *in him there is no sin.* 

Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: “The words of *the holy one, the true one*, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. 

‡ Jesus Christ is good:

1Pet 2:3 ... if indeed you have tasted that *the Lord is good.* 

The subsequent verse (v. 4) implies that Peter is here referring to Jesus Christ, rather than God.



Jesus Christ is righteous . . .

See also:

- [Jesus was righteous](#), p. 527
- [Jesus showed righteous anger and indignation](#), p. 527
- [. . . Jesus himself is identified with truth](#), p. 568
- [The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace](#), p. 720

Isa 11:5 *Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

Jer 23:5-6 Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when *I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.* ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. *And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'*

As with Isaiah 11:5 above, this speaks of the Messiah, highlighting his righteousness.

Acts 7:52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of *the Righteous One*, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ...

1Jn 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, *Jesus Christ the righteous.*

1Jn 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as *he is righteous.*

It is Jesus Christ who is being spoken of here as righteous. Note that the phrase "he is righteous" also occurs in 2:29. There it is debatable as to whether it is referring to Jesus Christ or to God.

2Pet 1:1b To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by *the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:* ...

Heb 1:8-9 But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, *the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.* ⁹*You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.*"

The quotation is from Psalms 45:5-6, a messianic psalm, in which the preceding verse (45:4) also makes reference to the Messiah's righteousness – speaking of him acting "for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness".

John 7:18 The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but *the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*

Eph 6:9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master^b and yours is in heaven, and that *there is no partiality with him.*

^b Greek *Lord*

In the light of the preceding verses (vv. 6-8), "Master" appears to be referring to Jesus Christ, but God may be in view.

. . . Jesus Christ judges in righteousness and with justice

See also:

- [Eph 6:9](#) ↑

Ps 72:2 *May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!*

This is from a messianic passage, understood to be ultimately fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

Isa 11:3b-4 *He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*

In making judgments with righteousness and equity (v. 4), Jesus Christ will not judge just simply on the basis of what is seen and heard (v. 3b; cf. [Rev 2:23](#) ↓).

Isa 16:5 ... then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David *one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.*

John 5:30 I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and *my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.*

Acts 17:31 ... because he has fixed a day on which he will *judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*

God will judge the world with justice through Jesus Christ – in righteousness.

2Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which *the Lord, the righteous judge,* will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.



Rev 2:23 ... and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that *I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.*



Two factors of Jesus Christ's just judgment are that he knows people's hearts and minds, and that he repays each person according to their deeds.

Rev 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and *in righteousness he judges and makes war.*

John 8:16 Yet even *if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father^c who sent me.*

^c Some manuscripts *he*

A key aspect of Jesus Christ's just judgment is that his decisions are true – which implies that they are “right” (NIV®), “correct” (NLT), “valid” (NRSV). This is in part at least because he is supported in them by the Father – whose will he seeks in making judgments (cf. [John 5:30 ↑](#)).

✦ Jesus Christ will establish justice on earth:

Isa 42:1-4 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; *he will bring forth justice to the nations.* ²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; *he will faithfully bring forth justice.* ⁴*He will not grow faint or be discouraged^d till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.*

^d Or *bruised*

This messianic prophecy is quoted in reference to Jesus in Matthew 12:18-21. Note that Isaiah 11:3b-4 above also speaks of Jesus Christ establishing justice on earth.

Jesus Christ is faithful

See also:

- [Isa 42:3 ↑](#)

2Thes 3:3 But *the Lord is faithful.* He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.^e

^e Or *evil*

2Tim 2:13 ... if we are faithless, *he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.*

Heb 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and *faithful high priest in the service of God,* to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Heb 3:1-2, 6a Therefore, holy brothers,^f you who share in a heavenly calling, consider *Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,* ²*who was faithful to him who appointed him,* just as Moses also was faithful in all God's^g house. ... ⁶*but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.*

^f Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

^g Greek *his*; also verses 5, 6

Rev 1:5a ... and from *Jesus Christ the faithful witness,* the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

The description of Jesus Christ as “the faithful witness” is alluding to Christ's faithfulness in his testimony to God's word (vv. 1-2).

Rev 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! *The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True,* and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

Isa 11:5 Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and *faithfulness the belt of his loins.*

Jesus Christ is loving

See also:

- *Jesus was loving – shown ultimately in him giving up his life,* p. 524
- *Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them* + ref., p. 819

John 15:9 *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*

The fact that Jesus Christ compares his love for his disciples with that of the Father's love for him, shows the enormity of his love for them. The following references from Ephesians 3:17b-19 and Romans 8:35-39 also highlight the enormity of Jesus Christ's love – as do the verses in the above cross references.

Eph 3:17-19 ... so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know *the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,* that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.



Note that in v. 18, “the breadth and length and height and depth” has been interpreted to be speaking of the immensity of either Christ’s love (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV) or God’s love (cf. NLT). It could more generally be referring to the vastness of riches that believers have in their relationship with Christ.

Rom 8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?* ³⁶As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors *through him who loved us.* ³⁸*For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹*nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Note that vv. 38-39 speak of God’s amazing love expressed to his people in or “through” (GNT) Jesus Christ, rather than the love of Jesus Christ himself. But in light of the earlier reference to Christ’s love – in v. 35 and quite possibly also in v. 37 – it could well be that Paul has Christ’s love in view as the medium of God’s love.

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers *beloved by the Lord*, because God chose you as the firstfruits^h to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

^h Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

✦ A reference to Jesus Christ’s affection:

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with *the affection of Christ Jesus.*

Jesus Christ shows grace . . .

John 1:14, 16-17 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, *full of grace and truth.* ... ¹⁶*And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.* ¹⁷*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

This may be implying that the Father’s grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Even so, it points to Jesus Christ’s grace (v. 16). In a similar vein, Romans 5:15 below speaks of the Father’s grace coming through Jesus Christ’s grace.

Rom 5:15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by *the grace of that one man Jesus Christ* abounded for many.

The “gift” primarily refers to the “free gift of righteousness” (v. 17).

Rom 1:7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Rom 16:20b *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

Acts 15:11 But we believe that *we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus*, just as they will.

2Cor 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

2Cor 12:9 But he said to me, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Gal 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who *called you in the grace of Christ* and are turning to a different gospel—

The term “the grace of Christ” is referring either to the grace Christ showed in sacrificing himself for the sake of others, or to “the grace that Christ has provided” (NirV®) whereby people are saved by grace rather than by their own merit. The two alternatives are in any case very much interrelated.

Eph 4:7 But *grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.*

The reference here is to spiritual gifts, a manifestation of Jesus Christ’s grace.

1Tim 1:14 ... and *the grace of our Lord overflowed for me* with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

2Tim 2:1 You then, my child, *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,* ...

2Pet 3:18a But grow in *the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*



... and Jesus Christ is merciful

See also:

- *Jesus was compassionate*, p. 524

Heb 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

1Cor 7:25 Now concerningⁱ the betrothed,^j I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment *as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy*.

ⁱ The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1

^j Greek *virgins*

Jude 1:21 ... keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

1Tim 1:2 To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1Tim 1:13, 15-16 ... though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But *I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief*, ... ¹⁵The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶But *I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience* as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

The reference to Jesus Christ's "perfect patience" (v. 16) – a further characteristic of Jesus Christ – suggests that it is Jesus Christ's mercy in view (vv. 13, 16).

2Tim 1:16, 18 *May the Lord grant mercy* to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, ... ¹⁸*may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!*—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

Note that the two references to "the Lord" in v. 18 seem to be speaking of two different entities, i.e. Jesus Christ and God (cf. CEV). As such the reference to mercy – as with that in v. 16 – may be to the God's mercy.

‡ **Jesus Christ is sympathetic:**

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus Christ can display anger and jealousy

See also:

- *Jesus showed righteous anger and indignation*, p. 527

Ps 2:11-12 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹²*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled*. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

This psalm is understood to be messianic, which is supported by NT quotations from it – and thus applicable to Jesus Christ. The references to anger and wrath are possibly speaking of the Son – hence the verse's inclusion in this subsection. But as the context indicates, they may well instead refer to the LORD (cf. CEV).

Rev 6:16-17 ... calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

1Cor 10:21-22 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²*Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?*

Jesus Christ is jealous for his people's faithfulness to him.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Jesus Christ's 'Name'

In biblical times, a person's name represented or embodied their whole person – including their nature, authority and significance or purpose. This concept is in view in references to the "name" of a person.

Subsections

- Jesus Christ's "name" signifies Jesus Christ himself
- Jesus Christ's "name" is correlated with his authority and power
- Jesus Christ's "name" signifies him in his attainment of forgiveness of sins



- Jesus Christ's "name" signifies him in his attainment of salvation and eternal life
- Jesus Christ's "name" signifies him in his gospel and cause – with Christians being devoted to it
- Note: God has given Jesus Christ a name that is superior to all others

Jesus Christ's "name" signifies Jesus Christ himself

John 3:18 Whoever *believes in him* is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not *believed in the name of the only Son of God*.

The phrases "believes in him" and "believed in the name of God's one and only Son" are equivalent – as are "call on him" and "calls on the name of the Lord" in Romans 10:12-13 immediately below. As such, these verses strongly suggest that Jesus Christ's "name" signifies Jesus Christ himself.

Rom 10:12-13 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on *all who call on him*. ¹³For "*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*."

2Thes 1:12 ... so that *the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him*, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here the connection between "the name of our Lord Jesus" and "you", and the reversal of the connection in the subsequent clause – "you in him" – correlates "the name" of Jesus Christ with Jesus Christ himself.

John 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, *many believed in his name* when they saw the signs that he was doing.

The phrase "believed in his name" is equivalent to "believed in him" (GNT, NCV, cf. CEV), indicative of the fact that Jesus Christ's "name" signifies Jesus Christ himself.

Acts 9:14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind *all who call on your name*.

To call on Jesus Christ's name (cf. v. 21) is to call on Jesus Christ himself (cf. [Rom 10:12-13](#) ↑). Note that the verse appears to be speaking of calling on him in terms of expressing allegiance to Jesus Christ as the one whom one worships (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIRV). To call on him also suggests turning to him for help, as the one we look to and worship as our helper and deliverer (cf. 2:21).

‡ **God sent the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ's name, in his place:**

John 14:26 But the Helper, *the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name*, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Jesus said the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his name – "in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf" (AMP; cf. CEV, NLT, 16:7 below). As such the Holy Spirit would represent Jesus Christ's interests and continue his work, doing such things as reminding his followers of everything Jesus Christ had said to them.

Jesus Christ's "name" is correlated with his authority and power

See also:

- [Ask for things in Jesus Christ's "name"](#), p. 1225
- ... [Do God's work in the "name" of Jesus Christ](#), p. 1418
- [Demons are driven out of people in Jesus Christ's "name"](#), p. 1819

Note that in addition to the above cross references, the verses in the following two subsections also allude to Jesus Christ's name being correlated with his authority and power, as they attribute aspects of salvation being appropriated on account of his name – often by believing in it.

Matt 18:20 For *where two or three are gathered in my name*, there am I among them.

To meet in Jesus Christ's "name" involves seeking to act in accordance with his will and by his authority, in recognition of who he is.

1Cor 5:4-5 When you are *assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus* and my spirit is present, *with the power of our Lord Jesus*, ⁵you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.^k

^k Some manuscripts add *Jesus*

Acts 4:30 ... while you stretch out your hand to heal, and *signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus*.

The disciples are effectively asking God to perform such miraculous acts "through the authority *and* by the power of the name of... Jesus" (AMP; cf. NCV).

Mark 9:38-40 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone *casting out demons in your name*,¹ and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." ³⁹But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who *does a mighty work in my name* will



be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰For the one who is not against us is for us. 📖

¹ Some manuscripts add *who does not follow us*

Luke 10:17-19 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” ¹⁸And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 📖

Bringing demons to submission in Jesus’ “name” (v. 18) was an example of the use of the authority Jesus spoke of in v. 19, which presumably was to be exercised in his “name”.

Acts 3:6-7, 16 But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!*” ⁷And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 📖 ... ¹⁶And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus^m has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. 📖

^mGreek *him*

Peter gave the command in the “name” or by the authority of Jesus Christ, his name representing or incorporating his authority and power – “By the power of Jesus Christ” (NCV™).

Acts 4:10 ... let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that *by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.* 📖

Acts 16:18 And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and *said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.* 📖

Matt 7:22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 📖

Note that while this clearly correlates Jesus Christ’s “name” with his authority and power, Jesus subsequently says that he will say to the people quoted here that he never knew them (cf. v. 23). Some commentators think that their claims to have done such things in his “name” may well be true, while others think that any power they may have exercised was actually of an evil source.

✦ **The attempt of some Jews to drive out spirits by Jesus Christ’s “name”:**

Acts 19:13-17 *Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.”* ¹⁴Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵*But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?”* ¹⁶*And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered allⁿ of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.* ¹⁷And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and *the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.* 📖

ⁿ Or *both*

Jesus Christ’s “name” cannot be invoked by just anyone as if it was some magical formula. To do anything in Jesus Christ’s “name” one has to be a committed follower of Christ. Furthermore not all Christians are given the gift/s to perform powerful deeds.

Jesus Christ’s “name” signifies him in his attainment of forgiveness of sins

See also:

- *God’s people are baptized in the “name” of Jesus Christ,* p. 1438

The following verses all associate Jesus Christ’s “name” with his attainment of the forgiveness and removal of sins. Correspondingly, they show that people can be forgiven through or on account of the authority of his “name”. (A similar comment can be made for the following subsection, regarding Jesus Christ’s “name” signifying his attainment of salvation and eternal life.)

Acts 10:43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him *receives forgiveness of sins through his name.* 📖

Acts 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and *wash away your sins, calling on his name.* 📖

1Jn 2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because *your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake.* 📖

John appears to be speaking of sins being forgiven because of Jesus’ name – “through His name and on account of confessing His name” (AMP).



Luke 24:46-47 ... and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that *repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations*, beginning from Jerusalem. 📖

The message of "repentance and forgiveness of sins" was to be preached "in his name", with his authority (cf. NLT), as the one who by his work has realized this forgiveness.

1Cor 6:11 And such were some of you. But *you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ* and by the Spirit of our God. 📖

This may well be meaning that all three things listed – being "washed...sanctified...justified" – are done in Jesus Christ's name and by the Holy Spirit (cf. CEV, NIRV).

Jesus Christ's "name" signifies him in his attainment of salvation and eternal life

As is the case with most of the verses in the previous subsection and indeed all of the subsections in this topic, in most of the following verses references to Jesus Christ's "name" can be replaced by references simply to Jesus Christ and the verses will maintain the same sense. As such the verses illustrate that Jesus Christ's name signifies Jesus Christ in his attainment of salvation and eternal life.

Acts 4:12 And *there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* 📖

Acts 2:21 And it shall come to pass that *everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* 📖

Matt 12:21 ... and *in his name the Gentiles will hope.* 📖

It was prophesied that people would put their hope for salvation in Jesus Christ's name (cf. Isa 42:4).

1Jn 3:23 And this is his commandment, that we *believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ* and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 📖

This alludes to – or at least can be applied to – believing on Jesus Christ's name for salvation (cf. John 3:18).

John 20:31 ... but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *by believing you may have life in his name.* 📖

1Jn 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. 📖

✦ **By believing in Jesus Christ's "name", people become children of God:**

John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ... 📖

The right to become a child of God is an additional aspect of salvation that one is given through Jesus Christ's name.

Jesus Christ's "name" signifies him in his gospel and cause – with Christians being devoted to it

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip as *he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*, they were baptized, both men and women. 📖

Philip preached the gospel "about Jesus Christ" (GNT), and the kingdom of God.

Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for *he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.* ¹⁶*For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.*" 📖

Paul was to take the message about Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, which would result in him suffering greatly for Jesus Christ and his cause – the cause of spreading the gospel about him in order to lead people to believe in him.

Luke 21:12 But before all this *they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake.* 📖

For the sake of Jesus Christ's name – and so for Jesus Christ himself – Christians would suffer greatly, in being faithful to him and spreading his gospel.

John 15:20-21 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹*But all these things they will do to you on account of my name*, because they do not know him who sent me. 📖

To suffer on account of the "name" of Jesus Christ means to suffer for him and his cause, doing so as one who is identified with and representative of him.

Acts 5:41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that *they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.* 📖



Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For *I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*”

Rev 2:3 I know *you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake*, and you have not grown weary.

Acts 4:18 So they called them and charged them not *to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*

To speak “in the name of Jesus” (cf. **Acts 9:27-28 ↓**) means not only to speak about him, but to do so as his representative, furthering his cause. It may well also imply reliance on him and his power.

Acts 9:27-28 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus *he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.* ²⁸So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, *preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.*

✦ Christians are called by Christ’s name:

1Pet 4:14, 16 If you are *insulted for the name of Christ*, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory^o and of God rests upon you. ... ¹⁶Yet if anyone *suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*

^o Some manuscripts insert *and of power*

The correlation between “the name of Christ” (v. 14) and “Christian” (v. 16) underlines the fact that Christians are called by Christ’s name.

Note: God has given Jesus Christ a name that is superior to all others

See also:

- ... *and Jesus’ usage of “I am” quite possibly alludes to God’s name*, p. 121

In addition to “Jesus Christ” or “Christ”, some of the following references are – or appear to be – speaking of an additional name (or names) bestowed on Jesus Christ, without actually stating the name. As referred to in the comments below, possibilities include “LORD”, “Lord” (as in him being the Lord or ruler of all things) and the “Son” of God. Two further names of Jesus Christ are stated below in Revelation 19:13, 16. All these names, given him by God, imply Jesus Christ’s superiority to all others.

John 17:11-12a And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in *your name, which you have given me*, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them in *your name, which you have given me.*

Some Greek manuscripts speak of the believers referred to here, rather than “the name”, as that which is given to Jesus – as is the case earlier in vv. 6, 9 and later in v. 24. This rendering is followed by some modern translations (cf. AMP, NKJV, NLT) and noted in text notes by others (cf. GNT, NRSV). As it is here in the ESV (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NRSV) it speaks of the Father giving his own name to Jesus, which besides emphasizing the superiority of Jesus Christ’s name, would also raise the possibility that “LORD” is in view (cf. comment on **Phil 2:9-11 ↓**).

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore *God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name*, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.

Commentators differ as to whether “name” (v. 9b) is referring to Jesus Christ’s actual name. If it is, it would probably not be referring to “Jesus”, appearing to have been given after his exaltation (v. 9a). “Lord” would be a more likely candidate, particularly with the mention of all people or creatures acknowledging that “Jesus Christ is Lord” (cf. ZBC). Additionally, “LORD” may ultimately be in view, in light of the description “the name that is above every name” (v. 9) and the fact that “LORD” is translated in Greek as “Lord”.

Heb 1:4-5 ... having become as much superior to angels as *the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.* ⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?

The “name” may have in view Jesus Christ being called God’s “Son” (v. 5). But it could well be the same name referred to in the above passages.

Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for *there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

The “name” referred to here and in James 2:7 below is probably simply “Jesus Christ” (or “Jesus” or “Christ”). The verses have been included as they point to the superiority of Jesus Christ’s name to all others.

James 2:7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme *the honorable name by which you were called?*

Jesus Christ’s name is being referred to here (cf. AMP, NCV, NIRV), although some think that more precisely the derivative



“Christian” is in view as “the fair name by which you have been called” (NASB; cf. NKJV, NLT). Either way, this points to Jesus Christ’s name as being “the excellent name” (NRSV).

✦ **Further mention of superlative names being given to Jesus Christ:**

Rev 19:12-13, 16 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and *he has a name written that no one knows but himself*. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in^p blood, and *the name by which he is called is The Word of God*.

📖 ... ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh *he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords*. 📖

^p Some manuscripts *sprinkled with*

Possibly v. 12b is implying that nobody understood the meaning of the name (cf. CEV, NLT), rather than simply not knowing it. Either way, it appears to speak of the incomprehensibility of Jesus Christ’s person and points to the supremacy of both him and the name itself. Likewise the other peerless names given him (vv. 13, 16) also point to his supremacy.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Jesus Christ and God

See also:

- *Note: Jesus Christ is the Word of God*, p. 300

The claim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is one of the most central teachings in the NT. In addition to this, the NT says much that associates Jesus Christ with God. This teaching forms the basis of a large portion of what distinguishes Christianity from other religions.

a) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General

See also:

- *b) Jesus Is the Promised Messiah*, p. 489
- *Note: The Christ is understood to be the Son of God*, p. 506

Subsections

- Jesus Christ is the Son of God . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ is God's only Son
- God is Jesus Christ's Father
- Jesus Christ is the image of God
- Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God – equality in nature
- Note: The Father loves his Son

Jesus Christ is the Son of God . . .

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of *Jesus Christ, the Son of God*.^a 

^a Some manuscripts omit *the Son of God*

2Cor 1:19 For *the Son of God, Jesus Christ*, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. 

Heb 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, *Jesus, the Son of God*, let us hold fast our confession. 

1Jn 1:3 ... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is *with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*. 

2Jn 1:3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from *Jesus Christ the Father's Son*, in truth and love. 

Heb 1:6 And again, when *he brings the firstborn into the world*, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." 

The description of Jesus Christ as God's "firstborn" points not only to his sonship but also to his preeminence as "the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15), with his exalted status and exclusive privileges.

. . . Jesus Christ is God's only Son

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of *the only Son from the Father*, full of grace and truth. 

John 3:16, 18 For God so loved the world,^b that *he gave his only Son*, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.  ... ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of *the only Son of God*. 

^b Or *For this is how God loved the world*

Heb 1:5 For *to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"?* Or again, "*I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son*"? 

The rhetorical questions point to Jesus Christ being uniquely the Son of God. Note that here the writer is quoting OT verses that referred to Davidic kings. He asserts that they are ultimately referring to Jesus Christ, in line with the many messianic prophecies that are consummately fulfilled in him (cf. *c) Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus*, p. 494). A further OT reference to God calling a Davidic king his son occurs in Psalms 89:27 – "I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth." These OT verses are key to the Messiah being understood to be the Son of God (cf. *Note: The Christ is understood to be the Son of God*, p. 506). Jesus Christ's claim to be the Son of God was effectively a claim to be the Messiah.

1Jn 4:9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that *God sent his only Son into the world*, so that we might live through him. 



1Jn 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but *he who was born of God* protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. 

The phrase “he who was born of God” quite probably refers to Jesus Christ (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NLT, NRSV), although some understand John to still have in view anyone born of God (cf. NKJV). In referring to “he” who was born of God suggests that “he” is the only one born of God in this sense – and so God’s only Son. Alternatively it may be speaking of him being the first to be born of God.

✦ A further possible OT reference to God having a son:

Prov 30:4 *Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name? Surely you know!* 

Whether or not the reference to his son is implying that God has a son depends upon whether the rhetorical questions are primarily implying that God is the one that does all these things, or simply that no one else does; there is only a subtle difference between the two. If the former alternative is correct then it would appear that this is implying that God has a son, however the latter is more likely the case (cf. CEV, NLT).

God is Jesus Christ’s Father

See also:

- [Heb 1:5](#) 
- [God is both Jesus Christ’s God and his Father](#), p. 132

Regarding the term “God the Father”, the NT often uses it or the similar terms “God our Father” and our/the “God and Father” – over 40 times in total. Almost always Jesus Christ is mentioned in the same verse, even the same clause. The NT does not refer to “God the Son” (although on occasions Jesus Christ is referred to as “God” – cf. [Jesus Christ is called “God”](#) . . . , p. 120). As such the NT would seem to use “God the Father” in a different sense to what we do when we use the term in reference to “God the Son” (and “God the Spirit”). As per the theme of this subsection, the NT would appear to use “Father” as a title of God, primarily to show or reflect God’s relationship to Jesus Christ, his Son.

Matt 16:17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but *my Father who is in heaven*.” 

Mark 14:36 And he said, “*Abba, Father*, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” 

The term “Abba” was one of intimacy, used of one’s own father.

Rom 15:6 ... that together you may with one voice glorify *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. 

Col 1:3 We always thank *God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, when we pray for you, ... 

Rev 1:5-6 ... and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to *his God and Father*, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 

Rev 3:5, 21 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name *before my Father* and before his angels.  ... ²¹The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with *my Father on his throne*. 

Jesus Christ is the image of God

See also:

- [To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father](#), p. 120
- [God is revealed and known through Jesus Christ](#), p. 243

The assertion that Jesus Christ is the image of God – having the nature and fullness of God (as per the following subsection) – reflects and supports the assertion that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

In speaking of Jesus Christ being the image of God, the following verses are probably speaking of Jesus Christ in his exalted state, with his being reflecting God’s. If alternatively Jesus Christ’s incarnation is in view, the verses would be referring to Jesus Christ’s words and actions reflecting the character of God.

2Cor 4:4-6 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of *Christ, who is the image of God*. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants^c for Jesus’ sake. ⁶For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in



our hearts to give the light of *the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*.

^c Greek *bondservants*

Verse 6 points to Jesus Christ being the image of God (v. 4), speaking of the glory of God being seen in Christ (cf. [Heb 1:3 ↓](#)) – the “glory of God [as it is manifest in the Person and is revealed] in the face of Jesus Christ” (AMP).

Col 1:15 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

Heb 1:3 *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ...*

Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God – equality in nature

See also:

- [Heb 1:3a ↑](#)
- [b\) Jesus Christ's Pre-Eminence](#), p. 95
- [b\) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God \(II\): Testimony](#), p. 115
- [c\) Jesus Christ Is Identified with God](#), p. 119
- [d\) Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is](#), p. 128

Jesus Christ's divinity (or “God nature”) is one of the distinctive, central teachings of Christianity. It is largely based on the teachings in this chapter section and the sections cross-referenced immediately above. In addition, it is also shown by: the divine attributes of his being and character that he has in common with God (which are discussed in the first half of this chapter); his supreme power and rule over the world (cf. [d\) Jesus Christ as Lord of All](#), p. 684); and, likewise, his deeds during his mission (cf. [a\) Jesus Christ's Authority from God](#), p. 538; [b\) Jesus Christ's Power from God](#), p. 542; and [a\) Jesus Christ's Miracles](#), p. 559).

Phil 2:5-7 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in *Christ Jesus*,^d *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*,⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant,^e being born in the likeness of men.

^d Or *which was also in Christ Jesus*

^e Greek *bondservant*

Here “equality with God” (v. 6b) appears to refer primarily at least to being “in the form of God” (v. 6a). As such the verse would appear to be referring to Jesus Christ having equality in nature with God.

Col 1:19 *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ...*

The phrase “all the fullness of God” refers to: the fullness of God's nature (cf. GNT, Nlrv) – “the sum total of the divine perfection, powers, and attributes” (AMP); and/or “all of himself” (NCV™; cf. CEV, NLT), meaning that God himself in all his fullness dwells in Jesus Christ. Similar comment can be made regarding “the whole fullness of deity” in 2:9 below.

Col 2:9 *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ...*

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*.

One implication of the last clause is that Jesus Christ has the nature of God. It may even be the main thrust of it (cf. REB; NET text note).

John 5:16-18 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷But *Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”* ¹⁸This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but *he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

Verse 18 appears to be indicating that in calling God his Father (v. 17) – and as reflected in his claim to like God be persistently working (v. 17) – Jesus in effect asserts that he is equal to God in nature (cf. NEL) and arguably even in status.

↳ **A reference quite possibly to equality in status:**

John 5:23 *... that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

The sense may be “as much as they honor” God (CEV, NCV).

Note: The Father loves his Son

Matt 12:17-18 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁸“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, *my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased*. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.”

Matt 17:5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and *a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son,^f with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”*

^f Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*



John 3:35 *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.* 

This and some of the following verses show some ways that God the Father has expressed his love for his Son, Jesus Christ. The Father has: placed everything in his hands; shown him all he does (cf. [John 5:20 ↓](#)); and given him great glory (cf. [John 17:24 ↓](#)).

John 5:20 *For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.* 

John 10:17 *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.* 

The Father loves Jesus because of his obedience (cf. [John 15:10 ↓](#)) – ultimately expressed in Jesus laying down his life.

John 15:9-10 *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.* 

John 17:24, 26 *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*  ... ²⁶I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that *the love with which you have loved me* may be in them, and I in them. 

Col 1:13 *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ...* 

1Pet 2:4 *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ...* 

Being chosen by God and in particular being precious to God, reflect the fact that Jesus Christ is loved by God.

✦ Jesus Christ loves his Father:

John 14:31a *... but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.* 

Jesus expressed his love for the Father by his obedience – and the Father loved Jesus because of his obedience (cf. [John 10:17 ↑](#); [John 15:10 ↑](#)).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (II): Testimony

See also:

- [d\) Further Testimony to Jesus Being the Messiah](#), p. 503
- [Testimonies about Jesus Christ . . .](#) [give reason to believe in him], p. 1047

Subsections

- [God testifies to Jesus Christ being his Son](#)
- [The Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ being the Son of God](#)
- [Jesus Christ himself testified to being the Son of God – which is why he was crucified](#)
- [Others also testified to Jesus Christ being the Son of God](#)
- [Jesus Christ's deeds are evidence that he is the Son of God](#)
- [Other events of Jesus Christ's incarnation are evidence that he is the Son of God](#)

God testifies to Jesus Christ being his Son

See also:

- [. . . God himself testified to Jesus and his claims](#), p. 1048

Matt 3:16-17 *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,^g and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,^h with whom I am well pleased."* 

^g Some manuscripts omit *to him*

^h Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

Matt 16:16-17 *Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For *flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*"* 

Matt 17:5 *He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son,ⁱ with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."* 

ⁱ Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

This occurred during Jesus' transfiguration (cf. vv. 1-9; [2Pet 1:17 ↓](#)), reflecting God's testimony at Jesus' baptism (cf. [Matt 3:16-17 ↑](#)).



2Pet 1:17 For when he received honor and glory from *God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son,^j with whom I am well pleased," ...* 

^j Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

Heb 1:5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? 

As noted earlier, the writer asserts that these OT verses that referred to Davidic kings are ultimately referring to Jesus Christ, in line with the many messianic prophecies that are consummately fulfilled in him. The rhetorical questions indicate that God has said these things of Christ, and only of him. As such they show that God testifies to Jesus Christ being his Son.

1Jn 5:9-11 If we receive the testimony of men, *the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.* ¹⁰*Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.* ¹¹*And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* 

This speaks of God giving testimony about his Son, Jesus Christ, as opposed to testimony that Jesus Christ is his Son. However the terms in which it is expressed imply or point to the latter. For further comment see . . . *God himself testified to Jesus and his claims*, p. 1048.

The Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ being the Son of God

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit witnesses about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief*, p. 1771

1Jn 5:5-8 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that *Jesus is the Son of God?* ⁶*This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.* ⁷*For there are three that testify:* ⁸*the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.* 

The "water" and "blood" are usually taken as references to Jesus' baptism and death (NLT, CEV text note, NCV text note). John uses them here in asserting that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was the truly human person who was baptized and who died. (John was refuting a heresy that the divine Christ came

upon the man Jesus at his baptism, but left him before his death.) In accordance with these two events (v. 8), the Holy Spirit testifies that this Jesus was in fact the Son of God. This testimony of the Holy Spirit is generally understood to be primarily referring to the ongoing inner witness of the Holy Spirit to believers, although some think it could also refer to the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus at his baptism.

Rom 1:4 ... and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, *Jesus Christ our Lord, ...* 

Jesus Christ's resurrection emphatically showed him to be the Son of God, largely because it vindicated Jesus and his claims. It firstly vindicated Jesus' claim that he would rise from the dead, and accordingly gave credence to his others claims – notably his claim to be the Son of God. This verse speaks of the Holy Spirit playing a key role in this declaration of Jesus Christ's sonship in his resurrection. More specifically, possibly it is primarily speaking of the Holy Spirit's role in the revelation of the implications of Jesus Christ's resurrection; alternatively it may be speaking of the Holy Spirit actually bringing about Christ's resurrection (cf. NLT).

1Tim 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He^k was manifested in the flesh, *vindicated^l by the Spirit,^m seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.* 

^k Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^l Or *justified*

^m Or *vindicated in spirit*

Here "Spirit" could alternatively be translated "spirit" (ESV text note, NCV, NRSV) referring to Jesus' own human spirit. If "Spirit" is to be preferred, the phrase "vindicated by the Spirit" would be referring to the Holy Spirit empowering Jesus to perform miracles and in particular to the Holy Spirit having a role in his resurrection. By such things the Holy Spirit vindicated Jesus and his claims, including his claim to be the Son of God.

‡ **The Holy Spirit coming on Jesus at his baptism supported the declaration that Jesus was God's Son:**

Matt 3:16-17 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and *behold, the heavens were opened to him,ⁿ and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;* ¹⁷*and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,^o with whom I am well pleased."* 

ⁿ Some manuscripts omit *to him*

^o Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

God's verbal testimony to Jesus Christ being his Son (v. 17) is supported by God anointing Jesus Christ with his Spirit, in a manner that was apparently visible (v. 16).



Jesus Christ himself testified to being the Son of God – which is why he was crucified

Matt 26:63-68 But Jesus remained silent. And *the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”* ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” ⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.” ⁶⁷Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, ⁶⁸saying, “Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?”

Luke 22:70 So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.”

Jesus’ response appears to have the sense: “You rightly say that I am.” (NKJV; cf. AMP, NASB, NIV, NLT).

John 5:17-18 But *Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”* ¹⁸*This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

By calling God his own Father, Jesus asserted that he was the Son of God.

John 10:36 ... do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because *I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’*

Comment on this verse is given later in this chapter (cf. *Jesus Christ’s deeds are evidence that he is the Son of God*, p. 118; and *Further evidence of Jesus Christ’s identification with God*, p. 125).

Rev 2:18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘*The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.*’

Jesus Christ is the speaker here.

Matt 27:37-43 And *over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”* ³⁸Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! *If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*” ⁴¹So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴²“He saved others; he cannot save himself. *He is the*

King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.” ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. *For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”*

John 19:7 The Jews^p answered him, “*We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.*”

^p Greek *Ioudaioi* probably refers here to Jewish religious leaders, and others under their influence, in that time; also verses 12, 14, 31, 38

Matt 27:27-29 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters,^q and they gathered the whole battalion^r before him. ²⁸And *they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him,* ²⁹*and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”*

^q Greek *the praetorium*

^r Greek *cohort*; a tenth of a Roman legion, usually about 600 men

This shows that the soldiers understood that Jesus was to be crucified for claiming to be the Christ, the King of the Jews.

Others also testified to Jesus Christ being the Son of God

See also:

▪ [Matt 14:33](#) ↓; [John 20:31](#) ↓; [John 1:49](#) ↓

Luke 1:31-32, 35 [Gabriel:] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name *Jesus*. ³²*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.* And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ... ³⁵And *the angel* answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore *the child to be born^s will be called holy—the Son of God.*”

^s Some manuscripts add *of you*

The speaker is the angel Gabriel, effectively testifying to Jesus being the Son of God.

Mark 8:29 And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” *Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.”*

John 1:32-34 And *John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.* ³³*I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend*



and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’
³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

John 11:27 She [Martha] said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

Acts 9:20 And immediately he [Saul] proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

Matt 27:54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son^t of God!”

^t Or a son

Mark 3:11 And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”

Mark 5:7 And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.”

These words were from an evil spirit, speaking through the man he possessed.

Jesus Christ’s deeds are evidence that he is the Son of God

See also:

- *Jesus’ deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ*, p. 503
- *Jesus’ deeds validated his claims about himself and God*, p. 545
- *Jesus’ deeds led many people to believe in him*, p. 546
- *Jesus Christ’s deeds* [give reason to believe in him], p. 1045

Matt 14:25, 28-29, 32-33 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ... ²⁸And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ... ³²And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

The disciples’ conclusion that Jesus was the Son of God (v. 33) appears to be in response to: Jesus walking on the water (v. 25); Jesus enabling Peter to walk on the water (v. 29); and the quieting of the strong, threatening wind (v. 32).

John 10:36-38 ... do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? ³⁷If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

In vv. 37-38 Jesus implies that the fact that he does what God his Father does – showing that God is in him and he in God – indicates that he is God’s Son (v. 36b).

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The phrase “these are written” (v. 31) refers to the miraculous signs performed by Jesus that John did record as testimony to Jesus being the Son of God, his miraculous deeds giving credence to his miraculous claim.

John 1:47-49 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” ⁴⁸Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” ⁴⁹Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Along with his actions, Jesus’ words pointed to him being the Son of God. Here Jesus’ words reveal his supernatural knowledge, evidencing that he was the Son of God.

Other events of Jesus Christ’s incarnation are evidence that he is the Son of God

Luke 1:31, 34-35 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ... ³⁴And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^v will be called holy—the Son of God.”

^u Greek since I do not know a man

^v Some manuscripts add of you

The fact that in his advent Jesus was conceived through God’s Holy Spirit and power (v. 35a) is evidence that he is God’s Son (v. 35b). For further comment see *Jesus was born, of Mary – after being conceived through the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 517.



Matt 17:1-3, 5-6 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²And *he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.* ³And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ¶ ... ⁵He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son,^w with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ¶

^w Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

Just as the Holy Spirit coming on Jesus at his baptism supported the declaration that Jesus was God’s Son (cf. Matt 3:16-17), God’s verbal testimony to Jesus Christ being his Son (v. 5) is supported by Jesus’ transfiguration (v. 2) and the appearance of Moses and Elijah, talking with him (v. 3). Moses and Elijah’s presence point to the significance of what Jesus would accomplish, bringing God’s people ultimate redemption and turn them to God. They were in a number of ways forerunners of Jesus.

Matt 27:50-54 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵²The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son^x of God!” ¶

^x Or *a son*

Rom 1:1-4 Paul, a servant^y of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning his Son, who was descended from David^z according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ... ¶

^y Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

^z Or *who came from the offspring of David*

As spoken of earlier, Jesus Christ’s resurrection is a powerful testimony to him being the Son of God.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Jesus Christ Is Identified with God

See also:

- *d) Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is*, p. 128
- *II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit*, p. 152
- ... *One’s response to Jesus Christ is one’s response to God, who sent him*, p. 1042

Subsections

- Jesus Christ and the Father are one – each is in the other
- To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father
- Jesus Christ is called “God” . . .
- . . . and Jesus’ usage of “I am” quite possibly alludes to God’s name
- Titles of God are applied to Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Other OT references to God are applied to Jesus Christ
- Some actions are attributed to both God and Jesus Christ
- Some things are said to be both God’s and Jesus Christ’s
- Further evidence of Jesus Christ’s identification with God
- Note: There is one God, the Father – and one Lord, Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ and the Father are one – each is in the other

John 10:30, 36-38 *I and the Father are one.*” ¶ ... ³⁶do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? ³⁷If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸but *if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.* ¶

Both here and in 14:10-11 below Jesus claims that what he does shows that he and the Father are one, for in doing his miracles he does what the Father does.

John 17:11, 21-23 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as *we are one.* ¶ ... ²¹that *they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you*, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as *we are one*, ²³*I in them and you*



in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 

That believers can be one as the Father and Jesus Christ are one (vv. 11b, 21-22) and that Jesus can be in them seemingly in a similar sense to the Father being in him (v. 23; cf. [John 10:38b ↑](#); [John 14:10, 20 ↓](#)), suggests that this being “one” points to such things as a spiritual union and a unity of purpose.

John 14:10-11, 20 Do you not believe that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me*? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.  ... ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 

The words Jesus spoke (v. 10b) as well as his miracles (v. 11b) were ultimately due to the Father dwelling in Jesus Christ doing his work.

✦ Prophecy that the Messiah would be close to God:

Zec 13:7a “Awake, O sword, against *my shepherd*, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the LORD of hosts. 

The clause “the man who stands next to me” (“my partner” – NLT, cf. NASB, NRSV) appears to point to the closeness or even the oneness of Jesus Christ – God’s shepherd – with God. As the Hebrew is used elsewhere to indicate a close relative, some also see it as implying that Jesus Christ shares God’s nature. Jeremiah 30:21 similarly speaks of the Messiah being close to God, quoting God as saying: “Their prince shall be one of themselves; their ruler shall come out from their midst; I will make him draw near, and he shall approach me, for who would dare of himself to approach me? declares the LORD.”

To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father

See also:

- [Jesus Christ is the image of God](#), p. 113
- [Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God – equality in nature](#), p. 114
- [Jesus came to enable us to know God](#) [objectives of Jesus’ mission], p. 511

John 8:19 They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. *If you knew me, you would know my Father also.*” 

John 12:45 And *whoever sees me sees him who sent me.* 

This and 14:7-9 below are unlikely meaning that those who saw Jesus saw the Father’s physical appearance. The verses are probably speaking of Jesus: representing the Father, carrying out the will of the Father who sent him (cf. 12:45); and reflecting or embodying what the Father was like (cf. [John 14:7-9 ↓](#)).

John 14:7-9 *If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.*^a From now on you do know him and have seen him.”⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’* 

^a Or *If you know me, you will know my Father also, or If you have known me, you will know my Father also*

Jesus Christ is called “God” . . .

See also:

- [Note: There is one God, the Father – and one Lord, Jesus Christ](#), p. 126

Isa 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon^b his shoulder, and *his name shall be called*^c *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* 

^b Or *is upon*

^c Or *is called*

Matt 1:21-23 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and *they shall call his name Immanuel*” (*which means, God with us*). 

John 1:1, 18 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God.*  ...¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; *the only God,*^d *who is at the Father’s side,*^e he has made him known. 

^d Or *the only One, who is God*; some manuscripts *the only Son*

^e Greek *in the bosom of the Father*

Jesus Christ is understood to be “the Word” – with the man Jesus being the manifestation of “the Word” (cf. v. 14). Note that the phrases in view here (i.e. in italics) may have a qualitative sense (cf. REB; NET text note).



John 20:28 *Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"* 

Rom 9:5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the *Christ who is God over all*, blessed forever. Amen. 

Note that this verse can be translated differently with "God" not being used of Jesus Christ (cf. CEV, GNT; text notes in NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

1Tim 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: *He^f was manifested in the flesh*, vindicated^g by the Spirit,^h seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. 

^f Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^g Or *justified*

^h Or *vindicated in spirit*

Here it is the rendering in the first text note that identifies Jesus as "God".

Titus 2:13 ... waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ... 

Heb 1:8 But of the Son he says, "*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.*" 

The quotation is from Psalms 45:6, where "God" appears to be applied in some sense to a Davidic king. As indicated here in Hebrews 1:8, this application is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

2Pet 1:1 Simeonⁱ Peter, a servant^j and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ... 

ⁱ Some manuscripts *Simon*

^j Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

1Jn 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. *He is the true God* and eternal life. 

"He is the true God" could refer to Jesus Christ, as he is mentioned immediately beforehand and typically is more often and directly associated with "eternal life" – as per earlier in the chapter (vv. 11-13) and in the prologue (1:1-3). But it could also refer to God, as he is the subject of the latter part of the previous statement and "true" is used of him twice earlier in the verse.

... and Jesus' usage of "I am" quite possibly alludes to God's name

See also:

▪ [Luke 2:11](#) 

▪ *Note: God has given Jesus Christ a name that is superior to all others*, p. 110

In the following selections from John chapters 8, 13 and 18, Jesus uses the phrase "I am" in a manner that may well be a reference to the name God gave for himself to Moses – "I AM WHO I AM" and its shortened form "I AM" – in Exodus 3:14. This is supported by the GNT and NLT translations and text notes in the CEV and NASB (as noted in a couple of the comments below).

John 8:24, 28 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you *believe that I am* he you will die in your sins.  ...
²⁸So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will *know that I am* he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. 

The Greek translated as "I am he" (vv. 24, 28) may simply be a reference to Jesus being the promised Messiah, and is used in such an ordinary sense in 9:9 by a man Jesus healed. However, the Greek phrase simply means "I am". Consequently, some other translations support an allusion to Exodus 3:14 – "I Am Who I Am" (GNT) and "I AM" (NLT); cf. text notes in CEV, NASB.

John 8:57-59 So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"^k ⁵⁸*Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."*
⁵⁹So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. 

^k Some manuscripts *has Abraham seen you?*

This is probably the most pointed of all the possible references to God's name, with most modern translations using "I am" for the phrase in question. This is affirmed by the Jews' response, stoning being the penalty for blasphemy. However, even if this is the case, given that Jesus is speaking about existing before Abraham and with God's use of "I AM" in Exodus apparently referring in part at least to his eternal existence, arguably Jesus may be alluding to sharing God's nature – in particular God's eternity, pointing to his (Jesus') preexistence (cf. NLT footnote) – rather than meaning he is one and the same being as God. The Jews would have also considered such a claim to be blasphemy. Note that if the Jews did think that Jesus was claiming to be God, presumably they did not continue to do so. For there is no mention of such a claim in the accounts of Jesus' trial – in contrast to Jesus' claims to be the messianic King of Israel, the Son of



God (cf. *Jesus Christ himself testified to being the Son of God – which is why he was crucified*, p. 117).

John 13:19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may *believe that I am* he.

John 18:4-8 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?”
⁵They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” *Jesus said to them, “I am he.”*¹ Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.
⁶When Jesus^m said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.⁷ So he asked them again, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”⁸ *Jesus answered, “I told you that I am* he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.”

¹ Greek *I am*; also verses 6, 8

^m Greek *he*

Again the Greek reads “I am” in vv. 5, 6, 8 (cf. text notes in CEV, NLT). Note that Ezekiel falls on his face in response to manifestations of God (cf. Ezek 1:28; 44:4) and in seeing Jesus Christ in a vision, John “fell at his feet as though dead” (Rev 1:17). Such responses to divine revelation and the lack of an alternative explanation, suggest that the reason why those who came to arrest Jesus drew back and fell to the ground was that they had some sense of a divine revelation in Jesus’ use of “I am”.

✦ Jesus’ use of “I am” in descriptions of himself:

John 6:35 *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

In John, Jesus makes 7 metaphorical statements about himself that begin with “I am”. “I am the bread of life” (6:35, 48; cf. v. 51); “I am the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5); “I am the door” (10:7, 9); “I am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14); “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25); “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6); and “I am the true vine” (15:1). Some evangelical scholars understand Jesus’ use of “I am” in these statements to also be alluding to God’s name.

Titles of God are applied to Jesus Christ . . .

Acts 3:14 But you denied *the Holy and Righteous One*, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ...

The title “the Holy One” is applied to God numerous times, particularly in Isaiah. God is referred to as the “Righteous One” in Proverbs 21:12 and Isaiah 24:16.

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is *Christ the Lord*.

The Greek word used for “Lord” in the NT, “kurios”, is the same Greek word used for God’s name – “LORD” (or “Yahweh”) – in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the OT). However, note that “kurios” is also used in the Septuagint to translate “Adon” (and derivative terms) which means “lord”, “ruler” or “master”.

1Cor 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified *the Lord of glory*.

The title “the Lord of glory” may allude to the titles or descriptions of God as “the King of glory” (Ps 24:7-10) and “the God of glory” (Ps 29:3).

Rev 1:7b-18 I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and *the living one*. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

The designation “the living One” – here referring to Jesus Christ – possibly alludes to the references to God as “the living God”.

Rev 17:14 They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for *he is Lord of lords and King of kings*, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

Similarly 19:16 ascribes to Jesus Christ the title: “King of kings and Lord of lords”. These titles echo the following titles given to God: “God of gods and Lord of lords” (Deut 10:17); “Lord of lords” (Psalm 136:3); “God of gods and Lord of kings” (Dan 2:47); and “the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1Tim 6:15).

Rev 22:13 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.*

This alludes to God’s descriptions of himself as: “the first and ... the last” (Isa 4:6; cf. 48:12); “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 1:8); and “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” (Rev 21:6). Note that Jesus Christ also refers to himself as “the first and the last” in Revelation 1:17.

Jer 23:5-6 Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And *this is the name by which he will be called: “The LORD is our righteousness.”*

The reference is obviously to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The inclusion of the divine name, “The LORD”, in this ascription is striking. It is perhaps speaking of God’s righteousness being manifested amongst his people through the Messiah. Probably it was intended as a contrast with the then ungodly king Zedekiah, whose name meant “The LORD Is My Righteousness”.



... Other OT references to God are applied to Jesus Christ

Matt 3:3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: *‘Prepareⁿ the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’*” 

ⁿ Or *crying: Prepare in the wilderness*

John the Baptist was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, referred to as “the Lord” in this quotation from Isaiah 40:3 which spoke of preparing the way for “the LORD” – i.e. God.

Matt 21:15-16 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, ¹⁶and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, *“Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?”*” 

Psalms 8:2 speaks of praise given to God. Here Jesus applies the verse to praise given to himself.

John 12:37-41 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” ³⁹Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.” ⁴¹Isaiah said these things because *he saw his glory and spoke of him.*” 

In v. 40 John quotes Isaiah 6:10. Earlier in the same passage in Isaiah 6, Isaiah speaks of seeing God’s glory (cf. vv. 3-5). Thus a number of commentators understand John in v. 41 to be correlating Isaiah seeing Jesus’ glory with him seeing God’s glory. By this John would appear to be identifying Jesus with God, hence the inclusion of these verses here. However in light of the preceding quotation in v. 38 from Isaiah 53:1, John may instead have in view other parts of Isaiah 52-53. He could thus be speaking of Isaiah foreseeing the messianic servant who would not only be disbelieved and rejected, but subsequently glorified (cf. Isa 52:13-15; 53:10-12). (cf. NBC)

Rom 9:33 ... as it is written, *“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”* 

The quotation is a combination of Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16, in which God speaks of himself as being to his unfaithful people “a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling” (8:14); and for

those who would believe in him, “a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation” (28:16). Here these segments of these verses are applied to Jesus Christ.

Rom 10:9, 12-13 ... because, if you confess with your mouth that *Jesus is Lord* and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.  ... ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For *“everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* 

The reference in v. 9 to Jesus as “Lord” suggests that he is also the one being referred to as “Lord” in vv. 12-13. As such Jesus Christ is correlated with “the Lord” referred to in the quotation from Joel 2:32, which in its original context refers to God.

1Cor 2:16 *“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.* 

This parallels the mind of God (cf. Isa 40:13) with the mind of Christ.

Eph 4:7-8 But *grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.* ⁸Therefore it says, *“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”* 

The quotation is from Psalm 68:18, where it speaks of God.

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹*and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* 

This alludes to Isaiah 45:23b, where God speaks of himself: “To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.”

Heb 1:6, 10-12 And again, *when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”*  ... ¹⁰*And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹²like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed.^o But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”* 

^o Some manuscripts omit *like a garment*

The quotations are from Deut. 32:43 (cf. Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint) and Psalm 102:25-27, which speak of God.

1Pet 2:3 ... if indeed you have *tasted that the Lord is good.* 



"Lord" is here most likely referring to Jesus Christ (cf. v. 4). The verse alludes to Psalm 34:8a – "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!"

Rev 2:23 ... and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that *I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.*

This alludes to a number of OT verses that speak of God in similar terms to the descriptions here of Jesus Christ as "he who searches hearts and minds" and who "will repay each of you according to your deeds". Quite possibly Jeremiah 17:10 is primarily in view, inclusive of both descriptions – "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Some actions are attributed to both God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- *c) Mutual Divine Roles*, p. 159
- *Jesus had the authority to forgive sins*, p. 539
- *Jesus only did works of God, and God worked through him*, p. 554

The verses in this subsection and the following one are examples of actions and things being attributed to both God and Jesus Christ at the same time, i.e. in the same verse or passage. In addition, there are other instances of where something is attributed to God in one or more verses and is also attributed to Jesus Christ elsewhere. A listing of actions that are in fact attributed to all three of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are given in *c) Mutual Divine Roles*, p. 159. (Likewise there are common attributes listed in *b) Mutual Divine Attributes*, p. 156.) There are also other examples in this book in chapters 16-20.

Mark 2:5-7 *And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."* ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! *Who can forgive sins but God alone?*"

Although the teachers of the law were mistaken in thinking that Jesus could not forgive sins, they were correct in asserting that the authority and capacity to forgive sins belongs to God.

Luke 8:38-39 The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹"Return to your home, and *declare how much God has done for you.*" And he went away, *proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.*

John 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him.*"

This speaks of both the Father and Jesus Christ being present with and having fellowship with believers.

1Cor 1:3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle—*not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father*, who raised him from the dead—

Eph 6:23 Peace be to the brothers,^p and *love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

^p Or *brothers and sisters*

1Thes 3:11 *Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ...*

2Thes 2:16-17 *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.*

Rev 22:6, 16 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And *the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.*" ... ¹⁶"*I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.*"

Here "Lord" (v. 6) appears to refer to God, which would mean that both God (v. 6) and Jesus (v. 16) are accredited with sending the angel.

‡ **Both God and Jesus Christ are acknowledged as "our Savior":**

Titus 1:3-4 ... and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of *God our Savior*; ⁴To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and *Christ Jesus our Savior.*



Note that in Revelation 7:10 in the following subsection, salvation is similarly said to belong to both God and Jesus Christ.

Some things are said to be both God's and Jesus Christ's

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit is described as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ*, p. 154

Matt 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^a *the name of the Father and of the Son* and of the Holy Spirit, ...

^a Or *into*

By this use of "name", this verse also correlates the Father's authority and power with Jesus Christ's (and the Holy Spirit's).

John 17:9-10 [Jesus:] I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for *those whom you have given me, for they are yours*. ¹⁰*All mine are yours, and yours are mine*, and I am glorified in them.

Believers belong to both the Father and Jesus Christ (cf. **Rev 20:6** ↓).

Eph 5:5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in *the kingdom of Christ and God*.

Rev 7:10 ... and crying out with a loud voice, "*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!*"

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but *they will be priests of God and of Christ*, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Rev 22:3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but *the throne of God and of the Lamb* will be in it, and his servants^r will worship him.

^r Greek *bondservants*; also verse 6

Rom 15:16, 19 ... to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of *the gospel of God*, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ... ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and

all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of *the gospel of Christ*; ...

Note, however, that while "the gospel of God" is speaking of the gospel as belonging to God, here "the gospel of Christ" quite possibly means "the gospel about Christ" rather than "the gospel belonging to Christ". Thus this is not necessarily an example of something being both God's and Jesus Christ's.

† All that the Father has is Jesus Christ's:

John 16:13-15 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵*All that the Father has is mine*; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The segment "he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (v. 14b, repeated verbatim in v. 15b) appears to mean that the Holy Spirit would make known to the disciples Jesus' teaching (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) and quite possibly also other matters pertaining to his person and work. In view of this segment then, "All that the Father has" (v. 15a) may allude to "all the truth" (v. 13a), possibly referring in particular to matters pertaining to his person and work, which are shared by Christ.

Further evidence of Jesus Christ's identification with God

Mal 3:1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he will *prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts*.

God speaks of the messenger preparing the way before him ("me") – implying that he himself will come – and then proceeds to speak of the "Lord" coming. With the latter more than likely referring to Jesus Christ – "the messenger of the covenant" – the verse correlates the coming of Jesus Christ with God himself coming, thus identifying Jesus Christ with God.

Mark 10:17-18 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "*Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" ¹⁸And *Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone*.

In his reply, commentators generally understand Jesus to be associating himself with God – rather than denying being good.



Luke 7:14-16 Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And *he said*, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” ¹⁵And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus^s gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!”

^s Greek *he*

In the last statement, the people may be speaking of God working through Jesus – a “great prophet” – rather than necessarily identifying Jesus with God.

John 10:28-36 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and *no one will snatch them out of my hand*. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me,^t is greater than all, and *no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand*. ³⁰I and the Father are one.” ³¹The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³²Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” ³³The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that *we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God*.” ³⁴Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? ³⁵If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—³⁶do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

^t Some manuscripts *What my Father has given to me*

In v. 33 the Jews indicate that they understood Jesus’ earlier statement in v. 30 to be a claim to be God. In verses 34–36 Jesus replies that if Scripture refers to men as “gods” in some sense, then it is even more appropriate for “him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world” to be identified with God, or spoken of as “God’s Son” (v. 36b). Note that verses 28–29 also allude to Jesus Christ’s identification with the Father, paralleling the ability of both – to keep hold of their people – with matching terminology.

1Jn 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and *we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ*. He is the true God and eternal life.

That being in God also involves being in Jesus Christ (cf. **John 17:21 ↓**; **1Thes 1:1 ↓**), correlates Jesus Christ with God.

John 17:21 ... that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, *that they also may be in us*, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

In praying that his followers would be “in us” (cf. **1Thes 1:1 ↓**), Jesus is to some extent at least identifying himself with the Father.

1Thes 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To *the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*: Grace to you and peace.

Acts 16:31, 34 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” ... ³⁴Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Rev 21:22-23 And I saw no temple in the city, for *its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb*. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for *the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb*.

Note: There is one God, the Father – and one Lord, Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Jesus Christ is called “God”* . . . , p. 120
- *e) Jesus Christ Is Under God’s Authority*, p. 131
- . . . *He is the one and only God*, p. 248
- *The church’s unity is linked with it having one God, one Lord and one Spirit*, p. 794

Verses that refer to the Father alone as being God, may be using “God” to refer to the position of sovereign over all (cf. **1Tim 6:15 ↓**) – i.e. they may be using “God” to refer to an exclusivity of position rather than exclusivity of divine nature. (This may also be the case with other verses that speak of there being only one “God”.) Such a meaning is: consistent with the words translated as “God”/“god” in the OT originally speaking primarily of strength; consistent with the references to the Father being Jesus Christ’s God (cf. *God is both Jesus Christ’s God and his Father*, p. 132); and not contrary to Jesus Christ being fully divine. However, such an interpretation is not standard Christian theology.

1Cor 8:4-6 Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “*there is no God but one*.” ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶yet *for us there is one God, the Father*, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and *one Lord, Jesus Christ*, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.



Eph 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵*one Lord*, one faith, one baptism, ⁶*one God and Father of all*, who is over all and through all and in all.

Rom 1:7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace *from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*.

The phrase “God our Father” occurs 11 times in the ESV. Other similar phrases are: “God the Father” (cf. **Eph 6:23 ↓**; **1Thes 1:1 ↓**) which occurs 15 times; “God, the Father” (**1Cor 8:4-6 ↑**; **Col 1:3 ↓**; **James 1:27 ↓**); and “God and Father” (cf. **Eph 4:6 ↑**; **1Thes 1:3 ↓**) which occurs 12 times – mostly as in “the God and Father” and “our God and Father”. (See also the introductory comment to *God is Jesus Christ’s Father*, p. 113, regarding how the NT would seem to use the phrase “God the Father” in a different way to what we do.)

1Cor 12:5-6 ... and there are varieties of service, but *the same Lord*; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is *the same God* who empowers them all in everyone.

Eph 6:23 Peace be to the brothers,^u and love with faith, from *God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*.

^u Or *brothers and sisters*

1Tim 6:13-16 I charge you *in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus*, who in his testimony before^v Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until *the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ¹⁵*which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign*, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

^v Or *in the time of*

As is almost always the case in the NT, here “God” refers to the Father, as made clear in v. 13 by the reference to the presence “of God... and of Christ Jesus”. Verse 15 speaks of him as being the “only Sovereign” – the “only almighty God” (NLT).

1Thes 1:1-3, 9-10 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in *God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*: Grace to you and peace. ²We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly^w mentioning you in our prayers, ³remembering before *our God and Father* your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in *our Lord Jesus Christ*. ... ⁹For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and

how you turned *to God from idols to serve the living and true God*, ¹⁰*and to wait for his Son* from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

^w Or *without ceasing*

Jude 1:25 ... *to the only God*, our Savior, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

There are also a good number of other NT passages that clearly refer to both the Father as God and Jesus Christ as Lord. The following verses speak of either the Father as God or Jesus Christ as Lord (as opposed to both). There are also many other NT passages that do likewise.

John 5:44-45 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from *the only God*? ⁴⁵Do not think that I will accuse you to *the Father*. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope.

Here Jesus refers to God both as “the only God” (v. 44) and “the Father” (v. 45).

John 17:1-3 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³And this is eternal life, that they know *you the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Col 1:3 We always thank *God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, when we pray for you, ...

1Tim 2:5 For *there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man^x Christ Jesus*, ...

^x *men* and *man* render the same Greek word that is translated *people* in verses 1 and 4

Similar to John 17:3 above, the reference to Jesus Christ in the latter part of the verse further implies that the phrase “there is one God” is referring to the Father in particular.

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before *God, the Father*, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

John 13:13-14 *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am*. ¹⁴*If I then, your Lord and Teacher*, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.



1Cor 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of *our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours*: ...

✦ The Father was who the Jews called God:

John 8:54 Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. *It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’*”

^y Some manuscripts *your God*

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is

The fact that Christians relate to (or treat) Jesus Christ in ways in which they relate to God, further reflects Jesus Christ’s identification with God and that he is God’s Son. Thus the teaching in this section supplements the teaching in the previous sections.

Subsections

- Jesus Christ is worshiped
- Jesus Christ is honored and glorified
- Jesus Christ is offered praise and blessing
- People pray to Jesus Christ
- People obey, follow and serve Jesus Christ
- People believe and have faith in Jesus Christ
- People put their hope in Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is worshiped

Verses below speak of Jesus being worshiped as the Christ (cf. **Matt 2:1-4, 11** ↓), the Son of God (cf. **Matt 14:33** ↓; **John 9:35-38** ↓) – which is in accordance with God’s will (cf. **Heb 1:6** ↓).

Matt 2:1-4, 11 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men² from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, “*Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose^a and have come to worship him.*” ³When Herod the king heard

this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ... ¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and *they fell down and worshiped him*. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

^z Greek *magi*; also verses 7, 16

^a Or *in the east*; also verse 9

The wise men came to worship Jesus as the messianic king of the Jews – “the Christ” (v. 4).

Matt 14:33 *And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”*

Matt 28:8-9, 16-17 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and *took hold of his feet and worshiped him*. ... ¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him *they worshiped him*, but some doubted.

Luke 24:51-52 While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And *they worshiped him* and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ...

John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”^b ³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” ³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe,” and *he worshiped him*.

^b Some manuscripts *the Son of God*

Acts 13:2 While *they were worshiping the Lord* and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Here “Lord” may refer to Jesus Christ, but could instead be speaking of God.

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹*and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.

Heb 1:6 And again, *when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”*



Note that the reference may be to Jesus Christ's second coming, when God "again brings the firstborn into the world" (NASB, NKJV; cf. AMP).

Rev 5:8, 14 And when he had taken the scroll, *the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb*, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ...¹⁴And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and *the elders fell down and worshiped*.

In v. 14 the worship is directed to both "him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" (v. 13).

Jesus Christ is honored and glorified

See also:

- [Rev 5:9-13](#) ↓

John 5:22-23 The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³*that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him*.

John 17:10 [Jesus:] All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and *I am glorified in them*.

In saying that he was "glorified in them" – or perhaps that his glory was "shown through them" (GNT, NCV) – Jesus was probably referring to such things as their testimony to whom he was and their lives (cf. [2Thes 1:12](#) ↓) that reflected his grace and power.

2Thes 1:12 ... so that *the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you*, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2Tim 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. *To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Note that here and in the verses below, while the writers are glorifying Jesus Christ, in particular they are ascribing glory to him.

Heb 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us^c that which is pleasing in his sight, through *Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

^c Some manuscripts *you*

The phrase "to whom" (v. 21) probably refers to Jesus Christ (cf. CEV, GNT), but God (v. 20) could be in view instead.

2Pet 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of *our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

Rev 1:5b-6 To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, *to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Jesus Christ is offered praise and blessing

Ps 45:17 I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore *nations will praise you forever and ever.*

This psalm is considered to be messianic, with God's words here understood to be ultimately speaking of the Messiah.

Matt 21:9, 15-16 And *the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"* ...¹⁵But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the *children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"* they were indignant,¹⁶and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, *"Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?"*

Rom 9:5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the *Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*

The phrase "blessed forever" may well be speaking of Christ being blessed by people or praised (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Rev 5:9-13 And *they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,* ¹⁰*and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."* ¹¹*Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,* ¹²*saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* ¹³*And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in*



the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" 

Rev 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 

✦ Paul gave thanks to Jesus Christ:

1Tim 1:12 *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ...* 

People pray to Jesus Christ

John 14:14 [Jesus:] *If you ask me^d anything in my name, I will do it.* 

^d Some manuscripts omit *me*

Acts 7:59-60 And as they were stoning Stephen, *he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* ⁶⁰*And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."* And when he had said this, he fell asleep. 

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, *with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.* 

With the reference to belief, "the Lord in whom they had believed" seemingly refers to Jesus Christ. As such, presumably Christ is the one to whom they prayed, being the one to whom Paul and Barnabas committed the elders.

1Cor 16:22b *Our Lord, come!*^e 

^e Greek *Maranatha* (a transliteration of Aramaic)

John repeats this prayer or call in Revelation 22:20 – "Come, Lord Jesus!"

2Cor 12:8-9 *Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.* ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 

2Tim 2:22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with *those who call on the Lord* from a pure heart. 

To "call" on Jesus Christ quite possibly has primarily in view calling out to him for help (cf. GNT) – effectively prayer. It is also indicative of trust in him (cf. NCV). Additionally, it can be construed to speak more generally of worship (cf. CEV).

Gal 6:18 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.* 

This benediction or blessing is in a sense a prayer to Jesus Christ.

People obey, follow and serve Jesus Christ

See also:

▪ *Angels serve Jesus Christ*, p. 171

Matt 28:19-20a Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^f the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* 

^f Or *into*

John 15:10 If you *keep my commandments*, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and *follow me.*" 

John 12:26 *If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.* 

James 1:1a *James, a servant^g of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ ...* 

^g Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

Dan 7:14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, *that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him*; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. 

Ps 72:11 May all kings fall down before him, *all nations serve him!* 

Psalms 72 concerns a king in the line of David. It is generally understood to be messianic.



People believe and have faith in Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Have faith in God and Jesus Christ](#), p. 1084

Acts 16:31 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

1Jn 3:23 And this is his commandment, that we *believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ* and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

John 12:36 *While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.*” When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Here “light” refers to Jesus (cf. v. 46) – partly as an allusion to his teaching.

John 14:1 Let not your hearts be troubled. *Believe in God*;^h *believe also in me.*

^h Or *You believe in God*

Gal 2:20b And the life I now live in the flesh *I live by faith in the Son of God*, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Col 1:4 ... since we heard of *your faith in Christ Jesus* and of the love that you have for all the saints, ...

People put their hope in Jesus Christ

Eph 1:12 ... so that *we who were the first to hope in Christ* might be to the praise of his glory.

Matt 12:21 ... and *in his name the Gentiles will hope.*

Rom 15:12 And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; *in him will the Gentiles hope.*”

1Cor 15:19 *If in Christ we have hope*ⁱ in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

ⁱ Or *we have hoped*

1Thes 1:3 ... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and *steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1Tim 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of *Christ Jesus our hope*, ...

The expression “Christ Jesus our hope” is indicative of Jesus Christ being the one in whom we have put our hope.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Jesus Christ Is Under God’s Authority

See also:

- [c\) Jesus Christ Is Identified with God](#), p. 119
- [d\) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ](#), p. 530

This section looks at the concept of Jesus Christ being subordinate to God in regard to authority – which involves “functional subordination” – as opposed to subordination or inferiority in regard to essence or being.

The concept of Jesus Christ being eternally subordinate to God (rather than only during his incarnation) is a historical doctrine that is still debated by Christian scholars. As such, some would disagree with or wish to qualify propositions put forward in this section.

Subsections

- God is both Jesus Christ’s God and his Father
- Jesus Christ is portrayed as being subordinate to God’s authority . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ’s authority was even granted to him by his Father
- Jesus Christ was God’s to give – as a sacrifice for sin
- Jesus Christ was chosen, anointed and sent by God
- Jesus Christ is God’s servant, largely spoken of in reference to his mission
- Jesus Christ is also spoken of as being God’s servant following his ascension
- God continues to be glorified in and through Jesus Christ and his work
- God the Father’s seniority is reflected by things he has done for Jesus Christ
- Note: God’s will is the prominent will in Scripture – sovereign in all the world, throughout the ages



God is both Jesus Christ's God and his Father

See also:

- a) *Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General*, p. 112

Note that the following verses are not simply referring to the Father being Jesus Christ's God only while Jesus was on earth. Of the NT verses below, just two refer to Jesus on earth – and the first is not until his crucifixion. Also note that the references akin to “the God ... of Jesus Christ” are quite unlikely to be referring to any aspect of Jesus himself. The phrase where this occurs mostly is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” and the like. Here “God” has to be referring to the same person as “the Father”. The only instance of “the Father” not being included in such a phrase occurs in Ephesians 1:17. There the subsequent phrase shows that the Father is in view – “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory”.

Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour *Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*

This cry from Jesus is also recorded in Matthew 27:46.

John 20:17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to *my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*’”

Here Jesus parallels the Father being his God with the Father being our God.

Rom 15:6 ... that together you may with one voice glorify *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2Cor 1:3 Blessed be *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ...

2Cor 11:31 *The God and Father of the Lord Jesus*, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

Eph 1:3, 17 Blessed be *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ... ¹⁷that *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory*, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ...

Heb 1:9 You [the Son] have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore *God, your God*, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.

Heb 10:5-7 Consequently, when Christⁱ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a

body have you prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, *I have come to do your will, O God*, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

ⁱ Greek *he*

The use of the phrase “O God”, particularly in the context, suggests that Jesus is addressing God the Father as his God – “my God” (CEV).

1Pet 1:3a Blessed be *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Rev 1:5b-6 To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and made us a kingdom, priests to *his God and Father*, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Rev 3:2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of *my God.*

Rev 3:12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of *my God*. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of *my God*, and the name of the city of *my God*, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from *my God* out of heaven, and my own new name.

Here Jesus Christ refers to God as “my God” no less than four times.

Ps 89:26-27 He shall cry to me, ‘*You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.*’ ²⁷And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.

Many commentators interpret this as a reference to the Messiah, or at least a promise that would be ultimately fulfilled by the Messiah. As such it speaks of God as the Messiah’s God. Isaiah 49:5 and Micah 5:4 below are both clearly messianic and likewise speak of God as the Messiah’s God.

Isa 49:5 And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and *my God* has become my strength—

The messianic servant is speaking.

Mic 5:4 And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of *the LORD his God*. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.



Jesus Christ is portrayed as being subordinate to God's authority . . .

See also:

- [God sent Jesus Christ into the world](#), p. 508
- [d\) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ](#), p. 530

1Cor 3:23 ... and you are Christ's, and *Christ is God's*. 

Belonging to another strongly implies subordination to the other's authority. Additionally, the assertion that Jesus Christ is under God's authority is further reflected here and in 1 Corinthians 11:3 below by the paralleling of our subordinate status in our relationship to him with his subordinate status in his relationship to God.

1Cor 11:3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife^k is her husband, and *the head of Christ is God*. 

^k Greek *gunē*. This term may refer to a *woman* or a *wife*, depending on the context

1Cor 15:24-28 Then comes the end, *when he* [Jesus Christ] *delivers the kingdom to God the Father* after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For "God^l has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸*When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all*. 

^l Greek *he*

Matt 20:23 He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but *to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father*." 

This is illustrative of Jesus Christ being subject to the Father's authority – or at least not challenging the Father's will.

John 14:28b If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, *for the Father is greater than I*. 

Commentators generally interpret the final clause as being applicable only to Jesus' incarnation. However the preceding clause does speak of Jesus' return to the Father – and as such Jesus makes the remark in association with or in the context of his return to the Father. The timing also suggests that Jesus has in view beyond just his time on earth, with Jesus saying this only hours before his crucifixion. If an eternal sense is intended, exactly what Jesus meant is debatable, but

it would at least include subordination to his Father. Note that in John 10:29 Jesus somewhat similarly says, "My Father... is greater than all".

Acts 3:19-21, 26 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and *that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus*, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.  ... ²⁶*God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness*. 

Jesus Christ's subordination to God is shown or implied here by: God appointing him (v. 20b) and raising him up (v. 26a) i.e. choosing him (cf. CEV, GNT); Jesus Christ being described as God's "servant" (v. 26a); God having sent him into the world (v. 26); and the fact that God will again send him (v. 20b).

. . . Jesus Christ's authority was even granted to him by his Father

See also:

- [1Cor 15:27-28](#) ↑
- [a\) Jesus Christ's Authority from God](#), p. 538
- [b\) Jesus Christ's Power from God](#), p. 542
- [d\) Jesus Christ as Lord of All](#), p. 684

Authority is given to a person by a greater authority.

Matt 11:27a *All things have been handed over to me by my Father ...* 

Jesus is saying that the Father had given him "authority over everything." (NLT; cf. [Matt 28:18](#) ↓)

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*." 

Luke 22:29 ... and I assign to you, *as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ...* 

John 3:35 *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand*. 

John 5:27 *And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man*. 

Here Jesus is speaking of the authority the Father has given him as "the Son of Man". This title – particularly in this context – is most likely a reference to the "one like a son of man" in Daniel 7:13-14, below.



John 10:17-18 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. *I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.*

This indicates that Jesus had authority over death. The final statement may allude to the Father granting him this authority. For further comment see *Jesus obeyed God*, p. 555.

John 13:3 *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ...*

John 17:2 ... since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Acts 2:36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that *God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*

Acts 5:31 *God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore *God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Eph 1:22 And he [God] *put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ...*

Rev 2:26-27 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as *I myself have received authority from my Father.*

This indicates that the Father has given Jesus Christ authority over the nations.

Dan 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and behold, *with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*

Jesus Christ was God's to give – as a sacrifice for sin

See also:

- *God provided Jesus Christ as an offering for sin*, p. 588
- ... *He offered himself to God, as a sacrifice for our sins*, p. 589

John 3:16 For God so loved the world,^m that *he gave his only Son*, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

^mOr *For this is how God loved the world*

Rom 8:32 *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

Note that the latter part of the verse is speaking of God giving us all things along with having given us Jesus Christ (cf. GNT, NLT).

2Cor 9:15 *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*

Isa 53:10 *Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;ⁿ when his soul makes^o an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

ⁿ Or *he has made him sick*

^o Or *when you make his soul*

Rom 3:25a ... whom *God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*

Jesus' blood "propitiated" or turned away God's wrath by satisfying God's justice, making a way for people to be forgiven without compromising God's justice and holiness.

Rom 8:3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. *By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^p he condemned sin in the flesh, ...*

^p Or *and as a sin offering*

The alternative rendering in the text note explicitly speaks of God sending Jesus Christ "as a sin offering". Note that this and 1 John 4:10 below speak of God sending Christ (as per the theme of the following subsection) rather than of God giving Christ. They have been included in this subsection because of their references to God sending Christ as a sacrifice for sin, akin to the theme of this subsection.

1Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and *sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*



✦ **Jesus Christ gave himself as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God:**

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as *Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Hebrews 9:14 makes a similar point: "... Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God ..."
Arguably these verses reflect Jesus Christ's subordination to God.

Jesus Christ was chosen, anointed and sent by God

See also:

- [1Jn 4:10](#) ; [Rom 8:3](#)
- [Matt 12:17-18](#) ; [Acts 3:26](#)
- *Jesus Christ is the one chosen and appointed by God*, p. 489
- *Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 490
- . . . *Jesus is the messianic Holy One of God*, p. 491
- *God sent Jesus Christ into the world*, p. 508
- *God sent Jesus to take away sins . . .*, p. 509

There are nine passages in this subsection. The first three attest to Jesus Christ being chosen by God; the second three attest to him being anointed by God; and the last three attest to him being sent into the world by God. For further passages on these topics, see the cross-references above.

Luke 9:35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "*This is my Son, my Chosen One*;^a listen to him!"

^a Some manuscripts *my Beloved*

1Pet 1:20 *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you* ...

Likely Jesus Christ was "foreknown" by God in the sense that he was "chosen and foreordained" (AMP; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

1Pet 2:4, 6 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but *in the sight of God chosen* and precious, ... ⁶For it stands in Scripture: "*Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen* and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

This portrays Jesus as God's chosen "stone" (v. 4), the prophesied chosen "cornerstone" on which God's people would depend (v. 6).

Luke 2:10-11 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is *Christ the Lord*."

"Christ" and "Messiah" (the Hebrew equivalent) both mean "the Anointed One". Thus the numerous ascriptions of Jesus as "Christ" mean that he is "the Anointed One", anointed by God.

Acts 4:26-27 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and *against his Anointed*^r— ²⁷for truly in this city there were gathered together *against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed*, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ...

^r Or *Christ*

In v. 26 the believers are quoting from Psalm 2, applying "his Anointed One" to Jesus Christ – as affirmed in v. 27.

Acts 10:38 ... how *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power*. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for *I came from God* and I am here. *I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.*"

John 10:36 ... do you say of *him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world*, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?

Note that in addition to speaking of the Father sending Jesus, this also refers to the Father consecrating him – i.e. setting him apart. This reflects the fact that the Father chose him (as spoken of earlier in this subsection).

1Jn 4:9, 14 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that *God sent his only Son into the world*, so that we might live through him. ... ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that *the Father has sent his Son* to be the Savior of the world.

Jesus Christ is God's servant, largely spoken of in reference to his mission

See also:

- [Heb 2:17](#)
- . . . *They describe him as a remarkable chosen servant of God*, p. 483
- *Jesus Christ is the one chosen and appointed by God*, p. 489



- a) *Jesus Christ's Mission from God*, p. 508
- d) *Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ*, p. 530
- d) *Jesus Christ's Direction from God*, p. 553

Matt 12:17-18 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁸*Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.*



This is the start of a quotation from Isaiah 42:1-4, which is the beginning of the first of four passages in Isaiah known as the "servant songs". This first song appears to extend to v. 7 (in Isaiah 42). The other three songs are contained within: 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12. (Segments of these are included below.) The servant of God of whom the songs speak, is generally understood to be the Messiah and is linked to Jesus Christ in various NT passages, such as this one from Matthew 12.

Acts 3:26 *God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.*

Acts 4:27 ... for truly in this city there were gathered together against *your holy servant Jesus*, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ...

Phil 2:6-8 ... who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, *taking the form of a servant*,^s being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by *becoming obedient to the point of death*, even death on a cross.

^s Greek *bondservant*

Isa 49:1-6 Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. *The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. ²He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. ³And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."* ⁴But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God." ⁵And now the LORD says, *he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—* for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— ⁶*he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the*

tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

^t Or *I will display my beauty*

Verses 1-2 speak of God's call and preparation of the Messiah for his work. In v. 3 "Israel" is usually understood to be a reference to the Messiah. This probably alludes to the fact that the Messiah would come from Israel and that in him would be the culmination of all that God would achieve through Israel. Note that as with the following references from Isaiah in this subsection, this is from one of Isaiah's "servant songs" (cf. vv. 4-11).

Isa 50:10a Who among you fears the LORD and obeys *the voice of his servant?*

Isa 52:13 Behold, *my servant shall act wisely*;^u he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.

^u Or *shall prosper*

Isa 53:11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see^v and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall *the righteous one, my servant*, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

^v Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *he shall see light*

Hag 2:23 On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, *I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a^w signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts."*

^w Hebrew *the*

Many understand Zerubbabel – an ancestor of Christ (cf. Matt 1:12-13) – to be spoken of here as foreshadowing the Messiah. This is reflected in him being "chosen" by God and being described as God's "servant" and "signet ring" – the latter term implying that he was representative of God's authority, to implement his will.

Zec 3:8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, *I will bring my servant the Branch.*

The "Branch" is a messianic title.

Jesus Christ is also spoken of as being God's servant following his ascension

Acts 3:12-13 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and



the God of Jacob, *the God of our fathers, glorified his servant^x Jesus*, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 

^x Or *child*; also verse 26

Acts 4:29-30 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants^y to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and *signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus*. 

^y Greek *bondservants*

Heb 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so *that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God*, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 

Jesus Christ's role as "high priest in the service of God" continues in the present (cf. **Heb 8:1-2** ↓). However, his service to God (in this role) in his mission may primarily be in view here, with the latter part of the verse referring to his sacrifice of himself – an aspect of his role as High Priest which he completed during his mission.

Heb 8:1-2, 6 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²*a minister in the holy places, in the true tent^z that the Lord set up*, not man.  ... ⁶But as it is, *Christ^a has obtained a ministry* that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. 

^z Or *tabernacle*; also verse 5

^a Greek *he*

The term "a minister" (v. 2) speaks of Jesus Christ's serving (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV), primarily in service of God (cf. ZBC). In v. 6, his "ministry" is the "priestly work" (GNT, NCV) that God has given him to do – his "work to do for God" (NirV®).

Rom 6:10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but *the life he lives he lives to God*. 

Quite possibly the final clause is speaking of Jesus Christ living for God (cf. CEV), "for the glory of God" (NLT) – and so would be pertinent to this subsection. But it has also been interpreted as speaking of him living with God (cf. NCV), in fellowship with God (cf. AMP, GNT). Possibly both concepts are involved.

Ezek 37:24-25 *My servant David shall be king over them*, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. ²⁵They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children

shall dwell there forever, and *David my servant shall be their prince forever*. 

This indicates or at least implies that the Messiah will reign forever as God's servant.

✚ **Jesus Christ will come in God's name:**

Matt 23:39 For I tell you, *you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'* 

God continues to be glorified in and through Jesus Christ and his work

See also:

- *Note: In doing God's will, Jesus brought glory to God . . .*, p. 557
- *God's people give thanks and praise to God through Jesus Christ*, p. 797

God is glorified in and through Jesus Christ by such things as: Jesus Christ bringing God's wonderful, astounding plans and promises for the whole world to fruition; and Jesus Christ reflecting God's sublime and awesome attributes. As such, through Jesus Christ the greatness and gloriousness of God is shown, bringing God glory.

The fact that Jesus Christ "brings" God glory by what he does – as do God's people – arguably points to Jesus Christ's service to God and his subordination to God. God also glorifies Jesus Christ, but in contrast he appears to grant glory to Jesus Christ (cf. **John 17:5, 24** ↓) – as he does for his people – arguably pointing to the God's superior status in blessing Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 7:7).

Eph 3:20-21 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹*to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever*. Amen. 

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore *God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name*, ¹⁰*so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth*, ¹¹*and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*. 

The status of Jesus Christ and the ultimate submission of all beings to him will bring glory to God as the one whom exalted Jesus Christ to such a position, giving him "the name that is above every name" (v. 9).

Rom 16:27 *... to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ!* Amen. 



Jude 1:25 ... to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. 

For comment on this verse, see the comment on [Jude 1:25](#) – under *God works in all eras through Jesus Christ, impacting all things everywhere*, p. 530.

John 14:13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 

With the time after his ascension seemingly in view, here Jesus speaks of himself bringing glory to the Father, reflecting the fact that the Father continues to be glorified in and through him.

✦ The Father grants glory to Jesus Christ:

John 17:5, 24 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.  ... ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 

This implies that the Father grants or bestows glory on Jesus Christ. The same could be said regarding Acts 3:13, where after healing a crippled beggar in Jesus' name (cf. vv. 3:6-7), Peter declares that by this: "... the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus ..."

God the Father's seniority is reflected by things he has done for Jesus Christ

See also:

- [John 17:5, 24](#) 
- ... *Jesus Christ's authority was even granted to him by his Father*, p. 133

The things mentioned in the following verses that God the Father has done for Jesus Christ, including what he has given Jesus Christ, point to the Father's seniority.

John 5:19-20 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father^b does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. 

^b Greek *he*

In the light of v. 19, v. 20a appears to mean that the Father enables Jesus to do what he (the Father) does.

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. 

John 13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ... 

John 17:7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 

This may be indicating that everything Jesus has comes from the Father (cf. CEV, NLT).

John 17:11-12a And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. 

For comment on this passage, see the comment on [John 17:11-12a](#) – under *Note: God has given Jesus Christ a name that is superior to all others*, p. 110.

Acts 5:31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 

Acts 13:34 And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." 

The quotation refers to God's promises to David (cf. 2Sam 7) that ultimately God would bestow upon David's messianic descendant.

Col 1:19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ... 

This likely means that God was pleased to have all of his "fullness" dwell in Jesus Christ. This implies that God chose for this to be the case (cf. GNT) and even that he brought this about.

Heb 1:2 ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 

For comment on Christ being made "perfect through suffering", see the comment on [Heb 5:8-10](#) – under *Jesus Christ is a high priest who is perfect – but can still identify with his people's humanity*, p. 676.



1Pet 1:21 ... who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 

2Pet 1:17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son,^c with whom I am well pleased,” 

^c Or my Son, my (or the) Beloved

Rev 1:1a The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants^d the things that must soon take place. 

^d Greek *bondservants*

Note: God’s will is the prominent will in Scripture – sovereign in all the world, throughout the ages

See also:

▪ *d) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ*, p. 530

Rev 4:11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” 

Acts 17:26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ... 

Matt 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?^e And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 

^e Greek *assarion*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/16 of a *denarius* (which was a day’s wage for a laborer)

The Father’s will in everyday life is evident here (cf. NIV, NKJV) and in Romans 13:1 immediately below.

Rom 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 

Rom 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^f for those who are called according to his purpose. 

^f Some manuscripts *God works all things together for good, or God works in all things for the good*

God works all things for the good of his people, in accordance with his purpose or will in calling them.

Eph 1:7-12 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹*making known* to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰*as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.* ¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 

⁸ Or he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known . . .

Eph 3:8-11 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^h God who created all things,¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ... 

^h Or by

2Tim 1:9 ... [God] who saved us and called us toⁱ a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^j ... 

ⁱ Or with

^j Greek *before times eternal*

John 6:39-40 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 

Acts 1:6-7 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 

The disciples’ question implies that God the Father would restore Israel’s kingdom through Jesus Christ. Jesus’ reply indicates that the Father had set a time for this – no doubt following his return – and times for other events of the end.

Acts 3:19-21 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out,²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ



appointed for you, Jesus,²¹whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 

Acts 17:31 ... because *he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed*; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. 

Rom 8:20 For *the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ...* 

God's will is in view here (as in the other passages in this subsection).

Heb 12:26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but *now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."* 

The reference is to God removing the old creation at the end of the age, to make way for the new earth and heavens.

Rev 17:17 ... for *God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



CHAPTER 4

The Holy Spirit

I. General

- a) The Holy Spirit of God..... 142
- b) The Holy Spirit's Being..... 144
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II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

- a) Mutual Association..... 152
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I. General

See also:

- *II. God's Holy Spirit in His People*, p. 831

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, as often indicated in the Bible. This assertion is reflected by the Holy Spirit's divine and imposing attributes. However, the Bible also distinguishes the Holy Spirit from God, portraying him as a personal being in his own right.

(Note that in regard to the Holy Spirit and God's people, see *II. God's Holy Spirit in His People*, cross referenced above.)

a) The Holy Spirit of God

Subsections

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .
- . . . God refers to the Holy Spirit as his Spirit
- The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence
- The Holy Spirit is from God
- God and the Holy Spirit know each other's mind

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit is described as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ*, p. 154

The Holy Spirit is God's spirit. As such one should bear in mind that when the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit, it is in effect speaking of God himself.

Gen 1:2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And *the Spirit of God* was hovering over the face of the waters. 

1Sam 10:6 Then *the Spirit of the LORD* will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. 

Isa 61:1a *The Spirit of the Lord GOD* is upon me ... 

Matt 10:20 For it is not you who speak, but *the Spirit of your Father* speaking through you. 

1Cor 2:11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except *the Spirit of God*. 

The parallel drawn between the spirit of a person and the Spirit of God emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is God's spirit.

1Cor 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by *the Spirit of our God*. 

2Cor 3:3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with *the Spirit of the living God*, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.^a 

^a Greek *fleshy hearts*

Rom 8:11 If *the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead* dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. 

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve *the Holy Spirit of God*, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 

Ps 51:11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not *your Holy Spirit* from me. 

. . . God refers to the Holy Spirit as his Spirit

Note that "Spirit" always refers to the Holy Spirit.

Isa 42:1 [God:] Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put *my Spirit* upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 

Isa 59:21 "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says *the LORD*: "*My Spirit* that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore." 

Ezek 39:29 And I will not hide my face anymore from them, *when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel*, declares *the Lord God*. 

Hag 2:5b [God:] *My Spirit* remains in your midst. Fear not. 



The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence

Ps 51:11 *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*

As David no doubt was aware and arguably was even suggesting, his two requests are effectively asking the same thing; one involves the other.

Ps 139:7-8 *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*

Acts 10:38 ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

This verse appears to correlate Jesus having the Holy Spirit with God's presence being with him.

Eph 2:22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^b the Spirit.

^b Or in

As perhaps is better reflected in the text note's rendering, quite possibly this is speaking of the church being a dwelling place "where God lives by his Spirit" (NLT; cf. GNT, NCV, NIV).

1Jn 3:24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^c and God^d in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

^c Greek *him*

^d Greek *he*

This verse and 4:13 below correlate the Holy Spirit with God's presence by asserting that the fact that believers have God's Spirit verifies that God lives in them.

1Jn 4:13 *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*

✦ **The Holy Spirit is also correlated with Jesus Christ's presence:**

Rom 8:9-10 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

This links the Holy Spirit living in a person with Jesus Christ living in them. Ephesians 3:16-17 also appears to make this link: "... strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ..."

The Holy Spirit is from God

See also:

- *God gave the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ*, p. 535
- *a) God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People*, p. 831

1Cor 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

1Cor 6:19a Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

John 15:26 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

Acts 1:4-5 And while staying^e with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with^f the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

^e Or eating

^f Or in

Acts 2:33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Particularly in light of the context – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – the middle clause appears to be referring to Jesus Christ receiving from the God "the promised Holy Spirit" (NIV®; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

God and the Holy Spirit know each other's mind

The fact that God and the Holy Spirit are spoken of as knowing each other's mind is indicative of the Holy Spirit being the Spirit of God.

Rom 8:27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because^g the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

^g Or that

Note that a further aspect of God and the Holy Spirit's relationship is shown here by the Holy Spirit interceding "according to the will of God" – no doubt characteristic of all that the Holy Spirit does. This also points to the Holy Spirit having an intimate knowledge of God's will and so also of God's mind.



1Cor 2:9-11 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. *For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.* ¹¹For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also *no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* 📖

The “depths of God” (v. 10) denotes “what is deep in the mind of God” (CEV), the “deep secrets” of God (NCV, NLT).

✦ The Holy Spirit and the mind of Jesus Christ:

1Cor 2:12, 15-16 Now *we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God*, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 📖 ... ¹⁵The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But *we have the mind of Christ.* 📖

This suggests a correlation between having the Holy Spirit (v. 12) and having the mind of Christ (v. 16). In turn this points to the Holy Spirit knowing the mind of Christ, as he knows the mind of God.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Holy Spirit’s Being

In addition to the following characteristics, as the Holy “Spirit”, the Holy Spirit has no visible form.

Subsections

- The Holy Spirit is everywhere
- The Holy Spirit is eternal
- The Holy Spirit has great power . . .
- . . . and the Holy Spirit can enable people to do great things
- The Holy Spirit has great wisdom and knowledge . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit even has knowledge of the future

The Holy Spirit is everywhere

Ps 139:7-8 *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* 📖

Verse 7 links the Holy Spirit with God’s presence, and so along with v. 8 implies that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent – i.e. everywhere.

John 14:17 ... even *the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for *he dwells with you and will be in you.* 📖

The fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in each of God’s people (cf. **2Tim 1:14 ↓**; *a) God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People*, p. 831) – and in each group of them (cf. **Eph 2:22 ↓**) – shows that he is everywhere.

2Tim 1:14 *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us*, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. 📖

Eph 2:22 In him *you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^h the Spirit.* 📖

^h Or *in*

As noted earlier, this may well be speaking of the church being a dwelling place where God lives by his Spirit (cf. GNT, NLT, NCV, NIV).

The Holy Spirit is eternal

Heb 9:14 ... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through *the eternal Spirit* offered himself without blemish to God, purify ourⁱ conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 📖

ⁱ Some manuscripts *your*

The “eternal Spirit” is probably speaking of the Holy Spirit, although there are other opinions – as reflected in the NCV text note on “Spirit” which says: “This refers to the Holy Spirit, to Christ’s own spirit or to the spiritual and eternal nature of his sacrifice.”

John 14:16-17a And I will ask the Father, and he will give you *another Helper;*^j *to be with you forever,* ¹⁷*even the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. 📖

^j Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7
“Helper” is a title for the Holy Spirit.



The Holy Spirit has great power . . .

Isa 11:2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, *the Spirit of counsel and might*, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. 

1Jn 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for *he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*. 

The “he who is in you” is most likely referring to the Holy Spirit (cf. vv. 2, 6). As such, the description of the Holy Spirit as greater than Satan – “he who is in the world” – is indicative of the Spirit’s great power.

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered her, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*; therefore the child to be born^k will be called holy—the Son of God. 

^k Some manuscripts add *of you*

This correlates – or at least associates – the Holy Spirit with the power of God.

Rom 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that *by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope*. 

Acts 8:39-40 And when they came up out of the water, *the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away*, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. 

This appears to indicate that the Holy Spirit miraculously removed Philip and took him to Azotus.

Isa 32:15 ... until *the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest*. 

Such is the Holy Spirit’s power that he can bring about renewal of the extent portrayed here. Note that while this appears to firstly refer to the Holy Spirit effecting physical blessings, it is often understood to have a spiritual application – particularly with the reference to the Holy Spirit as being “poured upon us”. As such this would attest to the Holy Spirit renewing God’s people.

. . . and the Holy Spirit can enable people to do great things

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did*, p. 543
- *The Holy Spirit empowers God’s people to do God’s work*, p. 849

Judg 14:6a, 19a Then *the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat*.  ... ¹⁹And *the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle*. 

Zec 4:6-7 Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. ⁷Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain*. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” 

Zerubbabel would not rebuild the temple with the aid of outstanding human might or power, but through the power and direction of the Holy Spirit – who would overcome mountainous obstacles.

Matt 12:28 But if *it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons*, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 

Acts 1:8 But *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*. 

On receiving “power (ability, efficiency, and might)” (AMP) when the Holy Spirit came upon them, the disciples would be enabled to witness for Christ far and wide.

Rom 15:18-19 For I will not venture to speak of anything except *what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ...* 

Grammatically the “signs and wonders” (v. 19) may not be directly attributed to “the power of the Spirit”, but this could well be implied (cf. CEV, NLT). Even if this is not the case, these verses still do attest to the power of the Holy Spirit enabling people to accomplish great things.



1Cor 2:4-5 ... and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The last clause in v. 4 appears to associate the Holy Spirit with the power which, through Paul's preaching, led the Corinthians to faith (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). As such, the Holy Spirit's power is here correlated with God's power (v. 5).

1Pet 3:18-20 For Christ also suffered^l once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but *made alive in the spirit*,¹⁹ in which^m he went and proclaimedⁿ to the spirits in prison,²⁰ because^o they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

^l Some manuscripts *died*

^m Or *the Spirit, in whom*

ⁿ Or *preached*

^o Or *when*

If the rendering in the first text note is preferred (cf. NIV, NKJV, NLT) this would then attest to the Holy Spirit's power by speaking of his role in raising Jesus Christ and empowering him to preach to the "spirits in prison" (v. 19a). Note that these "spirits" could be referring to human spirits or to fallen angels or demons – leaving vv. 19-20 open to various interpretations.

The Holy Spirit has great wisdom and knowledge . . .

See also:

- . . . *The Holy Spirit teaches God's people about all things*, p. 846

Isa 11:2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, *the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge* and the fear of the LORD.

Such descriptions of the Holy Spirit (cf. **Eph 1:17** ↓) imply that he has great wisdom and knowledge.

Isa 40:13-14 *Who has measured^p the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?* ¹⁴*Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?*

^p Or *has directed*

Arguably the Spirit is partially in view, along with God, in all of vv. 13-14. This is supported by the alternative rendering in the text note, which would more clearly place the Holy Spirit's wisdom/counsel in view at the start. As such these verses point to the self-sufficiency and pre-eminence of the Holy Spirit's wisdom and knowledge.

John 14:26 But the Helper, *the Holy Spirit*, whom the Father will send in my name, *he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

Acts 6:3, 9-10 Therefore, brothers,^a pick out from among you seven men of good repute, *full of the Spirit and of wisdom*, whom we will appoint to this duty. ... ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰But *they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.*

^a Or *brothers and sisters*

This suggests that Stephen's profound wisdom was a product of the Holy Spirit – indicative of the Holy Spirit having great wisdom.

1Cor 2:9-11 But, as it is written, "*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him*"— ¹⁰*these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.* ¹¹For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also *no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

Verse 10b is saying that the Holy Spirit "searches out all things" (NCV™; cf. NLT), "exploring *and* examining everything" (AMP). The Holy Spirit's complete wisdom and knowledge is further attested to by the fact that he comprehends and so knows the thoughts of God (v. 11b).

Eph 1:17 ... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you *a spirit of wisdom and of revelation* in the knowledge of him, ...

Quite possibly Paul has in view "the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you" (GNT; cf. CEV).

Eph 3:4-5 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into *the mystery of Christ*,⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as *it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*

Knowing such a "mystery" attests to the Holy Spirit's great knowledge.



... The Holy Spirit even has knowledge of the future

Luke 2:26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 

Acts 1:16 Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 

This speaks of the Holy Spirit giving a prophecy (cf. **1Pet 1:10-11** ↓), illustrating that the Holy Spirit has knowledge of the future. Additionally, note that similarly the Bible speaks at times of the Holy Spirit speaking through "prophets" (cf. *God has given his word by the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 301; . . . *Further mention of Scripture coming by the Holy Spirit*, p. 302).

Acts 20:23 ... except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 

Acts 21:11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 

1Tim 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ... 

1Pet 1:10-11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹⁴inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Holy Spirit's Personhood

Subsections

- The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit has a mind
- The Holy Spirit is referred to with personal pronouns
- The Holy Spirit has personal characteristics



- The Holy Spirit communicates . . .
- . . . and the Holy Spirit interacts in other ways
- Note: Like a person, the Holy Spirit can be treated wrongly

The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- *II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit*, p. 152

Although perhaps to varying degrees, each of the following verses speak of the Holy Spirit as being distinct from God and from Jesus Christ.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 

Jesus is the speaker here, as is the case in 15:26 below.

John 15:26 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 

Acts 2:32-33 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. 

2Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 

Eph 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits^r to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 

^r Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

Rev 1:4-5a John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. 

The term “the seven spirits” (v. 4) is usually interpreted as referring to the Holy Spirit – “the sevenfold Spirit” (NIV® text note; cf. AMP) – in his fullness or perfection.

The Holy Spirit has a mind

See also:

- *God and the Holy Spirit know each other's mind*, p. 143

Rom 8:27 And he who searches hearts knows what is *the mind of the Spirit*, because^s the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

^s Or *that*

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, *the Holy Spirit said*, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

This suggests that the Holy Spirit has a mind, telling of him giving a command (“Set apart for me...”) and having called people to do a certain task.

Acts 15:28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: ...

1Cor 12:11 All these are empowered by *one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills*.

That the Holy Spirit “wills” such things is indicative of him having his own mind.

The Holy Spirit is referred to with personal pronouns

See also:

- [Acts 13:2](#) ; [1Cor 12:11](#)

The fact that personal pronouns are used of the Holy Spirit suggests that he is an entity in his own right, as well as alluding to him being a personal being.

John 14:17 ... even *the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees *him* nor knows *him*. You know *him*, for *he* dwells with you and will be in you.

John 16:7-8, 13-14 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, *the Helper* will not come to you. But if I go, I will send *him* to you. ⁸And when *he* comes, *he* will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ... ¹³When *the Spirit of truth* comes, *he* will guide you into all the truth, for *he* will not speak on *his* own authority, but whatever *he* hears *he*

will speak, and *he* will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴*He* will glorify me, for *he* will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Acts 10:19-20 And while Peter was pondering the vision, *the Spirit said* to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.”

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, *the Holy Spirit said*, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Here the personal pronouns “me” and “I” (cf. [Acts 10:19-20](#)) both do refer to the Holy Spirit.

Rom 8:16, 26 *The Spirit himself* bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ... ²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but *the Spirit himself* intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

1Cor 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but *the Spirit who* is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

1Cor 6:19a Or do you not know that your body is a temple of *the Holy Spirit* within you, *whom* you have from God?

The Holy Spirit has personal characteristics

Prominent amongst the characteristics of the Holy Spirit shown in the following verses are: holiness (Ps 51:11; Acts 10:44-45); goodness (Neh 9:20a; Ps 143:10; Gal 5:22), and love (Rom 15:30; Gal 5:22-23a).

Ps 51:11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not *your Holy Spirit* from me.

Acts 10:44-45 While Peter was still saying these things, *the Holy Spirit* fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of *the Holy Spirit* was poured out even on the Gentiles.

Neh 9:20 You gave *your good Spirit* to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.

Ps 143:10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let *your good Spirit* lead me on level ground!



Rom 15:30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by *the love of the Spirit*, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ...

The phrase “the love of the Spirit” refers to the love that the Holy Spirit gives God’s people (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Gal 5:22-23 But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control*; against such things there is no law.

Each of these characteristics is described as a “fruit of the Spirit” because – like fruit from a tree – their source and means of growth is the Holy Spirit. Arguably this implies that as their source and as the one who fosters them, the Holy Spirit’s own character is reflected in them. This also applies to “the love of the Spirit” in Romans 15:30 above, which refers to the love that the Holy Spirit gives God’s people (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Heb 10:29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged *the Spirit of grace*?

Isa 63:10 But *they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit*; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.

This indicates that the Holy Spirit has feelings.

✦ The Holy Spirit is the truth:

1Jn 5:6 This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And *the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth*.

This implies that the Holy Spirit is more than just truthful, actually correlating the Holy Spirit with truth (cf. [John 16:13](#) ↓). As such, this also points to righteousness being a personal characteristic of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit communicates . . .

See also:

- [Neh 9:20a](#) ↑
- [The Holy Spirit teaches God’s people . . .](#), p. 845
- [. . . The Holy Spirit teaches God’s people about all things](#), p. 846
- [The Holy Spirit leads God’s people](#), p. 848
- [The Holy Spirit directs God’s people in doing God’s work](#), p. 848

- [The Holy Spirit has a significant role in what God’s people speak](#), p. 851

- [The Holy Spirit witnesses about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief](#), p. 1771

2Sam 23:2 *The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.*

Here “his word” probably refers to God’s word (cf. v. 3), but it could instead refer to the Holy Spirit’s word. Contextually – as always – the two are in effect the same.

Matt 10:20 For it is not you who speak, but *the Spirit of your Father speaking through you*.

John 16:13-14 *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

Acts 10:19-20 And while Peter was pondering the vision, *the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.”*

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, *the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

Acts 20:23 ... except that *the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.*

Acts 21:11 And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, *“Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”*

Rom 8:16 *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ...*

Rom 8:26b For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but *the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

Gal 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent *the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”*

Eph 3:5 ... which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as *it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*



1Tim 4:1 Now *the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith* by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ...

Heb 3:7 Therefore, *as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, ..."*

Rev 2:7a He who has an ear, let him *hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

Rev 22:17a *The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."*

... and the Holy Spirit interacts in other ways

Matt 4:1 Then *Jesus was led up by the Spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in *the comfort of the Holy Spirit*, it multiplied.

One way that the Holy Spirit interacts is that it comforts the church.

Acts 16:6-7 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, *having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.* ⁷And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but *the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.*

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which *the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*, to care for the church of God,^t which he obtained with his own blood.^u

^t Some manuscripts *of the Lord*

^u Or *with the blood of his Own*

Rom 8:14 For *all who are led by the Spirit of God* are sons^v of God.

^v See discussion on "sons" in the Preface

Rom 8:26a Likewise *the Spirit helps us in our weakness.*

Rom 15:30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by *the love of the Spirit*, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ...

As noted earlier, "the love of the Spirit" refers to the love that the Holy Spirit gives God's people (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

1Cor 12:11 *All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

This is speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit in bestowing spiritual gifts on believers (cf. vv. 7-10).

Note: Like a person, the Holy Spirit can be treated wrongly

Matt 12:32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but *whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit* will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

There are a number of interpretations of what Jesus meant by speaking against or blaspheming (cf. Mark 3:29) the Holy Spirit. One of the most prominent is that Jesus meant that by attributing to Satan what realistically could only have been the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 24), the Pharisees were willfully rejecting the Holy Spirit – and thus God – a sin that can never be forgiven; "an eternal sin" (Mark 3:29).

Acts 5:3, 9 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart *to lie to the Holy Spirit* and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ... ⁹But Peter said to her, "*How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?* Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

Ananias and his wife Sapphira conspired to try to deceive the church and thus also the Holy Spirit (v. 3), in effect testing the Holy Spirit (v. 9).

Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, *you always resist the Holy Spirit.* As your fathers did, so do you.

Heb 10:29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and *has outraged the Spirit of grace?*

The phrase "outraged the Spirit" can also be translated as "insulted the Spirit" (NASB; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV), clearly indicating that the Holy Spirit can be treated wrongly.

Isa 63:10 But *they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit*; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.



Eph 4:30-31 And *do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 📖

We grieve the Holy Spirit by sinning (cf. [Isa 63:10](#) ↑). In giving this command not to do so, Paul may have had in mind the

sins he then lists in v. 31 and also possibly “corrupting talk” (cf. v. 29).

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *II. Jesus Christ and God*, p. 112

The NT speaks of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as three identities, but also shows them as being related to each other in a unique unity. This is in part due to divine attributes and roles being attributed to each of them. Since the 4th century the church has viewed their relationship in terms of the *Doctrine of the Trinity* – the concept of them being three “persons” but one substance.

This close-knit relationship between God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is still one of the most intriguing and debated aspects of the Bible. The following provides some basic “building blocks” for coming to terms with it.

a) Mutual Association

Subsections

- *God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are very closely associated*
- *The Holy Spirit is identified with God . . .*
- *. . . and the Holy Spirit is identified with Jesus Christ*
- *The Holy Spirit is described as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ*
- *God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together in unity of purpose . . .*
- *. . . Most prominently, they work together in saving people*
- *Note: Possible references to God in plural form*

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are very closely associated

Matt 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^a *the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ...* 

^a Or *into*

The phrase “the name of” denotes a single name. Here it is applied to all three of the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy

Spirit. As such it points to a very close relationship between the three, indicative of such things as a unity of spirit and purpose.

1Cor 12:4-6 *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.* 

For comment on this passage, see the comment on **1Cor 12:4-6** – under *God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together in unity of purpose . . .*, p. 154.

2Cor 13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* 

The close association of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is pointed to by the attributing of these complementary blessings to them at the one time.

1Cor 2:12, 16 *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.  ... ¹⁶“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.* 

This correlates “the mind of Christ” with “the mind of the Lord” (v. 16a), the latter apparently referring to God as v. 16a is a quotation from Isaiah 40:13 where God is clearly in view. Additionally, Paul may well be implying that “we have the mind of Christ” (v. 16b) because we have received the Holy Spirit (v. 12). If so, this would link the Holy Spirit with “the mind of Christ”. As such these verses indicate that the three are very closely associated.

The Holy Spirit is identified with God . . .

See also:

- *c) Jesus Christ Is Identified with God*, p. 119
- *The Holy Spirit is correlated with God’s presence*, p. 143
- *The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ*, p. 147
- *. . . Having the Holy Spirit indicates that God lives in a person*, p. 834

2Sam 23:2-3 *The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue. ³The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ...* 

This correlates the Holy Spirit speaking (v. 2) with God speaking (v. 3), thus identifying the Holy Spirit with God.



Ps 51:11 *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.* 

Quite possibly this is identifying the Holy Spirit with God's presence (cf. *The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence*, p. 143).

Ezek 11:24-25 And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me. ²⁵And I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me. 

The phrase "the vision by the Spirit of God" (v. 24) may be speaking of the vision being given by the Spirit (cf. NCV, NIV). If this is the case then the phrase seems to correlate with "all the things that the LORD had shown me" (v. 25), identifying the Spirit with the LORD. Alternatively the phrase in question may be speaking of the Spirit bringing Ezekiel into Chaldea, in the vision (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Mark 3:29 ... but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" — 

The fact that it is possible to blaspheme the Holy Spirit – along with the severity of the consequences – arguably identifies him with God and points to his deity.

Acts 5:3, 4b But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?  ... ⁴ ... You have not lied to men but to God." 

Peter indicates that to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God. As such Peter identifies the Holy Spirit with God.

1Cor 2:4-5 ... and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 

This may well be correlating the Holy Spirit's power with God's power – thus identifying the Holy Spirit with God.

Acts 28:25-27 And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ²⁶"Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ²⁷For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'" 

The quotation (vv. 26-27) from Isaiah 6:8-10 is originally attributed to the "the voice of the Lord" (Isa 6:8), whereas here it is said to be spoken by the Holy Spirit. As such this

identifies the Holy Spirit with God. Hebrews 10:15-17 immediately below is another occurrence of the NT attributing to the Holy Spirit words spoken by God in the OT (cf. Jeremiah 31:33-34). For other such examples see Hebrews 3:7-11 and Psalms 95:7-11.

Heb 10:15-17 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," ¹⁷then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." 

... and the Holy Spirit is identified with Jesus Christ

Rom 8:10-11 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. 

The reference to Christ living in believers (v. 10) appears to be used interchangeably with the references to the Spirit living in believers (v. 11; cf. v. 9). As such, this passage identifies the Holy Spirit with Jesus Christ.

2Cor 3:17-18 Now the Lord^b is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^c are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 

^b Or *this Lord*

^c Or *reflecting the glory of the Lord*

There are a number of interpretations of "the Lord is the Spirit" (v. 17) and "the Lord who is the Spirit" (v. 18). The ones that are arguably the most plausible are compatible with a literal reading, identifying the Holy Spirit with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev 2:8-11 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: "The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. ⁹"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander^d of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'" 

^d Greek *blasphemy*



Verses 9-10 appear to be attributed to both Jesus Christ (v. 8) and the Holy Spirit (v. 11). Further similar examples of passages being attributed to both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are found in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation.

The Holy Spirit is described as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ

See also:

- [2Cor 3:17](#) ↑
- [The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .](#), p. 142
- [. . . God refers to the Holy Spirit as his Spirit](#), p. 142

The theme of this subsection closely correlates the Holy Spirit with God and with Jesus Christ – and also associates Jesus Christ with God, with the one Spirit being said to be of them both. The first of the verses/passages in this subsection (Rom 8:9) speaks of the Holy Spirit as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The following four refer to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God, while the last four refer to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Rom 8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact *the Spirit of God* dwells in you. Anyone who does not have *the Spirit of Christ* does not belong to him. 📖

Judg 14:19a And *the Spirit of the LORD* rushed upon him ... 📖

Isa 63:10 But they rebelled and grieved *his Holy Spirit*; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. 📖

1Cor 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in *the Spirit of God* ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit. 📖

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve *the Holy Spirit of God*, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 📖

Acts 16:6-7 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, *having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit* to speak the word in Asia. ⁷And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but *the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them*. 📖

The reference to “the Holy Spirit” and his work in v. 6 underlines the fact that “the Spirit of Jesus” in v. 7 is referring to the Holy Spirit.

Gal 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent *the Spirit of his Son* into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 📖

Phil 1:19 ... for I know that through your prayers and the help of *the Spirit of Jesus Christ* this will turn out for my deliverance, ... 📖

1Pet 1:10-11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹inquiring what person or time *the Spirit of Christ* in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 📖

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together in unity of purpose . . .

See also:

- [God gave the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ](#), p. 535
- [God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission](#), p. 542
- [The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did](#), p. 543

Matt 3:16-17 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, *the heavens were opened to him*,^e and he saw *the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him*; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, “*This is my beloved Son*,^f with whom I am well pleased.” 📖

^e Some manuscripts omit *to him*

^f Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

God’s anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus for his mission – and so illustrates the three working together in unity of purpose.

John 20:21-22 *Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”* ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “*Receive the Holy Spirit*.” 📖

The Father sent Jesus Christ to carry out his purposes and Jesus Christ sends his people empowered with the Holy Spirit to continue his work.

Acts 2:32-33 *This Jesus God raised up*, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³*Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing*. 📖

In v. 33, “this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing” refers to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, apparent in the believers speaking in various unlearned languages (cf. vv. 1-11). God raised and exalted Jesus Christ and gave him the Holy Spirit to further God’s purposes.



Rom 1:1-4 *Paul, a servant^g of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning his Son, who was descended from David^h according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ...* 

^g Or slave; Greek bondservant

^h Or who came from the offspring of David

This reflects the fact that God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit worked together in Jesus' mission and in bringing to fulfillment "the gospel of God" (v. 1).

1Cor 12:4-6 *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.* 

One could interpret this as indicating that gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, for service to Jesus Christ, in which God works. However Paul is not necessarily trying to draw marked distinctions between the roles of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus and God in relation to "gifts", "service" and "empowers". Rather the fact that these three things are interrelated reflects the close association and unity in both purpose and arguably even function of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ and God. (cf. NBC)

2Cor 1:20-22 *For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ²¹And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²²and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.ⁱ* 

ⁱ Or down payment

The first statement (v. 20a) means that God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ (cf. NLT).

Eph 2:18, 22 *For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.  ... ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^j the Spirit.* 

^j Or in

In these verses "him" refers to Jesus Christ. Both verses speak of vital roles of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in God's relationship with his people.

Eph 3:16-17a *... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ...* 

Note that "his" and "he" refer to God the Father.

1Pet 1:1b-2 *To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.* 

1Jn 4:2 *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ...* 

John is speaking of being able to "know" or recognize if someone has the Holy Spirit. The verse reflects that God has sent the Holy Spirit in part to enable people to acknowledge aspects of Jesus Christ's mission and its significance – here in particular the fact that Jesus Christ came in the form of a human being.

Rev 1:4-5a *John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.* 

As commented earlier, "the seven spirits" (v. 4) is usually interpreted as referring to the Holy Spirit in his fullness. As such this would be speaking of grace and peace being given by God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ.

... Most prominently, they work together in saving people

Some of the references in the previous subsection also make reference to matters connected with salvation, but the references in this subsection speak of it more explicitly.

Titus 3:4-6 *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ...* 

Acts 2:38-39 *And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."* 

Acts 5:31-32 *God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.* 



Verse 32 points to the Holy Spirit's role in the salvation of people, witnessing to them. This work of the Holy Spirit is in conjunction with God's will, and with what God has done through Jesus Christ (v. 31) to save people.

Rom 15:15-16 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of *the grace given me by God* ¹⁶*to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Gal 4:4-6 But when the fullness of time had come, *God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,* ⁵*to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*

One objective of God's salvation was to enable us to become his children, which he has done through Jesus Christ. In conjunction with and subsequent to this, God enables us to relate to him as his children through the Holy Spirit.

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, *brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits^k to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*

^k Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

Although this verse does not specifically speak of Jesus Christ playing a role in saving people, the phrase "brothers beloved by the Lord" points to the will of Jesus Christ being in accord with this purpose and may even allude to his dying for this purpose, the ultimate expression of his love.

Heb 9:14 ... how much more will *the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^l conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

^l Some manuscripts *your*

The meaning of "dead works" is debatable, but quite possibly denotes the ultimately useless rituals of the law.

Note: Possible references to God in plural form

There are differences of opinion over the use of "our" and "us" in the statements attributed to God in the following verses. As the subheading indicates, some people interpret them as a plural form of the Deity, leading many to understand them as a reference to the Trinity – God as three persons in one being. Other interpretations offered by some evangelical commentators of the terms in question include: they are used to emphasize God's majesty; they are an expression of the completeness or fullness of God's being;

and they are indicative of God addressing heavenly beings. Note that some commentators specifically reject the last interpretation, particularly in reference to Genesis 1:26.

Gen 1:26a *Then God said, "Let us make man^m in our image, after our likeness.*

^mThe Hebrew word for *man (adam)* is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

Gen 3:22a *Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.*

Gen 11:6-7 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷*Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.*"

Isa 6:8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and *who will go for us?*" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Mutual Divine Attributes

The listings here and in the following section of mutual divine attributes and roles are not comprehensive. Note that the subsections generally are composed of six verses – of which the first pair refers to God, the second pair to Jesus Christ and the third pair to the Holy Spirit.

Subsections

- Omnipresence – God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere
- Omnipotence – they each have infinite, sovereign power
- Omniscience – they each have complete knowledge
- Divine glory
- Eternal existence
- Holiness



Omnipresence – God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere

See also:

- *God is everywhere, not just in temples*, p. 8
- *Jesus Christ is everywhere*, p. 101
- *The Holy Spirit is everywhere*, p. 144

Prov 15:3 *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.* 📖

Jer 23:23-24 *Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away?²⁴ Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.* 📖

Matt 18:20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. 📖

The fact that Jesus Christ can promise to be with every gathering of Christians, points to him being everywhere. John 14:17 below makes a similar point regarding the Holy Spirit.

Eph 4:10 *He [Jesus Christ] who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.* 📖

Ps 139:7a *Where shall I go from your Spirit?* 📖

John 14:17 ... even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for *he dwells with you and will be in you.* 📖

Omnipotence – they each have infinite, sovereign power

See also:

- *b) God's Power (I): Ultimate Power*, p. 32
- *c) God's Power (II): His Deeds*, p. 36
- *Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power*, p. 100
- *The Holy Spirit has great power . . .*, p. 145

Job 42:2 I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 📖

Jer 32:17 *Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.* 📖

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, *the Lord Jesus Christ*,²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, *by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.* 📖

This and Revelation 3:7 immediately below, illustrate Jesus Christ's sovereign if not infinite power.

Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: "The words of the holy one, the true one [Jesus Christ], who has the key of David, *who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.*" 📖

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered her, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^a will be called holy—the Son of God.*" 📖

^a Some manuscripts add *of you*

As noted earlier in the chapter, this correlates – or at least associates – the Holy Spirit and his power with the power of God, pointing to the Holy Spirit having infinite power.

1Jn 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for *he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 📖

Being greater than Satan points to the Holy Spirit having sovereign power.

Omniscience – they each have complete knowledge

See also:

- *d) God's Knowledge and Wisdom*, p. 40
- *Jesus Christ has superlative knowledge and wisdom*, p. 101
- *The Holy Spirit has great wisdom and knowledge . . .*, p. 146

1Jn 3:20b God is greater than our heart, and *he knows everything.* 📖

Heb 4:13 *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* 📖

John 16:30 Now we know that you [Jesus] know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God. 📖

Acts 1:24 And they prayed and said, "*You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen . . .*" 📖



John 14:26 But the Helper, *the Holy Spirit*, whom the Father will send in my name, *he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

1Cor 2:10b-11 For *the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.* ¹¹For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also *no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

Divine glory

See also:

- *b) God's Glory*, p. 13
- *Jesus Christ has divine glory*, p. 97

Num 14:21 But truly, as I live, and as *all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD*, ...

Ps 138:5 ... and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for *great is the glory of the LORD.*

Matt 25:31 *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.*

1Cor 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified *the Lord of glory.*

2Cor 3:8 ... will not *the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?*

This speaks of the glory of "the ministry of the Spirit", associated with the new covenant (cf. v. 6) – encompassing both "the work of the Holy Spirit" (NirV®; cf. CEV, GNT, NLT) and the administering of the new covenant which is of the Spirit (cf. AMP, NCV). Although not speaking directly of the glory of the Spirit himself, by association it does point to the Spirit's glory (cf. [1Pet 4:14 ↓](#)).

1Pet 4:14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because *the Spirit of glory*^o and of God rests upon you.

^o Some manuscripts insert *and of power*

The term "the Spirit of glory" appears to speak of the Holy Spirit's own glory – "the glorious Spirit" (GNT, NCV, NLT; cf. CEV).

Eternal existence

See also:

- *d) God's Eternity*, p. 24
- *a) Jesus Christ's Eternity*, p. 92
- *The Holy Spirit is eternal*, p. 144

The Bible portrays God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as having always existed, and says that they will exist forever.

Ps 93:2 Your throne is established from of old; *you are from everlasting.*

Deut 32:40b [God:] *As I live forever*, ...

Rev 22:13 [Jesus Christ:] *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.*

Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, used together to depict Christ spanning all time – as do the subsequent pairings in the verse.

Rom 6:9 We know that *Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.*

John 14:16-17a And I will ask the Father, and he will give you *another Helper*,^p *to be with you forever*, ¹⁷*even the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

^p Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7

Heb 9:14 ... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through *the eternal Spirit* offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^q conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

^q Some manuscripts *your*

Holiness

See also:

- *a) Holiness* [God's], p. 54
- *Jesus Christ is holy*, p. 102

Rev 4:8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!*"

Rev 15:4a Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? *For you alone are holy.*



John 6:69 ... and we have believed, and have come to know, that *you are the Holy One of God*.

Simon Peter is addressing Jesus Christ, applying a Messianic title to him.

Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of *the holy one* [Jesus Christ], the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

Luke 12:12 ... for *the Holy Spirit* will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

Heb 10:15a And *the Holy Spirit* also bears witness to us ...

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Mutual Divine Roles

See also:

- *Some actions are attributed to both God and Jesus Christ*, p. 124
- *God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together in unity of purpose . . .*, p. 154
- *. . . Most prominently, they work together in saving people*, p. 155
- *d) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ*, p. 530
- *b) God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit*, p. 837

Common divine roles reflect the fact that God works through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is also reflected in some of the above cross references. Note that the latter roles are not exclusively divine in every sense, with believers also having roles akin to them.

Subsections

- God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are each ascribed a primary role in creation
- They each give spiritual or eternal life
- They each sanctify God’s people
- They each are constantly with God’s people, living in them
- They each strengthen and empower God’s people

- They each guide and teach God’s people
- They each give God’s people joy and peace

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are each ascribed a primary role in creation

See also:

- *a) God Made All Things*, p. 200
- *God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ*, p. 214
- *The Holy Spirit played a role in creation – and still does*, p. 215

Isa 44:24 Thus says *the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, ...*

Neh 9:6 ^r “You are the LORD, you alone. *You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.*

^r Septuagint adds *And Ezra said*

John 1:3 *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

This and the following verse refer to Jesus Christ.

Col 1:16 For *by^s him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

^s That is, by means of; or in

Job 33:4 *The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*

Ps 104:30 *When you send forth your Spirit,^t they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.*

^t Or *breath*

They each give spiritual or eternal life

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but *the free gift of God is eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1Jn 5:11 And this is the testimony, that *God gave us eternal life*, and this life is in his Son.



John 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also *the Son gives life to whom he will*.

Note that this seems to be drawing a parallel between the Father raising the physically dead to life and Jesus giving spiritual life (to the spiritually dead). Jesus' raising of the physically dead, particularly that of all people at the end of the age, is quite possibly also encompassed.

John 10:28 [Jesus:] *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand*.

John 6:63a *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all*.

2Cor 3:6b For the letter kills, but *the Spirit gives life*.

They each sanctify God's people

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit sanctifies God's people*, p. 844
- *b) God Makes His People Holy*, p. 859

"Sanctify" basically means to "make holy".

Lev 20:8 Keep my statutes and do them; *I am the LORD who sanctifies you*.

1Thes 5:23 Now *may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely*, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*^u

^u Or *holy and blameless*

Heb 2:11 For *he who sanctifies* and those who are sanctified all have one source.^v That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,^w ...

^v Greek *all are of one*

^w Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verse 12

Rom 15:16 ... to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so *that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit*.

1Pet 1:2 ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood*: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

This seems to speak of both the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ having a role in making God the Father's people holy, with "sprinkling with his blood" most likely referring to purification by Christ's blood (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

They each are constantly with God's people, living in them

See also:

- *a) God's People Are 'in' Jesus Christ*, p. 778
- *a) God Is Always with His People*, p. 802
- *a) God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People*, p. 831

Deut 31:8 It is the LORD who goes before you. *He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you*. Do not fear or be dismayed.

1Jn 3:24 *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^x and God^y in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us*.

^x Greek *him*

^y Greek *he*

Matt 28:20b [Jesus:] And behold, *I am with you always*, to the end of the age.

Gal 2:20a I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but *Christ who lives in me*.

John 14:17 ... even *the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for *he dwells with you and will be in you*.

2Tim 1:14 *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us*, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.



They each strengthen and empower God's people

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit empowers God's people to do God's work*, p. 849
- *b) God Strengthens His People*, p. 933
- *c) God Works through His People (II): Empowerment*, p. 968

Isa 41:10b *I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

2Tim 1:7 ... for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Phil 4:13 *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

The reference is to Jesus Christ strengthening (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

1Tim 1:12 *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ...*

Eph 3:16 ... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ...

God strengthens and empowers people through the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

They each guide and teach God's people

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit teaches God's people . . .*, p. 845
- *. . . The Holy Spirit teaches God's people about all things*, p. 846
- *The Holy Spirit leads God's people*, p. 848
- *The Holy Spirit directs God's people in doing God's work*, p. 848
- *c) God Teaches His People*, p. 864

Ps 48:14 ... that this is God, our God forever and ever. *He will guide us forever.*^z

^z Septuagint; another reading is (compare Jerome, Syriac) *He will guide us beyond death*

Isa 48:17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go."

John 10:3-4 To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

Jesus was applying this analogy to himself – the good shepherd. The analogy is indicative of his guidance of his people.

2Tim 2:7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

As is typical in Paul's letters, "the Lord" is more than likely a reference to Jesus Christ.

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

They each give God's people joy and peace

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit gives God's people joy and peace*, p. 845
- *b) Peace*, p. 885
- *c) Joy*, p. 890

Ps 4:7 *You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.*

Rom 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

John 15:11 *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

Jesus is the speaker in both this and the following verse.

John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

Rom 8:6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.



Gal 5:22-23 But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*²³*gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



Angels, Satan and Demons

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I. Angels

The Bible often mentions angels. The existence and role of these mighty servants of God should be a great encouragement to believers. This is in no small part due to the fact that their work often involves believers, including giving believers supernatural help.

Note that while the great majority of references to angels in the Bible are to God's holy angels, evil angels are also mentioned. These evil angels are commonly identified with demons (discussed in the second half of this chapter). In headings in this book, "Angels" primarily refer to angels of God. But bear in mind that some concepts, such as angels being very powerful, are applicable to all angels.

a) Attributes of Angels

Subsections

- Angels have human-like features, but are very awesome in appearance
- Angels have wings and can fly
- Angels are very powerful
- Angels have great wisdom and knowledge – but their knowledge is limited
- Angels can communicate and interact with others
- Angels have a will and emotions – notably joy
- Angels are holy – but not perfect
- Further attributes of angels

Angels have human-like features, but are very awesome in appearance

Note that there are variations in the descriptions of angelic beings below, suggesting that there are different kinds of angels, and even that they can vary their form. Also note that Hebrews 1:14 (cf. *Further attributes of angels*, p. 168) refers to angels as "spirits", implying that they do not always have a perceivable form.

Judg 13:3, 6a And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. ...
 6Then the woman came and told her husband, "A man of God

came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome.

The reference to the angel as a "man" (v. 6) suggests that angels have a human-like form.

Ezek 1:4-14, 24 As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness around it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming metal.^a ⁵And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness, ⁶but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. ⁷Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot. And they sparkled like burnished bronze. ⁸Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: ⁹their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went. ¹⁰As for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face. The four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle. ¹¹Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above. Each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. ¹²And each went straight forward. Wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. ¹³As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches moving to and fro among the living creatures. And the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. ¹⁴And the living creatures darted to and fro, like the appearance of a flash of lightning. ... ²⁴And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army. When they stood still, they let down their wings.

^a Or amber; also verse 27

These "living creatures" are cherubim (cf. **Ezek 10:5, 16, 19a** ↓), understood to be one of the highest orders of angels. Verse 10 speaks of each of them having four different faces, including a human face in front (cf. CEV, NLT).

Ezek 8:2 Then I looked, and behold, a form that had the appearance of a man.^b Below what appeared to be his waist was fire, and above his waist was something like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal.^c

^b By revocalization (compare Septuagint); Hebrew *of fire*

^c Or amber

Dan 10:5-10, 16a, 18 I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. ⁶His body was like beryl, his face like



the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. ⁷And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but *a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves.* ⁸So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and *no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed,*^d *and I retained no strength.* ⁹Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground. ¹⁰And behold, a hand touched me and *set me trembling on my hands and knees.* ... ¹⁶And behold, *one in the likeness of the children of man touched my lips.* ... ¹⁸Again *one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.*

^d Hebrew *My splendor was changed to ruin*

The heavenly being described in vv. 5-6 is generally understood to be an angel, though some consider him to be the preincarnate Christ (cf. Rev 1:13-16). It probably is the same being in view in vv. 16a, 18. The awesome nature of his appearance and presence is underlined by the reactions of Daniel and the men with him (vv. 7-8, 10; cf. vv. 15-17).

Matt 28:3-4 *His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.*

This is speaking of "an angel of the Lord" (v. 2).

Luke 24:4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, *two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.*

Heb 13:2 *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

This indicates that angels have or at least can take on a human-like form.

Rev 10:1 Then I saw *another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.*

Rev 18:1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and *the earth was made bright with his glory.*

Angels have wings and can fly

See also:

- [Ezek 1:4-11, 24](#) ↑

At least some kinds of angelic beings are spoken of as having wings. Note that complementary to verses speaking of angels flying, there are other verses that indicate that angels can move very quickly throughout the earth.

Isa 6:2 *Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*

The "seraphim" are apparently a high order or class of angelic beings.

Ezek 10:5, 16, 19a And the sound of *the wings of the cherubim* was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks. ... ¹⁶And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them. And when *the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth*, the wheels did not turn from beside them. ... ¹⁹And *the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth* before my eyes as they went out, with the wheels beside them.

Dan 9:21 ... while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, *came to me in swift flight* at the time of the evening sacrifice.

Rev 14:6 Then *I saw another angel flying directly overhead*, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.

Ps 18:10 *He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.*

This appears to speak poetically of God. The references to a cherub and to flying point to the fact that angels can fly.

✚ **The gold cherubim with wings on the atonement cover of the ark of the covenant:**

Ex 25:20 *The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.*



Angels are very powerful

See also:

- [5. Angels, Satan and Demons](#) [means of God's judicial retribution], p. 441

Ps 103:20 Bless the LORD, *O you his angels, you mighty ones* who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! 

Matt 28:2 And behold, *there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.* 

The linking of the earthquake with the angel's appearance and the angel rolling back the enormous stone both point to the angel's great power.

2Thes 1:7 ... and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with *his mighty angels* ... 

2Pet 2:10b-11 Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ¹¹whereas *angels, though greater in might and power*, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. 

Rev 7:1 *After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.* 

Rev 10:1-3 Then I saw *another mighty angel* coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. ²He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, ³and *called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded.* 

Verse 3 reflects the "mighty", awesome nature of this angel (v. 1). His "loud voice, like a lion roaring" (v. 3a) is indicative of his might, as is the resulting awesome revelation (v. 3; cf. v. 4).

Rev 12:7-9 Now war arose in heaven, *Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸but he was defeated*, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—*he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.* 

The great power of God's angels is shown here by them overcoming and ejecting Satan and his angels.

Rev 18:1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, *having great authority*, and the earth was made bright with his glory. 

Rev 18:21 *Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more; ...* 

Rev 20:1-3a Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit^e and a great chain. ²And *he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him*, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. 

^e Greek *the abyss*; also verse 3

The extraordinary might of this angel is shown by the angel seizing, binding and imprisoning Satan. Note that the bottomless pit (vv. 1, 3) is portrayed elsewhere as a prison or abode for demons.

2Chr 32:21a And the LORD sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. 

Angels have great wisdom and knowledge – but their knowledge is limited

2Sam 14:17, 20 And your servant thought, 'The word of my lord the king will set me at rest,' for my lord the king is *like the angel of God to discern good and evil*. The LORD your God be with you!"  ... ²⁰In order to change the course of things your servant Joab did this. But my lord has wisdom *like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth.* 

In addressing King David, a woman refers to the great wisdom and knowledge of angels.

Mark 13:32 But *concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.* 

Although angels have great wisdom and knowledge, this and the following verses show that angels do not know everything.



Eph 3:10 ... so that through the church *the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.* 

The “rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (v. 10) may be referring primarily to angels (cf. GNT) or at least inclusive of them.

1Pet 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, *things into which angels long to look.* 

This suggests that there are certain matters related to the gospel that angels are still to learn or learn more about (cf. CEV, GNT).

Angels can communicate and interact with others

See also:

- [Rev 22:8-9](#) 
- [Angels worship God and Jesus Christ](#), p. 169
- [Angels give God's people messages, such as instructions](#), p. 175
- [Angels also give messages about future events](#), p. 176

1Ki 19:5-7 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.”⁶ And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.” 

Isa 6:2-3 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”^f 

^f Or may his glory fill the whole earth

Dan 10:9-10, 18-19 Then I heard the sound of his words, and as I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in deep sleep with my face to the ground. ¹⁰And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.  ... ¹⁸Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. ¹⁹And he said, “O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” 

Luke 1:11-13, 18-20 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.  ... ¹⁸And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” ¹⁹And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” 

The angel Gabriel’s ability to interact is shown not only in him speaking the message but by his responses to Zechariah, responding to Zechariah’s fear (vv. 12-13a) and to his disbelief (vv. 18-20).

Heb 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 

That angels can be mistaken for people, suggests that they can communicate and interact as people do.

Rev 19:9-10 And the angel said^g to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant^h with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. 

^g Greek he said

^h Greek fellow bondservant

Angels have a will and emotions – notably joy

Note that along with such things as their ability to communicate and interact, the fact that angels have a will and emotions suggests that they are personal beings.

1Pet 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, *things into which angels long to look.* 

This and the following passage clearly illustrate that angels have a will – along with a mind and the ability to reason.

Rev 22:8-9 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹but



he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servantⁱ with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." [📖](#)

ⁱ Greek *fellow bondservant*

Job 38:6-7 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷when the morning stars sang together and *all the sons of God shouted for joy?* [📖](#)

The "sons of God" are angels (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to *innumerable angels in festal gathering*, ... [📖](#)

The term "festal gathering" is indicative of joy.

Luke 15:10 Just so, I tell you, *there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.* [📖](#)

The rejoicing appears to be done at least in part by the angels (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT).

Angels are holy – but not perfect

Mark 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with *the holy angels.* [📖](#)

Rev 14:10b ... he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of *the holy angels* and in the presence of the Lamb. [📖](#)

Psa 89:5-7 Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of *the holy ones!* ⁶For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings^j is like the LORD, ⁷a God greatly to be feared in the council of *the holy ones*, and awesome above all who are around him? [📖](#)

^j Hebrew *the sons of God, or the sons of might*

The term "holy ones" (vv. 5, 7) appears to refer to angelic beings – "the heavenly beings" (v. 6) – who are therefore holy. The same applies to "holy one" in Daniel 4:13 immediately below.

Dan 4:13 I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, *a holy one*, came down from heaven. [📖](#)

Rev 19:14 And *the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure*, were following him on white horses. [📖](#)

The "armies of heaven" may well be angelic hosts. If so, being dressed "in fine linen, white and pure" would be symbolic of

them being holy or righteous. However, some commentators consider that they may be believers, or at least be inclusive of believers. This view is partly due to believers earlier having been given to wear: "fine linen, bright and pure" (v. 8)

Job 4:18 Even in his servants he puts no trust, and *his angels he charges with error*; ... [📖](#)

This and 15:15 below indicate that angels are not perfect.

Job 15:15 Behold, *God^k puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight*; ... [📖](#)

^k Hebrew *he*

Further attributes of angels

Luke 20:36 ... for *they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels* and are sons of God, being sons^l of the resurrection. [📖](#)

^l Greek *huioi*; see Preface

This indicates that angels are immortal.

Heb 1:14 *Are they not all ministering spirits* sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? [📖](#)

Angels are spiritual beings.

2Pet 2:10b-11 Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ¹¹whereas *angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.* [📖](#)

This and Jude 9 immediately below illustrate that angels are respectful, even meek – not bold and arrogant like the false teachers being spoken of (v. 10b).

Jude 1:9 *But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment*, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." [📖](#)

Note that possibly one reason as to why Michael refrained from bringing a slanderous accusation against Satan is that to do so would be to follow Satan's own ways as the accuser.

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Angels and God

Subsections

- Angels are with God, surrounding him and even standing in his presence
- Angels worship God and Jesus Christ
- Angels serve God . . .
- . . . Angels carry out judgments of God
- Angels serve Jesus Christ
- Note: "The angel of the LORD" is identified with God

Angels are with God, surrounding him and even standing in his presence

See also:

- Rev 7:11 ↓

1Ki 22:19 And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: *I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; ...*



Ps 89:7 ... a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?

Rev 5:11 Then I looked, and *I heard around the throne* and the living creatures and the elders *the voice of many angels*, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ...

2Pet 2:11 ... whereas *angels*, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them *before the Lord*.

This is not necessarily indicating that angels are generally in the Lord's presence, but at the very least it implies that they can enter into it.

Matt 18:10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that *in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven*.^m

^mSome manuscripts add verse 11: *For the Son of Man came to save the lost*

In saying that angels "always see the face of" God, Jesus indicates that angels are always in the presence of God (cf. AMP, GNT, NLT) and likewise that they are always with God (cf. CEV, NCV).

Luke 1:19 And the angel answered him, "*I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.*"

Bear in mind that this is not actually saying that all angels stand in the presence of God. Revelation 8:2 below speaks of only seven angels doing so. However, the fact that angels surround God (as indicated in the earlier verses in this subsection) suggests that they are at least close to what may be termed as his "presence".

Rev 8:2 Then I saw *the seven angels who stand before God*, and seven trumpets were given to them.

Angels worship God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- Ps 103:20-21 ↓; Rev 22:8-9 ↓

Neh 9:6 ⁿ "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and *the host of heaven worships you*.

ⁿ Septuagint adds *And Ezra said*

Ps 148:2 *Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!*

Isa 6:2-3 *Above him stood the seraphim*. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³*And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"*^o

^o Or *may his glory fill the whole earth*

Luke 2:13-14 And suddenly *there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*^p

^p Some manuscripts *peace, good will among men*

Rev 4:8-9 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and *day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*^q And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ...

The "four living creatures" appear to be angelic beings – and arguably can be identified with the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2-3 above.



Rev 7:11-12 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

Heb 1:6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

Rev 5:11-14 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Angels serve God . . .

See also:

- *c) Angels and God's People*, p. 173
- *Angels* [means of God's judicial retribution], p. 441

Ps 103:20-21 Bless the LORD, *O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!* ²¹Bless the LORD, *all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will!*

Heb 1:7 *Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."*

Here "ministers" is used of angels (cf. **Ps 103:21** ↑). The meaning of the quotation may be that God makes his angels "swift as the wind" (NLT) and potent like fire (cf. NCV). Some understand it to literally mean that God changes his angels into winds and flames of fire to carry out various tasks.

Josh 5:13-15 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" ¹⁴And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" ¹⁵And the commander of the LORD's army

said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Possibly Joshua experienced here an encounter with God, although the "man" may have simply been an angel. Either way, the LORD'S army (vv. 14, 15) is presumably an army of angelic beings, ultimately at God's command to serve him.

Job 25:3a *Is there any number to his armies?*

This most likely is speaking of God's "angels who serve him" (GNT).

Dan 7:10 A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

The "thousands" are probably angels (cf. NCV, NLT) who wait upon God to serve him.

Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come, *your will be done,*^a *on earth as it is in heaven.*

^a Or *Let your kingdom come, let your will be done*

This may well be a reference to – or at least encompasses – God's will being done in heaven by angels, in service to God.

Rev 22:8-9 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹but he said to me, "You must not do that! *I am a fellow servant with you* and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

^r Greek *fellow bondservant*

. . . Angels carry out judgments of God

See also:

- **Matt 13:40-42** ↓
- *a) Prologue: Judgments Preceding Jesus Christ's Return*, p. 692

Carrying out judgments of God is a prominent role of angels in their service of God.

1Chr 21:15-16 And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw, and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ¹⁶And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then



David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. 

Ps 78:49 *He let loose on them his burning anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels.* 

This is referring to the last of the ten Egyptians plagues – the death of every firstborn male – as having been carried out by angels.

Zec 6:1-8 Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, *four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze.* ²*The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, ³the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses—all of them strong.* ⁴Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” ⁵And *the angel answered and said to me, “These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the LORD of all the earth.* ⁶*The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go toward the south country.”* ⁷*When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and patrol the earth. And he said, “Go, patrol the earth.” So they patrolled the earth.* ⁸Then he cried to me, “Behold, those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country.” 

^s Or *and the fourth chariot strong dappled horses*

The “chariots” are angelic “spirits” (v. 5) sent “throughout the earth” (v. 7) – by the angel speaking in the vision – to carry out God’s judgment. Verse 8 suggests that their works of judgment in the north appeased God’s wrath (cf. GNT, NASB, NLT).

1Cor 10:10 ... nor grumble, as some of them did and *were destroyed by the Destroyer.* 

The “Destroyer” speaks of a “destroying angel” (CEV, NIV).

Acts 12:23 Immediately *an angel of the Lord struck him down*, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. 

Rev 8:5 *Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings,^t flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.* 

^t Or *voices, or sounds*

Note that judgments spoken of in Revelation (cf. [Rev 14:19-20](#) ↓; [Rev 15:5-16:4](#) ↓) are generally from apocalyptic visions. Much of these visions is symbolic.

Rev 14:19-20 *So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.* ²⁰And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse’s bridle, for 1,600 stadia.^u 

^u About 184 miles; a *stadion* was about 607 feet or 185 meters

For comment, see the comment on [Rev 14:18-20](#) – under [Horrific consequences . . .](#), p. 450.

Rev 15:5-8; 16:1-4 After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent^v of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶and *out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.* ⁷And *one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever,* ⁸and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until *the seven plagues of the seven angels* were finished.  . ^{16:1}*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”* ²*So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.* ³*The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.* ⁴*The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood.* 

^v Or *tabernacle*

The “loud voice from the temple” (16:1) is presumably that of God, giving directions to angels. Further examples of angels carrying out God’s judgments are contained in the subsequent verses and elsewhere in Revelation (cf. [a\) Prologue: Judgments Preceding Jesus Christ’s Return](#), p. 692).

Angels serve Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Jesus Christ will return with his angels](#), p. 701

Matt 4:11 Then the devil left him, and behold, *angels came and were ministering to him.* 

Matt 13:40-42 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. ⁴¹*The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers,* ⁴²*and throw them into*



the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 

Matt 26:50b-54 Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant^w of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³*Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?* ⁵⁴But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" 

^w Greek *bondservant*

Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants^x the things that must soon take place. *He made it known by sending his angel* to his servant^y John, ... 

^x Greek *bondservants*

^y Greek *bondservant*

✦ An angel strengthened Jesus in Gethsemane:

Luke 22:41-43 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³And *there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.* 

Note: "The angel of the LORD" is identified with God

See also:

▪ Ps 34:7 ↓

Note that the apparent identification of "the angel of the LORD" with God in such passages as the following ones, has led a number of commentators to believe that this angel is the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. See also the comment below on Exodus 23:20-22. However, this identification with God may simply be due to the angel in question speaking or acting on behalf of God – as per the comment below on Exodus 3:2-6.

Gen 16:9-10, 13 *The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her."* ¹⁰*The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude."*  ... ¹³*So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing,"^z for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."*^a 

^z Or *You are a God who sees me*

^a Hebrew *Have I really seen him here who sees me? or Would I have looked here for the one who sees me?*

Here the angel of the LORD (v. 9) is identified with God by: speaking as if he was God – "I will surely multiply your offspring" (v. 10); being referred to as "the LORD who spoke to her" (v. 13a); and Hagar referring to him as "God" and by saying that she had seen God (v. 13b). Note however that there is uncertainty about the Hebrew text of v. 13b.

Ex 3:2-6 *And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.* He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴*When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"* And he said, "Here I am." ⁵Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶*And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* *And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.* 

Note that in Acts 7:35 Stephen interprets this incident as God speaking to Moses "through the angel who appeared to him in the bush."

Judg 6:22-23 *Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."* ²³*But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die."* 

Those who saw God often expected to die (cf. **Judg 13:22** ↓). Here the angel of the LORD is identified with God by Gideon calling him "Lord GOD" and expecting to die for apparently having seen God.

Judg 13:16-22 *And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "If you detain me, I will not eat of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.)* ¹⁷*And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?"* ¹⁸*And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?"* ¹⁹So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works^b wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching. ²⁰And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground. ²¹The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. *Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD.* ²²*And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God."* 

^b Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew *LORD, and working*



The angel of the LORD's description of his name as being "wonderful" (v. 18) arguably alludes to deity. Verse 20a may also be correlating the angel of the LORD with the LORD. Manoah, Samson's father, certainly in a sense at least equated the angel of LORD with God (v. 22).

Zec 3:1-4 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan^c standing at his right hand to accuse him. ²And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand^d plucked from the fire?" ³Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." 

^c Satan means the accuser

^d That is, a burning stick

The "angel of the LORD" is identified with God in that he appears to speak as God (vv. 1-2) and he cleanses and takes away sin (v. 4; cf. v. 9). Later in vv. 6-10 he may also be speaking as God.

Zec 12:8 On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. 

✦ **The angel who accompanied the Israelites on the desert journey:**

Ex 23:20-22 Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. ²¹Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. ²²"But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 

This angel is not actually referred to as "the angel of the LORD", but can plausibly be identified as such. Many commentators identify this angel with the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ or even God himself due to: the implication that the angel is able to forgive (v. 21); the assertion that "my name is in him" (v. 21); and the correlation with what the angel says and what God says (v. 22a).

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Angels and God's People

Subsections

- Angels help and care for God's people
- Examples of angels, sent by God, saving God's people
- Angels give God's people messages, such as instructions
- Angels also give messages about future events
- Note: Angels played a role in the introduction of the Mosaic Law

Angels help and care for God's people

See also:

- [Ex 23:20-22](#) 

Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? 

Gen 24:40 But he said to me, "The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and prosper your way. You shall take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's house. 

1Ki 19:5-7 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." ⁶And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." 

Ps 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. 

Ps 91:11-12 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. ¹²On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. 

Verse 12 figuratively depicts the work of angels in protecting God's people.

Dan 10:18-19 Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. ¹⁹And he said, "O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage." And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." 



Matt 18:10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven *their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.*^e 📖

^e Some manuscripts add verse 11: *For the Son of Man came to save the lost*

The reference to “their angels” who “always see the face of my Father who is in heaven” supports the concept of there being “guardian angels” who care for and in some sense represent individuals in God’s presence (although not all commentators would interpret this verse as such). Note that “little ones” probably refers to those who are like a child in a spiritual sense, either a new or young believer – or any humble believer. Some however think that the term may simply denote little children.

Job 33:23-25 *If there be for him an angel, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him,*²⁴*and he is merciful to him, and says, ‘Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom;’*²⁵*let his flesh become fresh with youth; let him return to the days of his youthful vigor’; ...* 📖

Elihu puts forward the concept of angels having an advocacy role on behalf of people – not dissimilar to that now fulfilled by Jesus Christ – and also giving guidance (v. 23b).

Rev 1:20 As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are *the angels of the seven churches*, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. 📖

This and the references to these angels in the subsequent chapters (cf. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14) suggest that churches have angels who represent them and have responsibility for them. However other common views of the meaning here of “angels” are: the term designates human ministers or messengers (cf. CEV text note); and these “angels” are personifications of the seven churches.

Examples of angels, sent by God, saving God’s people

Num 20:16a And when we cried to the LORD, *he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt.* 📖

2Ki 6:15-17 When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”¹⁶He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”¹⁷Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and *behold, the*

mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. 📖

Verse 17 tells of Elisha’s servant being enabled to see the surrounding heavenly forces protecting them. The “horses and chariots of fire” presumably depict angelic forces.

2Chr 32:20-21a Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven.²¹*And the LORD sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria.* So he returned with shame of face to his own land. 📖

Isa 63:9 In all their affliction he was afflicted,^f and *the angel of his presence saved them*; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. 📖

^f Or *he did not afflict*

Note that a number of commentators identify “the angel of his presence” with “the angel of the LORD”.

Dan 3:24-25, 28 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”²⁵He answered and said, “But *I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.*” 📖 ...²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “*Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside^g the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.*” 📖

^g Aramaic and *changed*

The fourth figure (vv. 24-25) may have simply been an angel (v. 28), but some scholars think that it was a Christophany, a manifestation of Christ, possibly as “the angel of the LORD”.

Dan 6:22 *My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me*, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm. 📖

Acts 5:18-19 ... they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.¹⁹But *during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out*, and said, ... 📖

Acts 12:6-11 Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were



guarding the prison. ⁷And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. ⁸And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." ⁹And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. ¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." 

Angels give God's people messages, such as instructions

See also:

- [Gen 16:11](#) ; [Luke 1:19](#) ; [Luke 1:31](#) 

The Hebrew and Greek words for "angel" carry the meaning "messenger" (cf. [Dan 4:13](#), [17](#) .

Gen 16:9 *The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her."* 

Judg 13:3-5 *And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. ⁴Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, ⁵for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines."* 

Matt 1:20-21 *But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."* 

Matt 2:13, 19-20 *Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."  ... ¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in*

Egypt, ²⁰saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." 

Matt 28:5-7 *But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he^h lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you."* 

^h Some manuscripts the Lord

Acts 7:35 *This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush.* 

Acts 8:26a *Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the southⁱ to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."* 

ⁱ Or go at about noon

Acts 10:3-6 *About the ninth hour of the day^j he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." ⁴And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."* 

^j That is, 3 P.M.

✚ An angel with the gospel to proclaim to all:

Rev 14:6-7 *Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."* 

Note that "angel" – meaning "messenger" – is possibly symbolically speaking of believers, who are to proclaim the gospel to every nation. The "hour of his judgment" (v. 7) presumably does not refer to the final judgment – with other judgments still to come in the following chapters – although it may be inclusive of it.



Angels also give messages about future events

See also:

- [Judg 13:3-5](#) ↑; [Matt 1:20-21](#) ↑; [Matt 2:13](#) ↑; [Matt 28:7](#) ↑; [Rev 14:6-7](#) ↑

As indicated by the above cross references, note that a number of the passages in the previous subsection also contain examples of angels giving messages about future events. Note also that a number of the examples below contain extracts of messages and so not the complete messages.

Gen 16:10-12 *The angel of the LORD also said to her [Hagar], "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude."¹¹ And the angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael,^k because the LORD has listened to your affliction. ¹²He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."* ☞

^k Ishmael means God hears

Dan 4:13, 15b-16 I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and *behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven.* ☞ ... ¹⁵ ... [The angel, speaking of Nebuchadnezzar:] *Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.* ¹⁶*Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him.* ☞

Dan 8:16-17, 19 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai [Canal], and it called, "*Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.*" ¹⁷So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But *he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end."* ☞ ... ¹⁹*He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end.* ☞

Dan 9:22-25a *He [Gabriel] made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.* ²³*At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.* ²⁴*"Seventy weeks^l are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.^m ²⁵Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and*

build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. ☞

^l Or *sevens*; also twice in verse 25 and once in verse 26

^m Or *thing, or one*

Dan 10:13b-14 [An angel:] I was left there with the kings of Persia, ¹⁴*and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.* ☞

Zec 1:14-17 *So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. ¹⁵And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. ¹⁶Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. ¹⁷Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'* ☞

Throughout Zechariah's visions in ch. 1-6 an angel speaks with Zechariah, revealing and explaining things to him, including future matters.

Luke 1:19 *And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.* ☞

The angel Gabriel (cf. [Luke 1:26-33](#) ↓) is speaking to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, after having informed him of John's forthcoming birth and role (cf. vv. 13-17). Note that the subsequent chapter records the appearance of the angel to the shepherds informing them of Jesus Christ's birth (2:8-15).

Luke 1:26-33 In the sixth month *the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothedⁿ to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"^o ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And *behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."* ☞*

ⁿ That is, legally pledged to be married



° Some manuscripts add *Blessed are you among women!*

Acts 1:10-11 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, *two men stood by them in white robes*, ¹¹and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? *This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.*”

Acts 27:23-24 For this very night *there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship*, ²⁴and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; *you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.*’

Rev 22:6, 16 And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And *the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.*” ... ¹⁶“*I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.*”

Similarly 1:1 says: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,....” Additionally, elsewhere in Revelation John tells of angels showing and explaining to him things of the future (cf. 17:1, 7; 21:9-10).

† The angel’s message of Jesus Christ’s birth:

Luke 2:8-12 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And *the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”*

Note: Angels played a role in the introduction of the Mosaic Law

The Mosaic Law (i.e. the law given through Moses, to Israel) was put into effect through angels (cf. **Acts 7:53 ↓**; **Gal 3:19 ↓**). This subsection’s content suggests that God gave the law through angels to the mediator Moses to pass on to the people.

Acts 7:37-38 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.’ ³⁸This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness *with the angel who spoke to him at Mount*

Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us.

The term “living oracles” is a reference to the Mosaic Law (cf. **v. 53 ↓**).

Acts 7:53 ... *you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.*

Gal 3:19 Why then *the law*? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and *it was put in place through angels* by an intermediary.

Heb 2:2 For since *the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ...*

The “message” refers to the law (cf. AMP, NLT, NIV), as reflected in the second part of the verse. It is spoken of here as being given through angels.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Further Teaching about Angels

Subsections

- Angels are very important
- There are different kinds and ranks of angels
- There are thousands upon thousands of angels
- Angels reside in heaven
- Angels are not to be worshiped
- Other teachings about angels

Angels are very important

See also:

- *Note: “The angel of the LORD” is identified with God, p. 172*

Although not stated directly, the importance and high status of angels is implied and/or reflected in each of the following verses.



2Sam 19:27b *But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you.* 📖

Dan 4:16-17 Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. ¹⁷*The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.* 📖

Through a vision, an angel – “a watcher, a holy one” (v. 13; cf. v. 17) – tells of how Nebuchadnezzar would become like a wild animal (v. 15). In v. 17a the angel appears to be saying that the decision has been made by angels (cf. GNT), which would exemplify the important status of angels. Alternatively, he may simply be underlining that this decision has been announced by angels.

Luke 12:8-9 And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, *the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,* ⁹*but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.* 📖

This speaks of judgment day and angels being witness to Jesus Christ's judgments. The fact that being spoken of as such underlines the high status of angels is reinforced by the parallel verses in Matthew 10:32-33, which speak of God in the same way. That is, they speak of Jesus Christ acknowledging people and disowning others “before my Father who is in heaven.”

Gal 4:14 ... and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but *received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.* 📖

This points to the great importance of angels, even making something of a parallel of them with Jesus Christ.

1Tim 5:21 *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.* 📖

Here the importance of angels is borne out by them being grouped with God and Jesus Christ, in regard to bearing witness to and approving of Paul's charge.

Heb 13:2 *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* 📖

This appears to imply that showing hospitality to angels is a greater privilege than doing so to humans, suggesting that angels are regarded more highly than humans.

Rev 14:10 ... he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and *he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.* 📖

Similar to 1 Timothy 5:21 above, the importance of angels is indicated by them being grouped with Jesus Christ, “the Lamb” – even being listed before him – in regard to observing such judgment.

There are different kinds and ranks of angels

Gen 3:24 He drove out the man, and *at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim* and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. 📖

As noted earlier, cherubim and seraphim (cf. [Isa 6:2 ↓](#)) are understood to be amongst the highest orders of the different kinds of angels.

Isa 6:1-2 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train^p of his robe filled the temple. ²*Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.* 📖

^p Or hem

The high ranking of seraphim is implied by their close proximity to God and his throne (cf. [Rev 4:4 ↓](#)).

Eph 3:10 ... so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to *the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.* 📖

Here and in Colossians 1:16 and 1 Peter 3:22 immediately below, “rulers”, “authorities” and like terms are often understood as referring to various rankings of angels; hence the inclusion of these verses in this subsection. This may well be the case, particularly here with the reference to the “heavenly” places. However the terms may more generally be intended to cover all spiritual powers – i.e. both good and evil spiritual beings. Earthly powers appear to also be included in Colossians 1:16.

Col 1:16 For by^q *him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*—all things were created through him and for him. 📖

^q That is, by means of; or in

1Pet 3:22 ... who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with *angels, authorities, and powers* having been subjected to him. 📖



1Thes 4:16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with *the voice of an archangel*, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 

The reference may well be to Michael (cf. [Jude 1:9](#) ↓; [Dan 10:13](#) ↓), the only angel actually called an archangel in Scripture (cf. [Jude 1:9](#) ↓).

Jude 1:9 But when *the archangel Michael*, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” 

Dan 10:13 The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but *Michael, one of the chief princes*, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, ... 

This reference highlights Michael’s high rank, as similarly does 12:1 below.

Dan 12:1a “At that time shall arise *Michael, the great prince* who has charge of your people. 

Rev 4:4 *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.* 

The “elders”, seated in close proximity to God’s throne, are quite possibly a high order of angelic beings.

There are thousands upon thousands of angels

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to *innumerable angels* in festal gathering, ... 

Jude 1:14 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with *ten thousands of his holy ones*, ... 

Rev 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of *many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands*, ... 

Psa 68:17 *The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands*; the Lord is among them; Sinai is now in the sanctuary. 

This appears to be figuratively speaking of God’s angelic forces as chariots – of which there are “thousands upon thousands”.

Deut 33:2 He said, “The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us;^r he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from *the ten thousands of holy ones*, with flaming fire^s at his right hand. 

^r Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate; Hebrew *them*

^s The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Matt 26:53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me *more than twelve legions of angels*? 

A Roman legion had 3,000 to 6,000 soldiers, plus cavalrymen.

† God’s angelic forces can hardly be numbered:

Job 25:2-3a “Dominion and fear are with God;^t he makes peace in his high heaven. ³*Is there any number to his armies?* 

^t Hebrew *him*

The rhetorical question (v. 3a) appears to be implying that no person could possibly count the number of God’s angelic forces, such is their vast number.

Angels reside in heaven

See also:

- [Heb 12:22](#) ↑
- *Angels are with God, surrounding him and even standing in his presence*, p. 169

Matt 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are *like angels in heaven*. 

Matt 24:36 But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even *the angels of heaven*, nor the Son,^u but the Father only. 

^u Some manuscripts omit *nor the Son*

Matt 28:2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an *angel of the Lord descended from heaven* and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 

Luke 2:15 When *the angels went away from them into heaven*, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” 

John 1:51 And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you,^v *you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*” 

^v The Greek for *you* is plural; twice in this verse



For comment, see the comment on [John 1:51](#) – under *God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit*, p. 797.

Gal 1:8 But even if we or *an angel from heaven* should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 📖

2Thes 1:7 ... and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed *from heaven with his mighty angels* ... 📖

Angels are not to be worshiped

Col 2:18 *Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels*, going on in detail about visions,^w puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ... 📖

^w Or *about the things he has seen*

Here Paul refers with strong disapproval to the practice of worshiping angels.

Rev 19:9-10 And the angel said^x to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”¹⁰ *Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant^y with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.”* For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. 📖

^x Greek *he said*

^y Greek *fellow bondservant*

Rev 22:8-9 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, *I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, ⁹but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant^z with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”* 📖

^z Greek *fellow bondservant*

Other teachings about angels

Col 1:16 For *by^a him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.* 📖

^a That is, by means of; or *in*

Like all other things, angels have been created, by Jesus Christ (cf. [Ps 148:2, 5 ↓](#)) and for Jesus Christ.

Ps 148:2, 5 Praise him, *all his angels*; praise him, all his hosts! 📖 ... ⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and *they were created.* 📖

This is also a possible reference to angels being created. However, v. 5 may only be referring to various elements of the heavens and the skies mentioned in the intervening verses (cf. vv. 3-4), rather than being also inclusive of angels (v. 2).

Matt 22:30 For in the resurrection *they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.* 📖

This implies that angels do not marry.

1Tim 5:21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *the elect angels* I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. 📖

God's holy angels have been chosen by him as such, in contrast to fallen angels.

1Cor 6:3 Do you not know that *we are to judge angels?* How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! 📖

Angels will be judged by God's people. A number of commentators consider that Paul is most likely speaking in particular of believers having a role in the judgment of evil angels.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Satan and Demons

See also:

- [II. Spiritual Warfare](#), p. 1810

Many people find the existence of Satan (i.e. the devil) and demons disturbing and choose to avoid the subject. But to live the Christian life it is vital to understand our chief opponents. Moreover, the Bible has a lot to say about Satan and demons – much of which is in fact encouraging to believers.

a) Satan's Evilness

See also:

- [c\) Satan's Work against God's People](#), p. 188

Subsections

- [Satan is evil – and is opposed to God's kingdom](#)
- [Satan is opposed to Jesus Christ](#)
- [Satan is deceitful . . .](#)
- [. . . Those who follow Satan likewise are deceitful](#)
- [Note: Possible references to Satan's original state and his fall](#)

Satan is evil – and is opposed to God's kingdom

Matt 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but *deliver us from evil*.^a 

^a Or *the evil one*; some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*

The text note indicates that "evil" can be translated "the evil one" (AMP, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV; cf. GNT, NCV) – referring to Satan.

1Jn 3:8a, 10, 12 *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.*  ...

¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and *who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*  ... ¹²We should not be like *Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.* And why did he murder

him? Because *his own deeds were evil* and his brother's righteous. 

Satan's evil actions are reflected in those who belong to him, who like Cain typically commit evil actions (v. 12). Their evil actions mirror Satan, "the evil one" (v. 12a), in that they: do what is sinful (v. 8a); do not do what is right (v. 10b; [Acts 13:10](#) ↓); do not love (v. 10b); and even murder (v. 12a; cf. [John 8:44a](#) ↓).

John 8:44a You are of your father *the devil*, and your will is to do your father's desires. *He was a murderer from the beginning*, and has nothing to do with the truth, because *there is no truth in him.* 

Matt 13:19 *When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.* 

Luke 8:11-12 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then *the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.* 

This speaks of Satan removing God's word with its message about the kingdom (cf. [Matt 13:19](#) ↑) from those who do not understand it (cf. [Matt 13:19](#) ↑) and absorb it, so that they will not respond to it.

Matt 13:37-41 He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and *the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil.* The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they *will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ...* 

Satan sows his "weeds" – "all causes of sin and all law-breakers" (v. 41) – in opposition to Jesus Christ's sowing of the sons of the kingdom (vv. 37-38a). At the end of the age Jesus Christ's angels will weed out of the kingdom all such "weeds" of Satan (v. 41).

Acts 13:10 ... and said, "You son of *the devil*, you *enemy of all righteousness*, full of all deceit and villainy, *will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?* 

This implies that Satan is an enemy of everything that is aligned with righteousness, as reflected by his followers. In particular Satan opposes the paths/ways of the Lord – "plotting against His saving purposes" (AMP).



Satan is opposed to Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Matt 13:19a](#) ↑; [Matt 13:37-41](#) ↑; [Acts 13:10](#) ↑

Matt 16:21-23 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord!^b This shall never happen to you.” ²³But he turned and said to Peter, “*Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance^c to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.*” ☞

^b Or “[May God be] merciful to you, Lord!”

^c Greek *stumbling block*

By his use of “Satan” (v. 23) in rebuking Peter, it would appear that Jesus could see an agenda that was of Satan in Peter’s words. For what Peter said was actually opposed to the main aspect of Jesus’ mission, which involved his death (v. 21).

Luke 22:3-4 Then *Satan entered into Judas* called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴*He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them.* ☞

2Cor 4:4 In their case *the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* ☞

The “god of this world” refers to Satan.

Rev 12:1-5 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ²She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³And another sign appeared in heaven: *behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.* ⁴His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. *And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.* ⁵*She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ...* ☞

The woman most likely is either the church, Israel or believing Jews. The “dragon” is Satan and the “male child” whom he sought to devour is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. For comment on v. 4, see the comment on [Rev 12:3-4a](#) – under [Satan is very powerful](#), p. 184.

✦ Jesus Christ came to destroy Satan’s work:

1Jn 3:8b *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* ☞

Satan is deceitful . . .

See also:

- [2Cor 11:14](#) ↓

John 8:44 You are of your father *the devil*, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* ☞

Gen 3:1-6, 13 *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You^d shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”* ²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴*But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,^e she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ☞
... ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “*The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*” ☞

^d In Hebrew *you* is plural in verses 1-5

^e Or *to give insight*

Here Satan is manifested in the serpent (cf. [2Cor 1:3](#) ↓). There is truth in v. 5 – as often the case with clever lies – but it is stated in such a way as to imply God’s motives were not honorable and not in Eve’s best interests.

2Cor 11:3 But I am afraid that as *the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning*, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ☞

2Thes 2:9-10 The coming of the lawless one is *by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.* ☞

The “man of lawlessness” is quite likely the antichrist, Satan’s great agent of the end time.



Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and *Satan, the deceiver of the whole world*—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 

Satan deceives everyone in the world who is not of God.

Rev 20:3, 7-10 ... and [an angel] threw him [Satan] into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so *that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended*. After that he must be released for a little while.  ... ⁷And when the thousand years are ended, *Satan will be released from his prison* ⁸*and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.* ⁹And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven^f and consumed them, ¹⁰*and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* 

^f Some manuscripts *from God, out of heaven, or out of heaven from God*

... Those who follow Satan likewise are deceitful

See also:

- [2Thes 2:9-10](#) 
- [Demons are deceitful, propagating what is false](#), p. 193
- [False teachers are deceitful](#), p. 1525

Acts 13:10 ... and said, “*You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?*” 

The last clause appears to refer to twisting the Lord’s truth/s (cf. GNT, NCV). Doing such things, particularly knowingly, is quintessential deceit.

2Cor 11:13-15 For such men are *false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.* ¹⁴*And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.* ¹⁵*So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.* Their end will correspond to their deeds. 

Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make *those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie*—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I have loved you. 

Synagogues are places of Jewish worship. John coins the term “the synagogue of Satan” to depict supposedly pious Jews, who in fact belonged to Satan (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) – and as such were liars.

Rev 19:20 And the beast was captured, and with it *the false prophet who in its presence^g had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image*. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 

^g Or *on its behalf*

The false prophet of the end times will perform miraculous signs to delude the followers of the beast, who is generally understood to be Satan’s antichrist (cf. [2Thes 2:9-10](#) 

Note: Possible references to Satan’s original state and his fall

See also:

- [Note: Satan hurled down from heaven to the earth](#), p. 191

Some commentators consider the following passages to refer or allude to Satan’s original state and fall, while others think that this is not necessarily so, even unlikely.

Ezek 28:12-17 Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: “*You were the signet of perfection,^h full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.* ¹³*You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire,ⁱ emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings.^j On the day that you were created they were prepared.* ¹⁴*You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you;^k you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.* ¹⁵*You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you.* ¹⁶*In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you,^l O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.* ¹⁷*Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you.* 

^h The meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain

ⁱ Or *lapis lazuli*

^j The meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain

^k The meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain

^l Or *banished you*



This is either simply “a lamentation over the king of Tyre” (v. 12) containing highly figurative language, or additionally also descriptive of Satan. If it does allude to Satan, it says much of his origin and fall. It portrays him as originally a perfect being, “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (v. 12b) and “blameless” (v. 15a) – and even created by God (v. 13b). Additionally Satan is shown to have been highly exalted by God and to have dwelt in close proximity to God (vv. 13-14). But largely through his pride he became wicked and was expelled from God’s presence (vv. 15b-17; cf. [Isa 14:12-15](#) ↓). Note that if v. 16a is meant to be applicable to Satan, it may be portraying widespread activity or dealings of Satan.

Isa 14:12-15 *How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! ¹³You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;’^m ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ ¹⁵But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.*

^mOr in the remote parts of Zaphon

The king of Babylon is spoken of here (cf. v. 4), with some commentators understanding the passage to also allude to Satan and his fall.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Satan’s Power

Subsections

- [Satan is very powerful](#)
- [Satan has great power and authority in the world](#)
- [Satan works in and through unbelievers](#)
- [Satan is not as powerful as God . . .](#)
- [. . . and Satan is not as powerful as Jesus Christ](#)
- [Note: Satan stands condemned](#)

Satan is very powerful

Matt 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by *Beelzebul, the prince of demons*, that this man casts out demons.”

“Beelzebub” refers to Satan. The description of him as “the prince of demons” speaks of him as the head of all demons, illustrating his extraordinary power and authority (cf. [Rev 12:3-4a](#) ↓).

Eph 6:16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish *all the flaming darts of the evil one*; ...

Here “the flaming darts” figuratively portray Satan’s potent spiritual weaponry and/or attacks, which have the potential to cause great harm.

Heb 2:14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy *the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil*, ...

This most likely refers to Satan’s power to induce people to sin and so to render them subject to the penalty of death. As such he effectively wields the power of death, an aspect of his very formidable power and influence.

1Pet 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. *Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

Rev 12:3-4a And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴*His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.*

The dragon is Satan (cf. [Rev 13:2](#) ↓). There are different ideas as to what v. 4a portrays. Some think that it is speaking of Satan winning over the fallen angels (cf. Gen 6:1-4). As such, along with illustrating Satan’s own great power, the verse would point to these powerful beings as extensions of Satan’s power and influence.

Satan has great power and authority in the world

See also:

- [Eph 2:2](#) ↓

Note that most of the references in the previous subsection to some extent also point to Satan’s great power in the world.



Luke 4:5-6 And *the devil* took him up and showed him *all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time*,⁶ and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. 📖

1Jn 5:19 We know that we are from God, and *the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*. 📖

Here and in Revelation 12:9 below, “the whole world” refers to “the rest of the world” (CEV) apart from the children of God. The term is applicable to world systems as well to the world’s people.

Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, *who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world*—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 📖

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will *the ruler of this world* be cast out. 📖

Jesus also uses the title “the ruler of this world” for Satan in 14:30 and 16:11. Other titles of Satan indicative of his power in the world are: “The god of this age” (2Cor 4:4 ↓) and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2 ↓).

Acts 10:38 ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing *all who were oppressed by the devil*, for God was with him. 📖

1Jn 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than *he who is in the world*. 📖

Particularly in this context, “he who is in the world” is indicative of Satan’s great authority in the world.

Rev 2:13 ‘I know *where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is*. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faithⁿ even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, *where Satan dwells*. 📖

ⁿ Or *your faith in me*

The clauses “where Satan’s throne is” and “where Satan dwells” most likely refer to the city of Pergamum as a center of pagan worship. This is illustrative of Satan’s power in the world.

Rev 13:2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth. *And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority*. 📖

This speaks of Satan’s dominating power over the world, which he will extend to the beast of the end times.

Matt 12:26 And if *Satan* casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will *his kingdom* stand? 📖

Here Jesus Christ refers to Satan’s worldly kingdom, indicative of the control Satan has in the world, over all people and spiritual beings that do not belong to God.

Satan works in and through unbelievers

Acts 26:17-18 ... delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you¹⁸ to open their eyes, so *that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God*, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. 📖

This implies that all non-believers are to some extent at least under the power of Satan. Being under his power involves such things as being influenced by his temptations and open to his control.

2Cor 4:4 In their case *the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ*, who is the image of God. 📖

Eph 2:2 ... in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*— 📖

Note that the reference to Satan as “the prince of the power of the air” probably alludes to him as the ruler and leader of “the spiritual forces of evil” (NirV®; cf. NCV).

2Cor 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.¹⁵ So it is no surprise if *his servants*, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. 📖

The description of false teachers as Satan’s “servants” (v. 15) indicates that they effectively carry out purposes of Satan.

2Tim 2:25-26 ... correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of *the devil, after being captured by him to do his will*. 📖

John 8:44 *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires*. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 📖



The phrase “do your father’s desires” may mean “carry out what your father desires you to do” or, more likely, “do the things your father desires to do”. These interpretations reflect that Satan is the father of wicked people in that they: are subject to his will; exhibit his characteristics; and follow his example (cf. v. 41), such as being prepared to murder and oppose the truth (cf. v. 40).

John 13:2, 27, 30 During supper, when *the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him*, ... ²⁷*Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.* Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” ... ³⁰*So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out.* And it was night.

Verses 27a and 30a indicate that as soon as Judas had taken the bread offered to him, Satan entered into him (v. 27a) and he immediately went out (v. 30a) to betray Jesus. This implies that Satan used Judas.

Rev 20:7-9 And when the thousand years are ended, *Satan will be released from his prison* ⁸*and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle;* their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹*And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven* ⁹ and consumed them, ...

⁹ Some manuscripts *from God, out of heaven, or out of heaven from God*

This appears to speak of Satan gathering numerous forces to fight against God’s people in the end time.

‡ Those who are of the devil:

1Jn 3:8a, 10 *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.* ... ¹⁰*By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

Satan is not as powerful as God . . .

See also:

- *Note: Satan stands condemned*, p. 187
- *Satan can only tempt and afflict as God permits*, p. 190
- *God has power over the forces of evil* + ref., p. 255
- *God protects his people from all evil, including Satan*, p. 943

Job 2:1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and *Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.*

In saying that Satan came to “present himself before the LORD”, this verse is indicative of God’s superiority and even of Satan’s acknowledgment of this.

Rom 16:20a *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*

In view of the preceding verses (vv. 17-19), Paul may be referring to God soon crushing the work of Satan carried out by false teachers. Alternatively Paul may have in view God’s final comprehensive crushing of Satan himself.

Luke 4:5-6 And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶*and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.*

The authority that Satan does have in this world is only his because God has given it to him – for a limited time (cf. [Rev 12:12](#) ↓).

Rev 12:12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because *he knows that his time is short!*

Satan knows that God in his supreme power has limited the time in which Satan has left before God implements his doom.

Rev 20:1-3 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit^P and a great chain. ²*And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,* ³*and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.*

^P Greek *the abyss*; also verse 3

Here even one of God’s angels exerts power over Satan, binding and imprisoning him – in accordance with God’s will. Revelation 12:7-8 also speaks of angels overpowering Satan. Such power being exercised by God’s forces is indicative of God’s power being superior to Satan’s.



... and Satan is not as powerful as Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Satan can only tempt and afflict as God permits*, p. 190
- *Jesus delivered people from demons and Satan – demonstrating power over evil*, p. 560
- *Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil*, p. 605
- *God protects his people from all evil, including Satan*, p. 943

Gen 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^a and her offspring; *he shall bruise your head*, and you shall bruise his heel.

^a Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis

Generally this is seen as more than just a description of the enmity that would exist between humans and snakes. The offspring of the woman is thought to represent human beings and God's people in particular, with the offspring of the serpent symbolizing those controlled by Satan, including demons. The second part of the verse is often understood to be chiefly fulfilled in Jesus Christ's victory over Satan through his death and resurrection (cf. [Heb 2:14](#) ↓).

Matt 4:10-11 *Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." 11Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

This reflects Jesus' authority over Satan.

Luke 11:14, 21-22 *Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. ... 21When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; 22but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.*

In v. 22 Jesus is referring to his overpowering of Satan in Satan's worldly domain, stripping him of his defenses and taking what was his – a truth demonstrated by Jesus driving out demons (v. 14) and thus releasing people from Satan's grip.

Heb 2:14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, *that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ...*

The term "destroy" appears to have the sense "break the power of" (NLT), although it may also allude to Jesus Christ's death being significant in Satan's ultimate destruction.

1Jn 3:8b *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*

1Jn 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but *he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

‡ **The Holy Spirit is greater than Satan:**

1Jn 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for *he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

The "he who is in you" is most likely referring to the Holy Spirit, but it could be referring to God or to Jesus Christ.

Note: Satan stands condemned

John 16:11 ... concerning judgment, because *the ruler of this world is judged.*

Satan is or has been "judged" in that he has been condemned.

Rom 16:20a *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*

Matt 25:41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into *the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Rev 20:10 ... and *the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

1Tim 3:6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and *fall into the condemnation of the devil.*

The clause "fall into the condemnation of the devil" most likely means to face the same condemnation as the devil does. However, note that it has also been interpreted as referring to falling from a high position just as the devil did, and even to judgment dealt out by the devil.

Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and *dust shall be the serpent's food.* They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

The serpent quite possibly alludes to Satan. As such, "dust shall be the serpent's food" would allude to Satan's punishment.



Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Satan's Work against God's People

See also:

- a) *The Existence of Spiritual Warfare*, p. 1810
- b) *Engaging in Spiritual Warfare*, p. 1813

Subsections

- Satan schemes and fights against God's people
- Satan tempts God's people . . .
- . . . and Satan can lead God's people astray
- Satan can afflict God's people
- Satan can only tempt and afflict as God permits
- Satan accuses God's people before God
- Note: Satan hurled down from heaven to the earth

Satan schemes and fights against God's people

2Cor 2:10-11 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ¹¹so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

Paul is speaking of forgiving a church member who has "caused pain" (v. 5) – and presumably has since repented. Not forgiving such a person would leave the church members themselves susceptible to Satan's designs and schemes, allowing him to work through such things as bitterness and animosity.

Eph 6:11, 16 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against *the schemes of the devil*. ... ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish *all the flaming darts of the evil one*; ...

The "flaming darts" (v. 16) depict such things as temptations and trials instigated by Satan against God's people.

1Tim 3:7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

The "a snare of the devil" appears to be a general reference to Satan deceiving one into sin, rather than referring to any particular "snare". Paul may be implying here that a church leader without a good reputation may well not be deserving of such, and so would be the type of person quite likely to fall into one of Satan's traps.

1Pet 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. *Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

Rev 12:17 *Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood^r on the sand of the sea.*

^r Some manuscripts *And I stood*, connecting the sentence with 13:1

As noted earlier, the dragon depicts Satan and the woman is usually thought to be symbolically representative of the church – or possibly Israel or believing Jews in particular. So, "the rest of her offspring" appears to refer to Christians.

Gen 3:15 *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^s and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*

^s Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis

See the comment on **Gen 3:15** earlier in . . . *and Satan is not as powerful as Jesus Christ*, p. 187.

‡ **Satan hinders God's people:**

1Thes 2:18 ... because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but *Satan hindered us*.

Satan tempts God's people . . .

Gen 3:1-6 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. *He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You^t shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"* ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴*But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,^a she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.



^t In Hebrew *you* is plural in verses 1-5

^u Or *to give insight*

Matt 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.^v 

^v Or *the evil one*; some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*

Particularly as James 1:13 says that God does not tempt anyone, “lead us not into temptation” probably has the sense “don’t let us yield to temptation” (NLT; cf. Nlrv), notably that of “the evil one” (text note). Alternatively, “temptation” could refer more generally to “hard testing” (GNT; cf. NRSV).

Luke 4:1-13 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²for forty days, *being tempted by the devil*. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ³*The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”* ⁴And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” ⁵*And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,* ⁶*and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.”* ⁷*If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.”* ⁸And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.”” ⁹*And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,* ¹⁰*for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,”* ¹¹*and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”* ¹²And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³*And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.* 

Satan’s temptation of Jesus is illustrative of Satan’s work in tempting God’s people. The temptation in vv. 2-3 appears to be for Jesus to invoke his divine power as the Son of God for his own purposes, in a way that would have been inconsistent with God’s purposes for his sacrificial mission, to be lived in dependence on God. Jesus counters Satan by pointing to the priority that God’s word should have in living one’s daily life (v. 4).

1Cor 7:5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, *so that Satan may not tempt you* because of your lack of self-control. 

1Thes 3:5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear *that somehow the tempter had tempted you* and our labor would be in vain. 

Paul had been concerned that Satan may have been successful in tempting the Thessalonians.

... and Satan can lead God’s people astray

See also:

▪ [Gen 3:6](#) ↑; [1Thes 3:5](#) ↑

The following verses show that Satan can lead one astray by leading one to: do something wrong (1Chr 21:1; Acts 5:3); compromise one’s faith (2Cor 1:3); or turn away from God to follow Satan (1Tim 5:15). Note that the some of the people concerned may actually never have been genuinely God’s people.

1Chr 21:1 Then *Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.* 

This taking of a census was wrong in that it appears that David did it to see how powerful he was, a sign of reliance on his own power rather than God’s. Joab’s reaction (cf. vv. 3, 6) showed that he certainly recognized it as sinful.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, “Ananias, *why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit* and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 

Keeping some of the money he had received for the sale of his land was not in itself wrong. But Ananias had deceitfully indicated that he had given all of the money to the church (cf. v. 2).

2Cor 11:3 But *I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.* 

Paul was concerned that just as Eve was deceived by Satan, the Corinthians may also be led astray by false teachers who were ultimately inspired by Satan.

1Tim 5:15 For *some have already strayed after Satan.* 

Presumably such action is primarily instigated by Satan, leading people astray. Note that while those concerned were amongst God’s people, it is debatable as to whether such people ever really have belonged to God.



Satan can afflict God's people

Job 2:7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 

Luke 13:16 And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? 

The woman had been crippled by an evil spirit (cf. v. 11) and here Jesus identifies Satan as the ultimate source of her affliction.

1Pet 5:9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 

The call to resist Satan implies that he is behind the "suffering", primarily afflictions associated with persecution, not necessarily physical afflictions.

Rev 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 

Satan can only tempt and afflict as God permits

God and Jesus Christ may permit Satan to tempt or afflict their people, but only in accordance with their purposes, as 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 below illustrates (cf. *d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons*, p. 869).

1Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 

God has the power to limit temptation, including that which originates directly from Satan – illustrating God's power to curtail Satan at will.

Job 1:12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. 

Note that the passages immediately preceding this and 2:6 below, are in the following subsection.

Job 2:6 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life." 

Luke 22:31 Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you,^w that he might sift you like wheat, ... 

^w The Greek word for you (twice in this verse) is plural; in verse 32, all four instances are singular

Jesus appears to mean that Satan "demanded permission" (NASB) to strongly test Simon Peter. As such, the fact that Satan needed permission to do so, illustrates that he can only act against God's people as he is permitted.

2Cor 12:7-9 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,^x a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 

^x Or hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited

Paul's affliction apparently came from Satan. But Paul implies that Jesus Christ permitted it, using it to both keep Paul from becoming conceited (v. 7) and make him receptive to Christ's power working in him.

✦ Jesus Christ protects his people from Satan's harm:

1Jn 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. 

Particularly in light of the above verses, the last clause appears to be speaking primarily of spiritual harm.

Satan accuses God's people before God

See also:

- **Rev 12:10** 

The Greek word from which "Devil" comes means an accuser, a slanderer. In being used of Satan it points to him carrying out such activity, notably accusing and slandering believers before God. To what extent Satan is still able to accuse believers before God, if at all, depends partly on the meaning of Revelation 12:7-12 in the following subsection.



Zec 3:1-2 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and *Satan*^y standing at his right hand to accuse him. ²And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand^z plucked from the fire?”

^y *Satan* means *the accuser*

^z That is, a burning stick

In this vision Satan makes accusations against Joshua – the high priest at the time of the return of the exiles, here representative of the people. Satan accuses God’s people apparently in the hope that God will condemn them – an objective he obviously fails to achieve here (v. 2).

Job 1:6, 8-11 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and *Satan*^a also came among them. ... ⁸And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” ⁹Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.”

^a Hebrew *the Adversary*; so throughout chapters 1-2

Job 2:1, 3-5 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and *Satan* also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ... ³And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.” ⁴Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.”

Note: Satan hurled down from heaven to the earth

See also:

- *Note: Possible references to Satan’s original state and his fall*, p. 183

Rev 12:7-12 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And *the dragon and his angels fought back*, ⁸but he was defeated, and there was no

longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for *the accuser of our brothers*^b has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹²Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But *woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!*”

^b Or *brothers and sisters*

Commentators differ in their understanding as to whether vv. 7-12: refer to a final expulsion of Satan from heaven in the last days, leading to the rise of the two beasts in the subsequent chapter; or are symbolic of Jesus’ victory on the cross and the victory that his followers have as a result. Further to the latter possibility, some consider that this passage may actually connect the timing of Satan’s expulsion from heaven with Jesus’ victory on the cross (cf. [John 12:31 ↓](#)). Much would depend on whether or not v. 10a is referring to the present forms of the things it mentions, which were established through Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. If it is connected with Jesus’ victory on the cross, then this may imply that that Satan is now not able to accuse Christians before God – or at least not “in” heaven.

Luke 10:17-18 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” ¹⁸And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”

As with John 12:31 below, v. 18 is not necessarily speaking of the event described above in Revelation 12:7-12. Jesus may have instead been speaking metaphorically, implying that the disciples’ success in exercising authority over demons (v. 17) was a sign that Satan’s power had been broken.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; *now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*

Jesus is referring to his imminent death – possibly along with his subsequent resurrection – by which Satan would “be cast out”. By this phrase Jesus may well be simply speaking of the breaking of Satan’s power and hold on humankind through sin and the power of death. However, in conjunction with this truth, Jesus may be more precisely speaking of Satan being “cast out (expelled)” (AMP; cf. NASB, NLT, NKJV) from heaven and “thrown down” (NCV™) to earth.



Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Demons

Evil spiritual forces are referred to by a number of names, including “demons”, “evil spirits”, “spirits” (cf. comment on [Rev 16:14](#) ↴) and even “angels”, with a number of verses correlating demons with fallen angels (cf. *Demons face eternal punishment*, p. 195). In order to be concise, only “Demons” has been used in this and the following subheadings.

Subsections

- Demons are evil and powerful spiritual beings
- Demons are aligned with Satan
- Demons are deceitful, propagating what is false
- Demons can possess people . . .
- . . . Demons can cause people they possess much harm
- Demons both fear and have to submit to God and Jesus Christ
- Demons face eternal punishment

Demons are evil and powerful spiritual beings

Luke 7:21 In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and *evil spirits*, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. 📖

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but *against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* 📖

The terms “rulers”, “authorities” and “powers” are indicative of the great – but limited – power of demons.

1Sam 19:9-10 Then a *harmful spirit from the LORD* came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing the lyre. ¹⁰And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. 📖

The presence of the harmful spirit – “an evil spirit” (AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NRSV) – in Saul led to Saul’s evil

action, attempting to take David’s life. Note that the fact that this evil spirit was “from the LORD” (v. 9a) illustrates that God can use evil for his own purposes (cf. *a) God Has Control over Evil*, p. 272).

Matt 8:28, 30-32 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,^c *two demon-possessed^d men* met him, coming out of the tombs, *so fierce that no one could pass that way.* 📖 ... ³⁰Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. ³¹And *the demons begged him, saying, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.”* ³²And he said to them, “Go.” *So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.* 📖

^c Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; some *Gerasenes*

^d Greek *daimonizomai*; also verse 33; elsewhere rendered *oppressed by demons*

The hostility and power of the men was due to demons possessing them. As such, the men’s hostility and power was indicative of the evil and power of demons – as was the effect of the demons on the herd of pigs. Similar comments can be made in regard to some of the following verses.

Mark 5:2-4 And when Jesus^e had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs *a man with an unclean spirit.* ³He lived among the tombs. And *no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain,* ⁴*for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.* 📖

^e Greek *he*; also verse 9

Note that “an unclean spirit” denotes an evil spirit.

Acts 19:15-16 But *the evil spirit* answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” ¹⁶And *the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all^f of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.* 📖

^f Or *both*

Rev 16:14 For *they are demonic spirits, performing signs*, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. 📖

As well as showing great power in violent actions, demons are also powerful in that they can perform miraculous signs.

✚ An example of powerful spiritual warfare between demons and God’s angels:

Dan 10:13, 20b-21 [An angel:] *The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the*



chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, ...²⁰ ... But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.²¹ But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: *there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince.*

The titles “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” (v. 13, cf. v. 20) and “the prince of Greece” (v. 20) appear to refer to demons that exercise great authority in Persia and Greece. They were combatants against the angel speaking and the archangel Michael (cf. [Rev 12:7-9](#) ↓).

Demons are aligned with Satan

Matt 25:41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for *the devil and his angels.*

Luke 11:14-18 Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled.¹⁵ But some of them said, “He casts out demons by *Beelzebul, the prince of demons,*”¹⁶ while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.¹⁸ And *if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.*

“Beelzebub” refers to Satan. This passage indicates that demons belong to Satan’s kingdom.

Eph 2:2 ... in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following *the prince of the power of the air,* the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

As noted earlier, the reference to Satan as “the prince of the power of the air” probably alludes to him as the ruler and leader of “the spiritual forces of evil” (NIRV®; cf. NCV) – primarily demons or evil angels.

Eph 6:11-12 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to *stand against the schemes of the devil.*¹² *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

This aligns demonic powers (v. 12) with Satan (v. 11).

Rev 12:7-9 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And *the dragon and his angels fought back,*⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer

any place for them in heaven.⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—*he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

Demons are deceitful, propagating what is false

1Tim 4:1-2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by *devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,*² *through the insincerity of liars* whose consciences are seared, ...

The fact that the medium of the teachings of demons is insincere “liars” (v. 2a) emphasizes the deceitfulness and falseness of their teaching (cf. [1Jn 4:1](#) ↓).

1Jn 4:1, 6 Beloved, *do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* ...⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and *the spirit of error.*

In v. 1, “spirit” and “spirits” refer to the spirits which inspires teachers – the real source of their teaching – either the Holy Spirit or an evil spirit. The false prophets referred to here are examples of false teachers under the influence of an evil spirit “of error” (v. 6) – “the spirit of deception” (NLT). Demons show that they are deceitful in using such people to propagate false teaching.

⚡ Demons can be involved in fortune telling:

Acts 16:16 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by *a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.*

It would appear that demons have some knowledge of the future. Such things as fortune-telling can be used by demons to bring people under their influence. What demons divulge of the future is by no means necessarily true, as their knowledge is not complete and they are deceptive. Note that if no demon is involved with a particular fortuneteller, then presumably what the fortuneteller predicts is simply made up by themself.



Demons can possess people . . .

See also:

- *Demons are evil and powerful spiritual beings*, p. 192

Matt 8:28 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,^g *two demon-possessed*^h men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. ☞

^g Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; some *Gerasenes*

^h Greek *daimonizomai*; also verse 33; elsewhere rendered *oppressed by demons*

Matt 9:32 As they were going away, behold, a *demon-oppressed man* who was mute was brought to him. ☞

The term “demon-oppressed” is indicative of a person being demon-possessed (cf. text note on 8:28a above; AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT).

Mark 7:25 But immediately a woman *whose little daughter had an unclean spirit* heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. ☞

Acts 19:13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over *those who had evil spirits*, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” ☞

1Sam 18:10 The next day *a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul*, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand. ☞

Matt 12:43-45 “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.” ☞

This indicates that if people who have been freed of demon possession do not turn to God and so receive his Holy Spirit, they are vulnerable to an even worse case of demon possession (v. 45).

. . . Demons can cause people they possess much harm

Matt 12:22 Then a *demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute* was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ☞

The man’s blindness and muteness were due to the demon that possessed him (cf. [Mark 9:17](#) ↓).

Matt 15:22 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; *my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.*” ☞

The girl was “suffering terribly” (NIV®).

Mark 5:2, 5 And when Jesusⁱ had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs *a man with an unclean spirit.* ☞ ... ⁵*Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.* ☞

ⁱ Greek *he*; also verse 9

Mark 9:17-22, 25-27 And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for *he has a spirit that makes him mute.* ¹⁸*And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid.* So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” ¹⁹And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” ²⁰And they brought the boy to him. And *when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.* ²¹*And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood.* ²²*And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him.* But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” ☞ ... ²⁵And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” ²⁶*And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.”* ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. ☞

Luke 9:39 And behold, *a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him.* ☞

Note that this is from the parallel passage in Luke to the extract from Mark 9 above.



Luke 13:11 And *there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself.* 

‡ Demons can torment people:

1Sam 16:14 Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a *harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him.* 

Note that it would appear that this evil spirit had been sent by God as a form of judgment.

Demons both fear and have to submit to God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Matt 12:22](#) ; [Mark 9:25-26](#) 
- *a) God Has Control over Evil*, p. 272
- *Jesus delivered people from demons and Satan – demonstrating power over evil*, p. 560
- *Jesus Christ drove out demons . . .*, p. 1818

James 2:19 *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!* 

The demons shudder in fear of God due to his vastly superior power and threat to them, which will culminate in their eventual eternal punishment (cf. [Matt 8:29](#) ; [Luke 8:31](#) ; *Demons face eternal punishment*, p. 195).

Matt 8:28-29 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,^j two demon-possessed^k men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. ²⁹And behold, *they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?”* 

^j Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; some *Gerasenes*

^k Greek *daimonizomai*; also verse 33; elsewhere rendered *oppressed by demons*

The questions originate from the demons possessing the two men. The tone of the questions – with them crying out (cf. AMP, GNT, NLT) – and the questions themselves, point to a deep fear of Jesus Christ.

Mark 3:11 And *whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”* 

That the evil spirits fell down before Jesus indicates their submissiveness to him – and quite probably their fear of him.

Mark 1:25-27 But *Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”* ²⁶*And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and*

crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! *He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.*” 

Luke 8:31-32 And *they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.* ³²Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and *they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission.* 

The Abyss (v. 31) or bottomless pit is understood to be a prison or abode for demons.

‡ Demons cannot separate believers from God’s love:

Rom 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels *nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹*nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* 

The term “rulers” (v. 38) here denotes demons (cf. NIV, NLT).

Demons face eternal punishment

See also:

- [Matt 8:29](#) ; [Luke 8:31](#) 

Matt 25:41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into *the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*’ 

As noted earlier, evil angels are commonly identified with demons.

2Pet 2:4 For if *God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell^l and committed them to chains^m of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ...* 

^l Greek *Tartarus*

^m Some manuscripts *pits*

Jude 1:6 And *the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—* 

Note that some commentators think that this and the sin of evil angels spoken of above in 2 Peter 2:4 may refer to Genesis 6:1-4. It speaks of the “sons of God” who went to the “daughters of man” and married them – thus sinfully abandoning their positions of authority and their heavenly home.



Isa 24:21-22 *On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth.*
²²*They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished.* 

The term “the host of heaven” here denotes evil spiritual forces or “fallen angels” (NLT).

Pray for persecuted Christians



Unit B

God and the World: Basics

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CHAPTER 6

God's Creation

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I. General

The formation of the universe is the most astonishing thing that has ever occurred. The Bible claims that God not only created the universe, but that he also created everything in it. Moreover, it claims that God continues to maintain the universe. If we believe that God is capable of doing all this, then we should have little trouble in accepting the other claims that the Bible makes about God.

a) God Made All Things

See also:

- *God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ*, p. 214
- *The Holy Spirit played a role in creation – and still does*, p. 215

Subsections

- God has made all things
- God made the earth . . .
- . . . God made the heavens as well as the earth
- Along with making the earth and the heavens, God made everything in them
- God made light, alongside the darkness
- God made the sky
- God made land and sea – partitioning the land off from the sea
- God made vegetation
- God made the sun, moon and stars
- God made all creatures and people
- Note: All that God makes is good

God has made all things

Isa 44:24a Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: *“I am the LORD, who made all things ...* 

Jer 10:16 Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob, for *he is the one who formed all things*, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance; the LORD of hosts is his name. 

Rom 11:36 *For from him and through him and to him are all things.* To him be glory forever. Amen. 

1Cor 8:6 ... yet for us there is one *God, the Father, from whom are all things* and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. 

1Cor 11:12 ... for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And *all things are from God.* 

God “brings everything into existence” (GNT).

Eph 3:9 ... and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^a *God who created all things, ...* 

^a Or by

1Tim 6:13a I charge you in the presence of God, *who gives life to all things ...* 

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting that *he, for whom and by whom all things exist*, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 

Heb 3:4 (For every house is built by someone, but *the builder of all things is God.*) 

Rev 4:11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for *you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.*” 

Ps 89:12 *The north and the south, you have created them; Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name.* 

This implies that God created everything – i.e. “everything from north to south” (NirV®; cf. CEV).

Mark 13:19 For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of *the creation that God created* until now, and never will be. 

God made or created all creation.

Rom 4:17 ... as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and *calls into existence the things that do not exist.* 

In conjunction with being the one who has created all things, it is God who will bring into existence the things that do not yet exist, i.e. that are yet to be created. Paul appears to make this point in reflecting on both God’s promise to Abraham that he would make him a father of many nations and the promise’s fulfillment (cf. vv. 16-17).



‡ God has made countless things:

Ps 104:24-25 *O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. ²⁵Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great.*

God made the earth . . .

1Sam 2:8b *For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world.*

This somewhat figuratively speaks of God creating all of planet earth, with its inner "pillars" (cf. **Job 38:4, 6 ↓**) upon which the outer parts are set. See also the comment below on Psalms 90:2.

Ps 24:1-2 *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,^b the world and those who dwell therein, ²for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.*

^b Or *and all that fills it*

Ps 33:8-9 *Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! ⁹For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.*

Ps 90:2 *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

Note that the reference to both "the earth and the world" refers both to the earth as a whole and to the productive part of it in particular (cf. BKC).

Isa 40:28 *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

Jer 33:2 *Thus says the LORD who made the earth,^c the LORD who formed it to establish it—the LORD is his name: ...*

^c Septuagint; Hebrew *it*

Job 38:4-6 *Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, ...*

The rhetorical questions emphasize that it was God who made the earth. The "line" (v. 5) is a measuring line.

Job 26:7 *He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing.*

. . . God made the heavens as well as the earth

In the following verses, "heavens" and "heaven" appear to refer to the rest of the universe, apart from the earth – as opposed to the abode of God.

Gen 1:1 *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

Gen 2:1-2 *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ²And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.*

2Chr 2:12 *Hiram also said, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, who has discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for the LORD and a royal palace for himself."*

Job 9:8 *... [God] who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea; ...*

Job 26:13 *By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.*

Ps 102:25 *Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.*

Ps 121:2 *My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*

Ps 148:4-5 *Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! ⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created.*

In regard to the "waters above the heavens" (v. 4): "It was believed that the earth and the heavens were surrounded by water" (CEV text note). See also the comment on Genesis 1:6-8 in *God made the sky*, p. 203. In addition to Genesis 1, such "waters" possibly are also spoken of in Psalms 104:2b-3a – "... stretching out the heavens like a tent. ³He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters ..."

Isa 44:24 *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, ..."*

Isa 48:13 *My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together.*



Heb 11:3 By faith we understand that *the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.* 

2Pet 3:5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that *the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ...* 

The phrase “by the word of God” may well refer to how the heavens came into existence (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), as well as the earth. For further comment on this verse see *God made all things with his power*, p. 214.

Along with making the earth and the heavens, God made everything in them

Ex 20:11 For *in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them*, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. 

Some believe that these “days” are literally six 24-hour days, while others take them to indicate six undetermined periods of time. The fact that God did not make the sun until the fourth “day” (cf. Gen 1:14-18) arguably supports the latter.

Neh 9:6 ^d “You are the LORD, you alone. *You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.* 

^d Septuagint adds *And Ezra said*

Isa 42:5 Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ... 

Isa 66:1-2a Thus says the LORD: “*Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? ²All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD.* 

“All these things” (v. 2) probably refers to heaven and earth and all things in them (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV), rather than simply to heaven and earth.

Acts 14:15b We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 

Eph 3:14-15 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵*from whom every family^e in heaven and on earth is named, ...* 

^e Or *fatherhood*; the Greek word *patria* is closely related to the word for *Father* in verse 14

Commentators differ as to whether the phrase “every family” refers to: believers only; all people (and possibly also all angels); or all created beings. If it is the latter, then v. 15 reflects the fact that God created all things in heaven and on earth (cf. NLT). Additionally, the phrase “is named” would most likely speak of God determining the identity and being of each creature (cf. CEV, CEV text note).

Rev 10:6 ... and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ... 

God made light, alongside the darkness

See also:

- *God controls the cycle of day and night*, p. 211

Gen 1:2-5 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³*And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.* ⁴*And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.* ⁵*God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.* 

2Cor 4:6 For God, who said, “*Let light shine out of darkness,*” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 

The quotation is based on Genesis 1:3 above.

Job 26:10 *He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness.* 

Ps 74:16 *Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.* 

The context (cf. v. 17) indicates that this may well be alluding to God’s creation of the day and the night (cf. GNT).

Isa 45:7 *I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.* 

Possibly this is speaking of God’s creation of life and darkness (cf. NCV) – hence its inclusion here – but his



ongoing control of the cycle of day and night is probably primarily in view (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

God made the sky

Gen 1:6-8 And God said, “Let there be an expanse^f in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.”⁷And God made^g the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven.^h And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

^f Or a canopy; also verses 7, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20

^g Or fashioned; also verse 16

^h Or Sky; also verses 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 26, 28, 30; 2:1

The term “Heaven” (v. 8) can here also be translated as “Sky” (cf. text note). Verses 6-7 may mean that the sky (the “expanse”) separated the atmospheric waters (or clouds) from the waters of the earth, or that the earth was enveloped by a dense layer of moisture (cf. BKC).

Ps 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky aboveⁱ proclaims his handiwork.

ⁱ Hebrew the expanse; compare Genesis 1:6-8

The sky displays God’s “marvelous craftsmanship.” (NLT; cf. NIRV)

Prov 8:27-28 [Wisdom:] When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, ...

^j The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

Note that v. 27 may be understood as speaking of God setting “the sky in place” (GNT; cf. NCV) and marking out “where the sky meets the sea” (NIRV®; cf. CEV), i.e. the horizon.

Job 26:7 He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing.

The “north” denotes the northern sky (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). This verse may be referring to God maintaining the skies as much as to (or rather than) his creation of them (cf. Isa 45:7).

‡ God established natural phenomena that occur in the sky:

Job 28:25-26 When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, ²⁶when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, ...

God made land and sea – partitioning the land off from the sea

On the third day of creation God made the land and sea – and also vegetation (as discussed in the following subsection).

Gen 1:9-10 And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth,^k and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

^k Or Land; also verses 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 2:1

Ps 95:5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

Jonah 1:9 And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

Rev 14:7 And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

Prov 3:20 ... by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.

This appears to be speaking of either the waters coming into existence (cf. CEV; Job 38:8) , or being divided up – “the deeps were broken up” (AMP, NASB, NKJV; cf. NIV).

Job 28:25 When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, ...

Quite likely “apportioned the waters by measure” is speaking primarily of God determining “the size of the sea” (GNT).

Job 38:8-11 Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, ⁹when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, ¹⁰and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, ¹¹and said, “Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed?”

Note that “thick darkness its swaddling band” (v. 9) may well refer to the darkness that initially was over the surface of the sea (cf. Gen 1:2).

Ps 33:7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses.

This is referring to God gathering the waters at creation (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT, NRSV), restricting them to particular areas on the earth.



Ps 74:17 *You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made summer and winter.* 

Ps 104:5-9 He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved. ⁶*You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.* ⁷*At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.* ⁸*The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them.* ⁹*You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.* 

Prov 8:24-29 [Wisdom:] *When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.* ²⁵*Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth,* ²⁶*before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.* ²⁷*When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,* ²⁸*when he made firm the skies above, when he established¹ the fountains of the deep,* ²⁹*when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ...* 

¹ The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

Verse 26 implies that God made the things mentioned in the preceding verses.

Jer 5:22 Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? *I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.* 

‡ God forms the mountains:

Amos 4:13 For behold, *he who forms the mountains* and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— *the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!* 

God made vegetation

Gen 1:11-13 And God said, *“Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants^m yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.”* And it was so. ¹²*The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind.* And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. 

^mOr *small plants*; also verses 12, 29

Gen 2:4-9 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. ⁵*When no bush of the fieldⁿ was yet in the land^o and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground,* ⁶*and a mist^p was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—* ⁷*then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.* ⁸*And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.* ⁹*And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.* The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 

ⁿ Or *open country*

^o Or *earth*; also verse 6

^p Or *spring*

Ps 104:14-16 *You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth* ¹⁵*and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.* ¹⁶*The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.* 

This speaks of God's ongoing formation of plant life, reflective of his initial creation of it.

‡ **God gave the plants for food to humans and other creatures:**

Gen 1:29-30 And God said, *“Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.* ³⁰*And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.”* And it was so. 

God made the sun, moon and stars

See also:

- [God controls the cycle of day and night](#), p. 211

Genesis 1 indicates that God made “light” on the first “day” (vv. 3-5), but did not make the sun and stars until the fourth “day” (vv. 14-18). There are different explanations for this. Possibly these entities were made from that through which God first provided light and first marked off each “day” (cf. v. 5); i.e. the fourth “day” may speak of the source of light being made into the sun and stars. That God “separated the



light from the darkness" (v. 4) after having earlier created light (v. 3) also suggests that the source of light has not always been in the same form.

Gen 1:14-19 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons,⁴ and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. 

⁴ Or *appointed times*

The "two great lights" (v. 16) are the sun and the moon.

Job 9:9 ... [God] *who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south*; ... 

The "chambers of the south" may well refer to the southern star constellations (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT).

Ps 8:3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, *the moon and the stars, which you have set in place*, ... 

Ps 19:4b In them [the heavens] *he has set a tent for the sun*, ... 

The use of "tent" speaks of God making a home for the sun in the heavens (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT). Perhaps, more specifically, it poetically depicts a place from which the sun rises each day (cf. v. 5).

Ps 33:6 *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host*. 

Ps 74:16 Yours is the day, yours also the night; *you have established the heavenly lights and the sun*. 

Ps 136:3, 7-9 Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever;  ... ⁷to *him who made the great lights*, for his steadfast love endures forever; ⁸*the sun to rule over the day*, for his steadfast love endures forever; ⁹*the moon and stars to rule over the night*, for his steadfast love endures forever; ... 

Ps 147:4 *He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names*. 

This may well be speaking of God's creation of the stars (cf. CEV, GNT) – particularly as it speaks of God naming them –

although alternatively his control over the display of the stars each night could be in view.

Ps 148:3, 5 *Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!*  ... ⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD! *For he commanded and they were created*. 

Isa 40:26 *Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?* He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing. 

The phrase "created these" refers to the stars (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), with God's control of their appearance each night subsequently spoken of.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from *the Father of lights* with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.^r 

^r Some manuscripts *variation due to a shadow of turning*

The title "the Father of lights" speaks of God as the "Creator of the sun, moon, and stars" (NCV™; cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

‡ God created the seasons:

Ps 74:17 You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; *you have made summer and winter*. 

Note that Genesis 1:14 above also points to God creating the seasons. Additionally, see [God controls the seasons](#), p. 212.

God made all creatures and people

See also:

- [Along with making the earth and the heavens, God made everything in them](#), p. 202
- [II. God's Creation of People](#), p. 223

On the fifth day of creation God made the sea creatures and the birds. On the sixth day God made the land creatures and people.

Gen 1:20-27 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds^s fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. ²⁴And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and



beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man^t in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 

^s Or flying things; see Leviticus 11:19-20

^t The Hebrew word for man (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

Gen 2:7, 19-24 ... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.  ... ¹⁹Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed^u every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam^v there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made^w into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."^x ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 

^u Or And out of the ground the LORD God formed

^v Or the man

^w Hebrew *built*

^x The Hebrew words for woman (*ishshah*) and man (*ish*) sound alike

Note that v. 24 speaks of a husband and wife being "one flesh" just as the first man and woman had been (v. 23).

Job 40:15 Behold, Behemoth,^y which I made as I made you; he eats grass like an ox. 

^y A large animal, exact identity unknown

Ps 8:6-8 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ⁷all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. 

Ps 104:24-26 O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. ²⁵Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. ²⁶There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.^z 

^z Or you formed to play with

The Leviathan (v. 26) apparently refers to a large animal of the sea – possibly the crocodile.

Jer 27:5 It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. 

† God gives plants, creatures and inanimate objects different bodies and kinds of glory as he determines:

1Cor 15:37-41 And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. 

The "earthly bodies" (v. 40) quite possibly refers to such things as mountains and bodies of water.

Note: All that God makes is good

1Tim 4:4-5 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. 

In both v. 4 and in the following passage from Genesis 1, the word "good" probably entails more than simply excellence. It would seem to also indicate that all of creation was made as God intended, in accordance with his will – i.e. it turned out as he had planned. Here (v. 4) the context also implies moral goodness.

Gen 1:3-4, 10, 12, 17-18, 21, 25, 31a And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.  ... ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth,^a and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.  ... ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing



fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. *And God saw that it was good.*  ... ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. *And God saw that it was good.*  ... ²¹So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. *And God saw that it was good.*  ... ²⁵And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. *And God saw that it was good.*  ... ³¹*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.* 

^a Or *Land*; also verses 11, 12, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30; 2:1

Ps 139:14 *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.^b Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.* 

^b Or *for I am fearfully set apart*

Matt 6:28-29 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 

Ecc 3:11 *He has made everything beautiful in its time.* Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. 

The suitability of this verse for this subsection is certainly debatable. Some commentators consider it to be speaking of the beauty of everything God has made – the reason for its inclusion here. However more often it is considered to mean that God has a designated time for every activity in which each activity is “appropriate” (NASB) – God “has set the right time for everything” (GNT; cf. CEV, NCV).

Ecc 7:29 See, this alone I found, that *God made man upright*, but they have sought out many schemes. 

As with all creation, God's creation of humankind was good, one aspect of which was moral uprightness – something which they have lost.

✦ The goodness of light and the sun:

Ecc 11:7 *Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Maintains Creation

See also:

- *God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ*, p. 214
- *The Holy Spirit played a role in creation – and still does*, p. 215
- *Creation and God's control over it show his power and wisdom to be incomparable . . .*, p. 220
- *b) God Has Control over Nature*, p. 276

Subsections

- Every creature's life is dependent on God
- God provides food for all creatures
- God sends rain on the earth, making it productive
- God's provision of rain and food is abundant . . .
- . . . God's provision satisfies his creation
- God regulates all aspects of the weather
- God controls the cycle of day and night
- God controls the seasons
- God regulates and maintains the other aspects of nature
- Note: God made the earth and all creation to last

Every creature's life is dependent on God

See also:

- *Note: The life of every person is in God's hands*, p. 293

Job 12:10 *In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.* 

Neh 9:6 ^c “You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you. 

^c Septuagint adds *And Ezra said*

The phrase “you preserve all of them” may well include all the creatures referred to in the heavens, earth and seas. Note



that it is often translated to mean that God gives life to all of them (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Job 10:12 You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit. 

Following on from speaking of God creating him (cf. vv. 8-12a), the last clause here may be referring to God's preserving Job's life as he does everyone everyday; hence the verse's inclusion here. Alternatively, Job may be speaking of how God has cared for him in particular.

Ps 36:6 Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; *man and beast you save, O LORD.* 

The last clause speaks of people and animals being under God's care (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT). It can be translated as: "You preserve man and beast." (AMP, NASB; cf. NIV).

Job 34:14-15 *If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,* ¹⁵*all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.* 

All flesh is reliant on God's "spirit and ... breath" to stay alive.

Ps 104:29-30 *When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.* ³⁰*When you send forth your Spirit,*^d *they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.* 

^d Or *breath*

The phrase "hide your face" (v. 29) or "turn away" (CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) is used to express God's apparent removal of his favour and care, evidenced by the loss of his provision or blessings. This naturally causes any creature to be terrified, being dependant on his provision. Verse 30 implies that the ongoing reproduction of creatures is dependent on God.

Acts 17:28 ... for "*In him we live and move and have our being*";^e as even some of your own poets have said, "*For we are indeed his offspring.*"^f 

^e Probably from Epimenides of Crete

^f From Aratus's poem "Phainomena"

In the first quotation Paul appears to be citing the Cretan poet Epimenides to illustrate that our existence and its continuation depends on God.

Rom 11:36 For from him and *through him and to him are all things.* To him be glory forever. Amen. 

In this context "through him... are all things" may mean that all things continue to exist through God – in which case the verse is applicable to this subsection. Alternatively, it may be speaking of all things being created through him. The same

applies to the phrase "by whom all things exist" in the following verse from Hebrews 2:10.

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and *by whom all things exist*, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 

‡ **No creature dies apart from God's will:**

Matt 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?[‡] And *not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.* 

[‡] Greek *assarion*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/16 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a laborer)

God provides food for all creatures

See also:

▪ [Isa 55:10](#) ↴; [Zec 10:1](#) ↴

Ps 136:25 ... *he who gives food to all flesh*, for his steadfast love endures forever. 

Ps 145:15 *The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.* 

The reference appears to be to all living things (cf. v. 16; GNT, NCV, NIV).

Ps 104:24, 27-28 O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; *the earth is full of your creatures.*  ... ²⁷*These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.* ²⁸*When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.* 

Job 38:41 *Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help, and wander about for lack of food?* 

Ps 104:21 *The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.* 

Ps 147:9 *He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.* 

Eccl 2:24-25 There is nothing better for a person than *that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment*^h *in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God,* ²⁵*for apart from him*ⁱ *who can eat or who can have enjoyment?* 

^h Or *and make his soul see good*

ⁱ Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts *apart from me*



Hos 2:8 And she did not know that *it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil*, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

This is speaking of Israel, and points to the fact that God provides food for people.

Matt 6:26 *Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*

The implication is that God supplies food for humans, just as he does for less valuable creatures.

Luke 11:3 *Give us each day our daily bread,*¹ ...

¹ Or *our bread for tomorrow*

This points to people being ultimately dependent on God for daily provisions.

Acts 17:25 ... nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since *he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

2Cor 9:10 *He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.*

Paul is referring to God as the one who supplies seed and food, to illustrate that God would also supply the Corinthians with what they needed to produce a harvest from their righteousness, expressed in their generosity (cf. v. 11).

† God created foods to be received with thanksgiving:

1Tim 4:3 ... who forbid marriage and require abstinence from *foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

God sends rain on the earth, making it productive

Sending rain on the earth, making it productive, is of course one of the key ways that God provides food for all creatures (as per the previous subsection) and maintains creation.

Job 5:10 ... *he gives rain on the earth and sends waters on the fields;* ...

Job 37:11-13 *He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. ¹²They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world. ¹³Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen.*

Jer 14:22 *Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not he, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for you do all these things.*

Amos 9:6 ... who builds his upper chambers in the heavens and founds his vault upon the earth; *who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the surface of the earth—the LORD is his name.*

Matt 5:45 ... so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and *sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Lev 26:4 ... then *I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.*

Note that this and the following verses refer to how God sending rain on the earth makes it productive. A number of the verses in the following two subsections likewise speak of this.

Ps 147:8 *He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills.*

Isa 55:10 For as *the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,* ...

Zec 10:1 *Ask rain from the LORD in the season of the spring rain, from the LORD who makes the storm clouds, and he will give them showers of rain, to everyone the vegetation in the field.*

God's provision of rain and food is abundant . . .

See also:

- [Ps 132:15](#) ↓

Job 36:27-28, 31 For *he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, ²⁸which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly.* ... ³¹For by these he judges peoples; *he gives food in abundance.*

Ps 36:8 *They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.*

The term “your house” denotes the earth – God’s estate. The latter term “the river of delights” quite possibly refers to the constant flow of God’s delightful provisions.



Ps 65:9-13 *You visit the earth and water it;^k you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. ¹⁰You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. ¹¹You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. ¹²The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, ¹³the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.* 

^k Or and make it overflow

Ps 68:9 *Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished; ...* 

Note that here "inheritance" refers to the Promised land.

Ps 104:16 *The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.* 

Joel 2:22-24 *Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. ²³"Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. ²⁴"The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.* 

This speaks of God's abundant renewal of the land after a devastating locust plague sent as a judgment on Israel.

1Tim 6:17 *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.* 

Note that "everything" refers to more than just food, encompassing all that we need and more.

Gen 27:28 *May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine.* 

Note that "the dew of heaven" may be poetically speaking of rain (cf. NCV) rather than simply dew.

... God's provision satisfies his creation

See also:

- ... *God satisfies his people's physical needs*, p. 928

Deut 11:13-15 *And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD*

your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹⁴he^l will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. ¹⁵And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full. 

^l Samaritan, Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew I; also verse 15

Job 38:25-27 *Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain and a way for the thunderbolt, ²⁶to bring rain on a land where no man is, on the desert in which there is no man, ²⁷to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground sprout with grass?* 

Job 38:39-40 *Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, ⁴⁰when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in their thicket?* 

Ps 104:10-15 *You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills; ¹¹they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. ¹²Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. ¹³From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. ¹⁴You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth ¹⁵and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.* 

As well as being stated in vv. 11, 13 (cf. v. 28 ↓), the fact that God's provision satisfies his creation appears to be implied or reflected in vv. 12, 15.

Ps 104:27-28 *These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. ²⁸When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.* 

Being "filled" with good things is indicative of being satisfied (cf. Ps 107:9 ↓).

Ps 107:9 *For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.* 

Ps 132:15 *I will abundantly bless her [Zion's] provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread.* 

Ps 145:16 *You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.* 

Acts 14:17 *Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.* 



God regulates all aspects of the weather

Job 36:27-30 For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, ²⁸which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. ²⁹Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? ³⁰Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. 

Job 37:6, 9-10 For to the snow he says, ‘Fall on the earth,’ likewise to the downpour, his mighty downpour.  ... ⁹From its chamber comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds. ¹⁰By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast. 

The “breath of God” (v. 10) refers to the cold driving winds (v. 9), alluding to God ultimately being their source and/or his control over them.

Job 38:28-29 Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew? ²⁹From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the frost of heaven? 

This is implying that God is the one who does all this and/or that as the one who designed these things, he alone fully comprehends such phenomena (cf. v. 18).

Ps 77:17-18 The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side. ¹⁸The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook. 

This speaks of God being behind a mighty thunderstorm.

Ps 147:16-18 He gives snow like wool; he scatters hoarfrost like ashes. ¹⁷He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? ¹⁸He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow. 

The “waters” (v. 18) most likely refers to “streams” (CEV) resulting from God firstly melting his snow and ice, and then stirring up his wind.

Jer 10:13 When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, and he brings forth the wind from his storehouses. 

Amos 4:13 For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— *the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!* 

God controls the cycle of day and night

See also:

- [Amos 4:13](#) 
- [Gen 8:22](#) ; [Ps 104:19](#) 

Ps 104:20 You make darkness, and it is night, when all the beasts of the forest creep about. 

Ps 74:16 Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun. 

This points to God’s dominion and control over day and night.

Jer 31:35 Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the LORD of hosts is his name: ... 

Jer 33:20-21 Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, ²¹then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. 

The implication is that God’s covenant or “agreement” (CEV, NCV) with the day and night cannot be broken, with them always coming at “their appointed time” (v. 20).

Amos 5:8 He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name; ... 

Isa 45:7 I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things. 

Matt 5:45 ... so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 

Ps 19:4b-6 In them [the heavens] he has set a tent for the sun, ⁵which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. ⁶Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. 

This may well refer to God’s control over – or at least his lasting design of – the daily course of the sun.



Isa 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? *He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.* 

This points to God's control over the commencement of each night, speaking of God controlling the appearance of the stars each night.

Job 38:12-13 *Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place,* ¹³*that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it?* 

God controls the seasons

Gen 8:22 *While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.* 

God's promise that these things will continue is indicative of his control over them.

Ps 104:19 *He made the moon to mark the seasons;*^m *the sun knows its time for setting.* 

^mOr *the appointed times* (compare Genesis 1:14)

The context shows (cf. v. 20 ) – that it is God who causes these things to happen.

Job 38:31-32 *Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?* ³²*Can you lead forth the Mazzarothⁿ in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children?* 

ⁿ Probably the name of a constellation

God's control over the seasons is reflected in the regulated variations in the appearance of the star constellations (cf. text note). The "Bear with its children" most likely refers to the constellations commonly called the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper (cf. CEV, NlrV).

Jer 5:24 They do not say in their hearts, 'Let us fear *the LORD our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.*' 

Dan 2:21 *He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ...* 

The appropriateness of including this reference here is debatable, as it is more likely figuratively speaking primarily of God determining "the course of world events" (NLT; cf. NCV), as opposed to the year's four seasons.

God regulates and maintains the other aspects of nature

See also:

- *God has power over all aspects of nature, including: the earth; the skies; . . .*, p. 257
- *. . . and the waters*, p. 258
- *b) God Has Control over Nature*, p. 276

Gen 9:13 *I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.* 

The "bow" is the rainbow.

Ps 75:3 *When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars.* Selah 

The psalmist most likely is speaking figuratively of God's control amidst the institutions of the earth and its people being in turmoil. However some commentators interpret this more literally as referring to earthquakes and the distress they cause amongst people, with God holding firm the foundations of the earth amidst such turmoil. The verse certainly at least reflects God's control over these things – hence its inclusion here.

Isa 51:15 *I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—* the LORD of hosts is his name. 

Jer 33:25-26 Thus says the LORD: If I have not *established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth,* ²⁶*then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.* 

God has established and also maintains "the fixed order" – the laws of nature – regulating the sky and earth (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Matt 6:28-29 And why are you anxious about clothing? *Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,* ²⁹*yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.* 

This illustrates that God maintains plant life.



Note: God made the earth and all creation to last

See also:

- *The present heavens and earth will pass away . . .*, p. 726
- *. . . The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God's judgment of the wicked*, p. 727
- *God will create new heavens and a new earth*, p. 728

Ps 78:69 He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever.

Ps 96:10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."

As with Psalms 104:5 below, this appears to be speaking of the earth being firmly secure, not being able to be moved or "shaken" (CEV, NLT). But note that some commentators understand "world" in this context more generally as the world order, under God's reign.

Ps 104:5 He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.

Ps 119:90 Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.

Ps 148:3-6 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! ⁴Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! ⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created. ⁶And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.^o

^o Or it shall not be transgressed

Ecll 1:4-7 A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. ⁵The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens^p to the place where it rises. ⁶The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. ⁷All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.

^p Or and returns panting

Verses 5-7 speak of the never ending cyclic nature of these aspects of God's creation.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) How God Made and Maintains Creation**Subsections**

- God made all things with his wisdom
- God made all things with his power
- God made and maintains all things by his word or command
- God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit played a role in creation – and still does

God made all things with his wisdom

See also:

- *Creation and God's control over it show his power and wisdom to be incomparable . . .*, p. 220
- *. . . God made this point very clear to Job*, p. 221

Ps 104:24 O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Ps 136:5 ... to him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever; ...

Prov 3:19-20 The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; ²⁰by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Prov 8:27-30 [Wisdom:] When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸when he made firm the skies above, when he established^q the fountains of the deep, ²⁹when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his^r delight, rejoicing before him always, ...

^q The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

^r Or daily filled with

Here God's wisdom is personified and speaks of its presence and role in creation.

Jer 10:12 It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.



God made all things with his power

See also:

- [Jer 10:12](#) ↑
- [Creation attests to God's power](#), p. 220

Ps 65:5-6 By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; ⁶*the one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might; ...* 

Jer 27:5 *It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me.* 

The term “outstretched arm” (cf. [Jer 32:17](#) ↓) depicts God's strength.

Jer 32:17 *Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.* 

Jer 51:15a *“It is he who made the earth by his power ...* 

God made and maintains all things by his word or command

See also:

- [Heb 1:3a](#) ↓; [John 1:1-4, 10](#) ↓
- [Note: God acts by his word](#), p. 315

Gen 1:3, 9, 11, 14-15, 24 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.  ... ⁹And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so.  ... ¹¹And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants^s yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so.  ... ¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons,^t and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so.  ... ²⁴And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. 

^s Or *small plants*; also verses 12, 29

^t Or *appointed times*

“God said” occurs nine times in Genesis 1, largely in introducing the making of the various aspects of creation, emphasizing that God made all things by his word or command.

Ps 33:6, 9 *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.*  ... ⁹*For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.* 

Ps 148:3-5 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! ⁴Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! ⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD! *For he commanded and they were created.* 

Heb 11:3 By faith we understand that *the universe was created by the word of God*, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. 

2Pet 3:5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and *the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ...* 

The clause “the earth was formed out of water” is often thought to have Genesis 1:9 in view, which says that God commanded that the water covering the earth “be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”. The phrase, “through water”, may well indicate that God formed the other parts of creation with water, one of the first elements he created.

Ps 147:15-18 *He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.* ¹⁶He gives snow like wool; he scatters hoarfrost like ashes. ¹⁷He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? ¹⁸*He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow.* 

This and Job 37:11-12 below suggest that in addition to creating all things by his command, God continues to control nature (vv. 16-17a, 18b) through his command (vv. 15, 18a).

Job 37:11-12 He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. ¹²*They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world.* 

God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ

Heb 1:2-3a, 10 ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, *through whom also he created the world.* ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and *he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*  ... ¹⁰And,



"You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ..."

The quotation in v. 10 is attributed to God, as addressing Jesus Christ – i.e. it is here applied to Jesus Christ.

John 1:1-4, 10 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life,^u and the life was the light of men. ... ¹⁰He was in the world, and *the world was made through him*, yet the world did not know him.

^u Or *was not any thing made. That which has been made was life in him*

"In him was life" (v. 4) is possibly referring primarily to physical life (cf. text note), following on from v. 3. However it may well simultaneously be alluding to spiritual or eternal life. (Similar comments are made below on 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Acts 3:15a.) Note that this passage may in a sense associate Jesus Christ, "the Word" (v. 1), with God's spoken word through which all things were created (as per the previous subsection). Such an assertion is perhaps supported by the opening phrase, "In the beginning", echoing the opening phrase of the account of creation in Genesis (cf. [Gen 1:1](#) ↓). However, Hebrews 1:3a above speaks of Jesus Christ sustaining creation by his "word", suggesting that such uses of God's "word" may be in a similar vein.

1Cor 8:6 ...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, *Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*

The phrase "through whom we exist" may well speak of Jesus Christ's role in creation (like the preceding clause) or of his role in preserving or sustaining creation.

Col 1:16-17 For *by^v him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.* ¹⁷And he is before all things, and *in him all things hold together.*

^v That is, by means of; or *in*

The final clause, "in him all things hold together" (v. 17), refers to Jesus Christ's work in sustaining creation – i.e. "he holds all creation together" (NLT); "all things continue because of him" (NCV™).

Acts 3:15 ... and you killed *the Author of life*, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

The title "the Author of life" may be referring to Jesus Christ's role in creation – hence this verse's inclusion here. But his

role in giving eternal life could instead be primarily in view (cf. CEV, GNT).

Rev 3:14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, *the beginning of God's creation.*"

The final phrase appears to refer to Jesus Christ as the "origin" (GNT, NRSV) of God's creation.

The Holy Spirit played a role in creation – and still does

Gen 1:1-2 *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. *And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

Many commentators understand the reference here to the Holy Spirit's presence in the very early stages of creation to be pointing to him playing key a role in it.

Job 26:13 *By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.*

The word translated as "wind" can also be translated as "Spirit" (cf. NKJV, NLT). As such this may refer to the Holy Spirit.

Job 33:4 *The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*

Ps 104:30 *When you send forth your Spirit,^w they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.*

^w Or *breath*

Isa 40:12-13 *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? ¹³Who has measured^x the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?*

^x Or *has directed*

Verse 13 appears to refer to directing (cf. ESV text note, AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) or understanding (cf. NCV, NIV) God's Spirit. With it immediately following what appears to be references to God creating the world and heavens in v. 12, Isaiah may have in view the Holy Spirit's role in creation.

Gen 6:3 Then the LORD said, "*My Spirit shall not abide in^y man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.*"

^y Or *My Spirit shall not contend with*



This appears to imply that the Holy Spirit plays a critical role in sustaining or preserving people (cf. CEV, NCV). But note that the Hebrew text is not clear (cf. CEV text note). Job 34:14-15 below may also speak of such a role of the Holy Spirit (cf. NKJV).

Job 34:14-15 *If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, ¹⁵all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Implications of God Being Creator

See also:

- *God's creation of the world and heavens perpetually evidence and reveal God to all people . . .*, p. 241
- *. . . God's ongoing control over nature likewise testifies to him*, p. 242
- *God's deeds show that he is the only God . . .*, p. 248
- *. . . God's deeds show that he is indeed the LORD*, p. 249

Subsections

- God is the Father of all things, notably of all people
- God is sovereign over all things
- All things belong to God
- All things exist for God
- Creation attests to God's greatness and glory
- Creation attests to God's power
- Creation and God's control over it show his power and wisdom to be incomparable . . .
- . . . God made this point very clear to Job

God is the Father of all things, notably of all people

See also:

- *God has made people in his own image*, p. 234
- *God is their Father*, p. 769

1Cor 8:6 ... yet for us there is one *God, the Father, from whom are all things* and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. 

This may be speaking of God as "the Father" of "all things", being the one "from whom are all things". However, it may simply be using "Father" to refer to God as either the Father of Jesus Christ or of believers.

Eph 3:14-15 For this reason I bow my knees before *the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family^z in heaven and on earth is named, ...* 

^z Or *fatherhood*; the Greek word *patria* is closely related to the word for *Father* in verse 14

As indicated earlier in this chapter, "every family" could refer to all creation or all people. If this is the case, then this verse would appear to point to God being the Father of them. But bear in mind that the comment above on 1 Corinthians 8:6 is also applicable here.

Deut 32:6, 18 Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? *Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?*  ... ¹⁸You were unmindful of *the Rock that bore^a you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.* 

^a Or *fathered*

This is most likely speaking of Israel's creation as a nation – quite possibly also the case in Isaiah 64:8 and Malachi 2:10a below – rather than the physical creation of each one of the Israelite people (which would be better illustrative of God being the Father of all people). However, even if the former is the case, the verses are still applicable to the latter.

Isa 64:8 But now, *O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.* 

Mal 2:10a *Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?* 

Heb 12:9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to *the Father of spirits* and live? 

The title "the Father of spirits" is probably acknowledging God as the creator of our spirits. As such the verse would be applicable to this subsection. However possibly it could instead be speaking of God as the "spiritual Father" of believers.

Acts 17:28-29 ... for "*In him we live and move and have our being*";^b *as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."*^c ²⁹*Being then God's offspring, we ought*



not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

☞

^b Probably from Epimenides of Crete

^c From Aratus's poem "Phainomena"

The uses of the term "offspring" imply that God is our Father.

‡ Adam is spoken of as "the son of God":

Luke 3:38 ... the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. ☞

In referring to Adam as "the son of God", Luke appears to have in view that Adam was made directly by God.

God is sovereign over all things

Because God has made all things, God has the right of sovereignty over all things. God's almighty power and incomparable wisdom enable him to enforce his sovereignty. Note that most of the references in this subsection do not explicitly attribute God's sovereignty to his status as creator, but they do at least imply it.

2Ki 19:15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: "O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. ☞

Neh 9:6 ^d "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you. ☞

^d Septuagint adds *And Ezra said*

The first statement and the final clause point to God's sovereignty, here linked with him being the creator of all things.

Isa 40:21-22, 25-28 Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? *Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?* ²²*It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;* ☞ ... ²⁵*To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.* ²⁶*Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?* He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing. ²⁷*Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"?* ²⁸*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the*

Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ☞

Note that the term "God" (v. 28) itself implies sovereignty over all things.

Jer 10:10-12 *But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King.* At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation. ¹¹*Thus shall you say to them: "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens."*^e ¹²*It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.* ☞

^e This verse is in Aramaic

In contrast to other supposed "gods", God is "the everlasting King" (v. 10), the creator of everything (vv. 11-12).

Acts 4:24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ... ☞

Acts 17:24 *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,*^f ... ☞

^f Greek *made by hands*

Isa 45:11-12, 18 *Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: "Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?"*¹²*I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.* ☞ ... ¹⁸*For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other.* ☞

¹² A slight emendation yields *will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the work of my hands?*

As the one who formed Israel (v. 11a) – indeed the one who formed the whole earth, mankind and the heavens (v. 12) – the Israelites had no right to question what God chose to do regarding them (v. 11b). In v. 11b, "children" appears to refer to Israel (cf. CEV), which may also be the case with "the work of my hands" (v. 11b) – although in the light of v. 12 the latter could refer to all creation. Together with v. 18, vv. 11-12 point to God as creator being sovereign over all things.

Isa 48:13 *My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together.* ☞



The second part of the verse probably speaks of God's sovereignty over the earth and the heavens which he made – portraying them as complying with his every command. Alternatively, it possibly has in view his calling them into being.

Jer 27:5 *It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me.* 

Job 25:2-3 *Dominion and fear are with God;*^h *he makes peace in his high heaven. ³Is there any number to his armies? Upon whom does his light not arise?* 

^h Hebrew *him*

The fact that the sun is God's and it shines on all people (v. 3b), reflects that God's dominion and control extends over all (v. 2).

All things belong to God

See also:

- *Note: All things belong to God*, p. 254
- ... *In fact, all we have to give God has been given to us by him and ultimately belongs to him*, p. 1364

Ps 24:1-2 *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof;*ⁱ *the world and those who dwell therein, ²for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.* 

ⁱ Or *and all that fills it*

Ps 89:11 *The heavens are yours; the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it, you have founded them.* 

Ps 95:4-5 *In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. ⁵The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.* 

"In his hand are the depths of the earth" (v. 4) indicates either that: he owns them – "He owns the depths of the earth" (NLT, cf. NCV); or he has control over them (cf. GNT). Possibly both alternatives are encompassed.

Ps 74:16 *Yours is the day, yours also the night; you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.* 

Ps 100:3 Know that the LORD, he is God! *It is he who made us, and we are his;*^j *we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* 

^j Or *and not we ourselves*

"It is he who made us, and we are his" may be implying that "he made us and so therefore we are his". As such the verse

would be applicable to this subsection. The text note gives another possible meaning. Also note that it may well be God's formation of Israel as a nation that is primarily in view.

Gen 14:19 And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by *God Most High, Possessor^k of heaven and earth*; ... 

^k Or *Creator*; also verse 22

"Possessor" and "Creator" (text note, CEV, NLT, NIV) here being alternative renderings of the Hebrew word in question, arguably supports the assertion that because God created all things everything belongs to him.

‡ **As the world was made through Jesus Christ, it is "his own":**

John 1:10-11 He was in the world, and *the world was made through him*, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹*He came to his own,*^l and his own people^m did not receive him. 

^l Greek *to his own things*; that is, to his own domain, or to his own people

^m *People* is implied in Greek

As the world was made through Jesus Christ (v. 10), it is referred to as "his own" (v. 11a) – although note that "his own" could be referring in particular to his own people, the Jews.

All things exist for God

Rom 11:36 *For from him and through him and to him are all things.* To him be glory forever. Amen. 

The phrase "to him are all things" implies that all things have God as their focus – essentially that "all things exist... for him" (GNT, cf. NCV, NLT). The suggestion is that this is because God created all things, with all things coming "from him and through him" (cf. [1Cor 8:6](#) ↓; [Heb 2:10](#) ↓).

1Cor 8:6 ... yet for us there is one *God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist*, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. 

The phrase "for whom we exist" possibly has believers primarily in view, but even if this is the case one can construe from it that all should exist or live for God.

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting that *he, for whom and by whom all things exist*, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 

Ps 119:91 By your appointment they stand this day, for *all things are your servants.* 

The clause "all things are your servants" suggests that all things exist for God. Note that Psalms 22:30 speaks of all



future generations of people serving God – “Posterity shall serve him...”

‡ All things were created by Jesus Christ and “for him”:

Col 1:16 For *by^m him all things were created*, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—*all things were created through him and for him.*

^m That is, by means of; or in

The assertion that all things were created “for him” would appear to be implying that all things were made for Jesus Christ and/or his purposes. In addition, some commentators understand it to be indicating that Jesus Christ is the goal towards which all creation converges or moves.

Creation attests to God’s greatness and glory

See also:

- [Rom 1:20](#)

1Chr 16:25-26 For *great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be held in awe above all gods.* ²⁶*For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.*

Job 36:24-26 Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung. ²⁵*All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar.* ²⁶*Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable.*

In v. 24 “his work” most likely refers primarily to God’s creation and control of it (cf. vv. 27-33), much of which – such as the stars – can only be observed from afar (v. 25). This leads Elihu to exclaim in v. 26, “Behold, God is great ...”

Ps 104:1a, 5 Bless the LORD, O my soul! *O LORD my God, you are very great!* ... ⁵*He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.*

Ps 8:1, 3-4 *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.* ... ³*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,* ⁴*what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*

The exclamation, “how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (v. 1a) indicates that God’s majesty is displayed throughout the earth, it being so wonderfully created. Likewise the subsequent statement (v. 1b) probably is speaking of God’s glory being displayed by the creation of the heavens (cf. [Ps 19:1](#)). Such a creation prompts David to question why God

bothers with humankind (vv. 3-4), alluding to God’s surpassing greatness.

Ps 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above^o proclaims his handiwork.*

^o Hebrew *the expanse*; compare Genesis 1:6-8

Ps 29:3-4, 7-9 *The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters.* ⁴*The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.* ... ⁷*The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.* ⁸*The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.* ⁹*The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth^p and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, “Glory!”*

^p Revocalization yields *makes the oaks to shake*

God’s glorious power and majesty is spoken of as being manifested or evidenced in an awesome storm or storms – part of the natural world that he has created and controls – evoking the cry ascribing glory to him (v. 9).

Ps 104:24, 31 *O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.* ... ³¹*May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, ...*

Quite possibly the psalmist is reflecting on God’s glory (v. 31a) in view of God’s creative work (vv. 24, 31b).

Isa 43:7 ... everyone who is called by my name, *whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.*

This is speaking primarily of God’s creation of his own people bringing him glory. Arguably it can be applied to his creation of all people.

Num 14:21 But truly, as I live, and as *all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, ...*

The similar expressions here and in Isaiah 6:3 below may be linking God’s glory with his presence (cf. GNT). However, alternatively (or in conjunction) creation’s testimony to God’s glory may be in view.

Isa 6:3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; *the whole earth is full of his glory!*”^q

^q Or *may his glory fill the whole earth*



Creation attests to God's power

See also:

- *God made all things with his power*, p. 214

Rom 1:20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 

Isa 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing. 

Ps 33:8-9 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! ⁹For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. 

This indicates that God's creation of the world is ample reason to fear him because it illustrates how incredible is his power. (The same is the case with Jeremiah 5:22 immediately below.)

Jer 5:22 Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it. 

Ps 124:8 Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth. 

God's creation of the world is a great comfort to his people, showing how incredibly powerful is the one who is the source of their help. The references below from Psalm 146, Isaiah 44 and Isaiah 51 have the same theme.

Ps 146:5-6 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; ... 

Isa 44:24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, ... 

God's people have a mighty Redeemer, emphatically shown by him creating the heavens and the earth by himself.

Isa 51:12-13, 15-16 "I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, ¹³and have forgotten the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the

earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor?  ... ¹⁵I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name. ¹⁶And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing^r the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, 'You are my people.'" 

^r Or planting

As the God of his people (vv. 15a, 16b), the one who in his care comforts them (v. 12a), his people have no reason to fear anyone else (v. 13b). For God created all things (vv. 13a, 15-16), such is his power.

Creation and God's control over it show his power and wisdom to be incomparable . . .

See also:

- **Isa 51:12-13, 15-16** 
- *God's knowledge and wisdom is far superior to that of people – beyond our comprehension . . .*, p. 44

Job 9:3-10, 12-15 If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times. ⁴He is wise in heart and mighty in strength—who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?—⁵he who removes mountains, and they know it not, when he overturns them in his anger, ⁶who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; ⁷who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; ⁸who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea; ⁹who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south; ¹⁰who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number.  ... ¹²Behold, he snatches away; who can turn him back? Who will say to him, 'What are you doing?' ¹³"God will not turn back his anger; beneath him bowed the helpers of Rahab. ¹⁴How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him? ¹⁵Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.^s 

^s Or to my judge

In view of God's wisdom and power as shown in his creation – and power over it – Job acknowledges that there is no way that he (v. 14-15) – like everyone else (vv. 3, 12-13) – can hope to contend with God. Note that v. 6 most likely refers to earthquakes (cf. GNT); and, in v. 13, "the helpers of Rahab" is probably a reference to evil forces.

Job 26:7-11, 14 He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing. ⁸He binds up the waters in his



thick clouds, and the cloud is not split open under them. ⁹He covers the face of the full moon^t and spreads over it his cloud. ¹⁰He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary between light and darkness. ¹¹The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke. ¶ ... ¹⁴Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand? ¶

^t Or his throne

As shown in creation (vv. 7-11), God's power is so much greater than that of people that it is even beyond their comprehension (v. 14). Note that the "pillars of the heavens" (v. 11) are most likely mountains, poetically portrayed as holding up the skies.

Job 37:1-5, 14-18 [Elihu:] "At this also my heart trembles and leaps out of its place. ²Keep listening to the thunder of his voice and the rumbling that comes from his mouth. ³Under the whole heaven he lets it go, and his lightning to the corners of the earth. ⁴After it his voice roars; he thunders with his majestic voice, and he does not restrain the lightnings^u when his voice is heard. ⁵God thunders wondrously with his voice; he does great things that we cannot comprehend. ¶ ... ¹⁴"Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God. ¹⁵Do you know how God lays his command upon them and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine? ¹⁶Do you know the balancings^v of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge, ¹⁷you whose garments are hot when the earth is still because of the south wind? ¹⁸Can you, like him, spread out the skies, hard as a cast metal mirror? ¶

^u Hebrew *them*

^v Or *hoverings*

Elihu trembles (v. 1) as he begins to contemplate the manifestations of God's incomparable power in thunder and lightning (vv. 4-5). Verse 17 reinforces the supremacy of God's power over people, as manifested in creation, by showing how people are subject to his forces of nature.

Prov 30:4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know! ¶

Isa 40:12-15, 25-26 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? ¹³Who has measured^w the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? ¹⁴Whom did he consult, and who made him

understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? ¹⁵Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust. ¶ ... ²⁵To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. ²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing. ¶

^w Or *has directed*

Verses 13-14 may well have primarily in view God's incredible understanding as shown in him being able to create the universe. As such, vv. 12-14 emphasize that it was God who created the universe (v. 12), without the need of anyone to advise him (vv. 13-14). The implication is that this was/is far beyond the ability of anyone else. In fact this shows that in comparison to God the nations are next to nothing (v. 15).

Ecl 11:5 As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb^x of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. ¶

^x Some Hebrew manuscripts, Targum; most Hebrew manuscripts *As you do not know the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb*

... God made this point very clear to Job

During his suffering Job had at times complained against God, making incorrect and unjust assertions. In chapters 38-41 (extracts from which compose this subsection) God answered Job in no uncertain terms.

Job 38:1-8, 12-13 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: ²"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?³ Dress for action^y like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. ⁴"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? ⁸"Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, ¶ ... ¹²"Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, ¹³that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? ¶

^y Hebrew *Gird up your loins*

The phrase "surely you know!" (v. 5) may indicate that surely Job knew that God was the one he had done all this (cf. CEV).



But more likely it is irony (cf. v. 21), scornfully suggesting that surely Job – who had shown that he considered himself to be knowledgeable and wise enough to question God – knew how all this had been done (cf. GNT, NLT).

Job 38:31-41 *Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion? ³²Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth^z in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children? ³³Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth? ³⁴“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you? ³⁵Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are?’ ³⁶Who has put wisdom in the inward parts^a or given understanding to the mind?^b ³⁷Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, ³⁸when the dust runs into a mass and the clods stick fast together? ³⁹“Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, ⁴⁰when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in their thicket? ⁴¹Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help, and wander about for lack of food? 䄂*

^z Probably the name of a constellation

^a Or in the ibis

^b Or rooster

Verse 34 is speaking of God shouting orders to the clouds to make it rain (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Job 39:1-2, 5-6 *Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the does? ²Can you number the months that they fulfill, and do you know the time when they give birth, 䄂 ... ⁵“Who has let the wild donkey go free? Who has loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, ⁶to whom I have given the arid plain for his home and the salt land for his dwelling place? 䄂*

Verses 1-2 imply not only imply God's knowledge of such things, but also his active involvement in them.

Job 39:19-20, 26-27 *Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane? ²⁰Do you make him leap like the locust? His majestic snorting is terrifying. 䄂 ... ²⁶“Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars and spreads his wings toward the south? ²⁷Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high? 䄂*

Job 41:1-5, 8-10 ^c *“Can you draw out Leviathan^d with a fishhook or press down his tongue with a cord? ²Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? ³Will he make many pleas to you? Will he speak to you soft words? ⁴Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant forever? ⁵Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your girls? 䄂 ... ⁸Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again! ⁹Behold, the hope of a man is false; he is laid low even at the sight of him. ¹⁰No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before me? 䄂*

^c Ch 40:25 in Hebrew

^d A large sea animal, exact identity unknown

^e Ch 41:1 in Hebrew

If no one is able to control (vv. 1-5) or challenge (vv. 8-10a) the leviathan (cf. text note), then no one has the capacity to stand against God (v. 10b).

✦ **Job's acknowledgment of God's far superior power and wisdom – and subsequent repentance:**

Job 42:1-6 *Then Job answered the LORD and said: ²“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ³Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ⁴Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’ ⁵I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; ⁶therefore I despise myself, and repent^f in dust and ashes.” 䄂*

^f Or and am comforted

In the first part of each of v. 3 and v. 4, Job is quoting questions that God had asked him (cf. 38:2-3; 40:7), before responding to them. Note that Job had earlier acknowledged God's superior power and wisdom. However Job did not appreciate them enough to refrain from complaining against and questioning God.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. God's Creation of People

Most would agree that the most significant part of God's creation is his creation of people. God not only gives people life and a spirit, he has made people quite unique amongst all creatures. Furthermore, of all his creatures, it is primarily to people that God reveals himself and relates.

a) Life and Death

See also:

- *People are dead without their spirit*, p. 233
- *People's spirits and souls exist after death*, p. 233

Subsections

- God creates people . . .
- . . . Children ultimately come from God
- God creates the various aspects of people's beings
- God gives people life and breath
- Human life is of great value
- People's lives are very brief
- Each person is destined to die . . .
- . . . All people die no matter who or what they are
- Once a person dies, they do not return
- Note: Blood signifies life – and a person's life is taken by the shedding of their blood

God creates people . . .

See also:

- *God made all creatures and people*, p. 205
- *God is the Father of all things, notably of all people*, p. 216
- *God's creation of the first people, in an ideal environment*, p. 294

Gen 5:2 *Male and female he created them*, and he blessed them and named them Man^a when they were created. 

^a Hebrew *adam*

Deut 4:32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that *God created man on the earth*, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. 

Job 10:8-9 *Your hands fashioned and made me*, and now you have destroyed me altogether. ... ⁹Remember that *you have made me like clay*; and will you return me to the dust? 

Ps 119:73 *Your hands have made and fashioned me*; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. 

Job 31:15 *Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?* 

Prov 22:2 The rich and the poor meet together; *the LORD is the maker of them all*. 

Acts 17:26 And *he made from one man every nation of mankind* to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ... 

1Cor 11:12 ... *for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God*. 

Woman may have originally come from man (in that Eve came from Adam) and every man since has been born of a woman, but everything – including every woman and man – ultimately comes from God.

1Pet 4:19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to *a faithful Creator* while doing good. 

. . . Children ultimately come from God

See also:

- *Note: Children are a blessing to their parents from God . . .*, p. 1715

Gen 33:5 And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "*The children whom God has graciously given your servant*." 

This and the following two references (Josh 24:3-4a; 1Ch 28:5) speak of God giving children, implying that children are ultimately from God.



Josh 24:3-4a Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. ⁴And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. 📖

1Chr 28:5 And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. 📖

Gen 4:1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten^b a man with the help of the LORD." 📖

^b Cain sounds like the Hebrew for gotten

Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. 📖

1Sam 1:27 For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. 📖

Ps 113:9 He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD! 📖

Luke 1:7, 13, 57-58 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. 📖 ... ¹³But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 📖 ... ⁵⁷Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 📖

God creates the various aspects of people's beings

Ps 139:13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 📖

Job 10:10-11 Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese? ¹¹You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. 📖

Note that in v. 10 Job likens his beginnings in the womb to the curdling of milk into cheese.

Ps 33:15 ... he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds. 📖

Considering the Hebrew meaning of "hearts", this may well be speaking of God forming people's minds (cf. CEV) or thoughts (cf. GNT).

Ps 94:9 He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? 📖

Prov 20:12 The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both. 📖

Prov 29:13 The poor man and the oppressor meet together; the LORD gives light to the eyes of both. 📖

God gives people life and breath

Gen 2:7 ... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 📖

Job 10:12 You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit. 📖

Job 27:3 ... as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, ... 📖

In the latter part of the verse, Job acknowledges that his breath is of or from God – "God gives me breath" (GNT; cf. CEV, NLT). Elihu does likewise in addressing Job in 33:4 immediately below.

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. 📖

Ecc 8:15 And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. 📖

Isa 42:5 Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ... 📖

Isa 57:16 For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would grow faint before me, and the breath of life that I made. 📖

Acts 17:25 ... nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 📖

† Jesus Christ is the "author of life":

Acts 3:15 ... and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 📖



As noted earlier, "the Author of life" may be referring to Jesus Christ's role in creation, giving life to all, but his role in giving eternal life could instead be primarily in view.

Human life is of great value

See also:

- *People are of much more value than other creatures*, p. 236

Gen 9:5-6 And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. ⁶"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. 

The fact that God says here that he will "require a reckoning" (v. 5) for the taking of any human life, implies that it is very important, of quite some value. One prime reason – if not the prime reason – as to why human life is of great value, is that humans are made in the image of God (v. 6; cf. *God has made people in his own image*, p. 234).

Luke 9:24-25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? 

The reference to "himself" (v. 25) is associated with one's "life" (v. 24), both indicated here as having an eternal dimension (cf. John 12:25). Although spiritual life and one's eternal destiny are primarily in view (cf. v. 26) in the comparison with "the whole world" (v. 25), this passage still reflects the importance of human life. For it speaks of the great priority of saving one's life, both the present life (generally a higher priority for non-believers) and particularly life in eternity.

Matt 6:25-26 Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. *Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?* ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. *Are you not of more value than they?* 

In teaching that there is more to life than the peripheral issues that people tend to worry about, v. 25 suggests that life is far more important than such things (cf. GNT, NIV). Verse 26 teaches that people and their lives are indeed of great value in God's eyes.

Ps 91:16 *With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.* 

Such is the value of life that to experience more of it is a satisfying thing.

Ps 49:7-9 Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, ⁸for *the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice*, ⁹that he should live on forever and never see the pit. 

The focus here is on the unaffordable cost of being able to live forever. As such, it points to the great value of human life itself.

† **Life is to be loved:**

1Pet 3:10 For "*Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ...*" 

This is not actually saying to love life, but the implication is that this is an appropriate and natural thing to do.

People's lives are very brief

As many older people would affirm, in a relative sense life is very brief.

Job 9:25 *My days are swifter than a runner; they flee away; they see no good.* 

In 7:6 Job similarly says, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and come to their end without hope." In these verses Job may be speaking of the wasting away of his life rather than speaking of the human lot in general, and it may be the swiftness of each of his days that is primarily in view rather than the swiftness of life. However his words are at least applicable to the brevity of human life in general.

Job 14:1-2 *Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble. ²He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not.* 

Ps 39:5 *Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!* Selah 

Ps 89:47 Remember *how short my time is! For what vanity you have created all the children of man!* 

Note that "vanity" probably has the fleetingness of life in view, along with such suffering as spoken of in the preceding verses (cf. vv. 38-46).

Ps 90:10 *The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span^c is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.* 

^c Or *pride*



Ps 103:15-16 *As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.*

Like grass and flowers, relatively speaking, people do not exist for long.

Ps 144:4 *Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.*

James 4:14 ...yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. *What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*

Each person is destined to die . . .

See also:

- *Sin results in physical death – through Adam's original sin*, p. 381

Job 30:23 *For I know that you will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living.*

Eccl 7:2 *It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.*

Eccl 9:5 *For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.*

1Cor 15:22 *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

As Adam is the one person from whom the whole human race is descended, all people share in his sin and its consequence of death (cf. *Sin results in physical death – through Adam's original sin*, p. 381).

Heb 9:27 *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ...*

1Pet 1:24 ...for *"All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ...*

Josh 23:14a *"And now I am about to go the way of all the earth ...*

Joshua is referring to his approaching death, the destiny of all who live on the earth.

1Chr 29:15 *For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding.*^d

^d Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew *hope*, or *prospect*

Job 21:32-33 *When he is carried to the grave, watch is kept over his tomb. ³³The clods of the valley are sweet to him; all mankind follows after him, and those who go before him are innumerable.*

Ps 49:7-9 *Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, ⁸for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, ⁹that he should live on forever and never see the pit.*

Ps 89:48 *What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah*

"Sheol" is a name used for the place of the dead. It is often translated as "the grave".

. . . All people die no matter who or what they are

Job 3:11-19 *Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? ¹²Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse? ¹³For then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then I would have been at rest, ¹⁴with kings and counselors of the earth who rebuilt ruins for themselves, ¹⁵or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. ¹⁶Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light? ¹⁷There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. ¹⁸There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the taskmaster. ¹⁹The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master.*

Job 21:23-26 *One dies in his full vigor, being wholly at ease and secure, ²⁴his pails^e full of milk and the marrow of his bones moist. ²⁵Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of prosperity. ²⁶They lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them.*

^e The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

No matter what people's lot in life has been, they all die.

Ps 49:10 *For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others.*

Eccl 2:14, 16 *The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. ... ¹⁶For of the wise as of the fool*



there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. *How the wise dies just like the fool!*

Ecc 9:2-3 *It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil,^f to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. ³This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.*

^f Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate; Hebrew lacks *and the evil*

The common destiny spoken of would appear to be – or to primarily be – death. However, not all commentators would agree (cf. v. 1). Note that the use of “evil” in v. 3a speaks of this common destiny as being seemingly unfair and wrong (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Luke 16:22 *The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.^g The rich man also died and was buried, ...*

^g Greek *bosom*; also verse 23

This illustrates the fact that both poor and rich will die.

✦ Being destined to die, humans are like the animals:

Ecc 3:19-20 *For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. ²⁰All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.*

Similarly Psalms 49:12 says, “Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.”

Once a person dies, they do not return

2Sam 12:23 *But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.*

Job 7:9-10 *As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up; ¹⁰he returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him anymore.*

Job 10:21 *... before I go—and I shall not return—to the land of darkness and deep shadow, ...*

Job 16:22 *For when a few years have come I shall go the way from which I shall not return.*

Ps 49:11 *Their graves are their homes forever,^h their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names.*

^h Septuagint, Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Their inward thought was that their homes were forever*

Ecc 9:6 *Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.*

Isa 26:14 *They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them.*

Note that the term “shades” denotes a shadow or area of darkness.

Job 14:10-12 *But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he? ¹¹As waters fail from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up, ¹²so a man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep.*

2Sam 14:14a *We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.*

The precise intention of the water illustration is somewhat debatable. However, it may well be meaning that we are like water spilled on the ground in that we will disappear and it will not be possible for us to be recovered.

Ecc 12:5 *... they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along,ⁱ and desire fails, because *man is going to his eternal home*, and the mourners go about the streets—*

ⁱ Or *is a burden*

The first part of the verse portrays aspects of old age, preceding one's death whereupon one goes to one's “eternal home”.

Note: Blood signifies life – and a person's life is taken by the shedding of their blood

See also:

- *... for the life of a creature is in its blood – and as such blood is not to be eaten*, p. 391

Blood sustains life (cf. **Lev 17:11, 14** ↓) and as such it is often used in Scripture to signify life.



Gen 9:5-6 And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. ⁶“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. 

The term “lifeblood” (v. 5; cf. [Isa 63:3 ↓](#); [Jer 2:34 ↓](#)) underlines the correlation between blood and life.

1Ki 2:5 Moreover, you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed, avenging^j in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war^k on the belt around his^l waist and on the sandals on his feet. 

^j Septuagint; Hebrew *placing*

^k Septuagint *innocent blood*

^l Septuagint *my*; twice in this verse

Ps 72:14 From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight. 

Psalms 72 was composed for a Davidic king, and is understood to be messianic. This verse speaks of the king's concern for the life of the needy.

Isa 26:21 For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain. 

Isa 63:3 I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood^m spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. 

^mOr *their juice*; also verse 6

Jer 2:34a Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor; you did not find them breaking in. 

Ezek 22:3-4a, 25, 27 You shall say, Thus says the Lord GOD: A city that sheds blood in her midst, so that her time may come, and that makes idols to defile herself! ⁴You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made, and you have brought your days near, the appointed time ofⁿ your years has come.  ... ²⁵The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.  ... ²⁷Her princes in

her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. 

ⁿ Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, Targum; most Hebrew manuscripts *until*

Matt 27:3-4 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus^o was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” 

^o Greek *he*

Luke 11:50-51 ... so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, ⁵¹from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. 

‡ The life of every creature is in its blood:

Lev 17:11, 14 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.  ... ¹⁴For the life of every creature^p is its blood: its blood is its life.^q Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off. 

^p Hebrew *all flesh*

^q Hebrew *it is in its life*

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Human Spirit

Subsections

- God has made people with a spirit
- The spirit is distinguished from one's body
- The spirit and the soul are closely associated – along with one's “heart”
- The spirit and soul are at the core of one's being . . .
- . . . They embody and are central to one's state of mind – as often depicted in hardship
- The spirit and soul are linked with one's emotions



- The spirit and soul are linked with one's desires
- The spirit is involved in one's thinking
- The spirit is fundamental to one's attitude and actions
- People are dead without their spirit
- People's spirits and souls exist after death

God has made people with a spirit

See also:

- *People's spirits and souls exist after death*, p. 233

Zec 12:1b Thus declares *the LORD, who* stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and *formed the spirit of man within him*: ...

Ecc 12:7 ... and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and *the spirit returns to God who gave it*.

Heb 12:9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to *the Father of spirits* and live?

As noted earlier, "the Father of spirits" may well be implying that God created our spirits.

Num 16:22 And they fell on their faces and said, "*O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh*, shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation?"

Like the similar expression in Hebrews 12:9 above, "God of the spirits of all flesh" may be speaking of God as the creator of the spirits of all mankind (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). However, it may instead be meaning that he is "God over" (NCV™) the spirits of all mankind.

Job 32:8 *But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand*.

This appears to be speaking of the human spirit with God Almighty as its source. But "spirit" may instead be referring to the Holy Spirit (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Ecc 11:5 As you do not know the way *the spirit comes to the bones in the womb^r of a woman with child*, so you do not know *the work of God who makes everything*.

^r Some Hebrew manuscripts, Targum; most Hebrew manuscripts *As you do not know the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb*

This verse may well be referring to the spirit entering the body when it is formed as being the work of God, "who makes everything". But note that the text note has an alternative rendering.

Isa 42:5 Thus says *God, the LORD*, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, *who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it*: ...

James 4:5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over *the spirit that he has made to dwell in us*"?

† God made people with a soul:

Jer 38:16 Then King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah, "As *the LORD lives, who made our souls*, I will not put you to death or deliver you into the hand of these men who seek your life."

The spirit is distinguished from one's body

See also:

- **Ecc 11:5** ↑
- **1Thes 5:23** ↓

Matt 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*.

1Cor 7:34 ...and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how *to be holy in body and spirit*. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.

2Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us *cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body^s and spirit*, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

^s Greek *flesh*

James 2:26 For as *the body apart from the spirit is dead*, so also faith apart from works is dead.

1Pet 4:6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that *though judged in the flesh* the way people are, *they might live in the spirit* the way God does.

Col 2:5 For though *I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit*, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Here "spirit" is used in a different sense, referring more directly to Paul's thoughts. Nevertheless the verse serves to illustrate that the spirit is distinguished from the body.



‡ Likewise, the soul is distinguished from one's body:

Matt 10:28 And do not fear *those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul*. Rather fear *him who can destroy both soul and body in hell*.^t 📖

^t Greek *Gehenna*

The spirit and the soul are closely associated – along with one's "heart"

Some commentators caution against attempting to make categorical distinctions between the spirit and the soul. The verses in this subsection are supportive of such a view. Having said this, the following subsections show that "spirit" is used when speaking of the will and thoughts, whereas "soul" is more prominent when speaking of emotions and desires or of the person themselves. The term "heart" is perhaps a more inclusive term. In the Bible it can be understood to signify one's conscious inner-self – encompassing one's emotions, thoughts and will.

Job 7:11 Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; *I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul*. 📖

This and the two references immediately below portray the spirit and the soul as closely associated by attributing similar actions to both of them.

Isa 26:9a *My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you*. 📖

Luke 1:46-47 And Mary said, "*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ...*" 📖

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, *piercing to the division of soul and of spirit*, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 📖

Although this distinguishes between the soul and the spirit, it is also portrays them as very closely connected.

Ps 143:4 Therefore *my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled*. 📖

Here and in Isaiah 57:15 below the spirit and the heart are closely associated. The remaining two references (Ps 84:2; Prov 2:10) closely associate the soul and the heart.

Isa 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, *to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite*." 📖

Ps 84:2 *My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God*. 📖

Prov 2:10 ... *for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ...* 📖

‡ The spirit, soul and body as the whole person:

1Thes 5:23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and *may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*. 📖

Paul appears to be speaking of one's whole being as being composed of the spirit, soul and body (cf. GNT, NCV).

The spirit and soul are at the core of one's being . . .

Prov 20:27 *The spirit^u of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all his innermost parts*. 📖

^u Hebrew *breath*

Ps 103:1 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!* 📖

Ps 142:3 When *my spirit faints within me*, you know my way! In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. 📖

Lam 3:20 *My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me*. 📖

Ps 143:8 Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for *you I lift up my soul*. 📖

This and of the following reference from Mark 8 arguably imply that one's soul is not only at the core of one's inmost being but is the very essence and fundamental aspect of one's being.

Mark 8:36-37 *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷For what can a man give in return for his soul?* 📖

. . . They embody and are central to one's state of mind – as often depicted in hardship

Ps 116:7 *Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you*. 📖

Isa 57:15-16 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also *with him who is of a contrite and*



lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite. ¹⁶For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; *for the spirit would grow faint* before me, and the breath of life that I made.

Note that similarly to v. 15b, Genesis 45:27b says, "...the spirit of their father Jacob revived."

Ps 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect,^v *reviving the soul*; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; ...

^v Or *blameless*

Ps 143:7 Answer me quickly, O LORD! *My spirit fails!* Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit.

Prov 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but *a crushed spirit* dries up the bones.

Job 10:1 I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in *the bitterness of my soul*.

Ps 6:3 *My soul also is greatly troubled*. But you, O LORD—how long?

Isa 54:6 For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and *grieved in spirit*, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.

Isa 61:3 ... to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of *a faint spirit*; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.^w

^w Or *that he may display his beauty*

John 11:33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, *he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled*.

John 13:21 After saying these things, *Jesus was troubled in his spirit*, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

‡ Hope braces the soul:

Heb 6:19 *We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope* that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ...

The spirit and soul are linked with one's emotions

Note that a number of the verses in the previous subsection similarly associate the spirit or the soul with one's emotions.

Job 30:25 Did not I weep for him whose day was hard? *Was not my soul grieved for the needy?*

Ecc 7:9 *Be not quick in your spirit to become angry*, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

Ezek 3:14 The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went *in bitterness in the heat of my spirit*, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me.

Ps 35:9 Then *my soul will rejoice in the LORD, exulting in his salvation*.

Luke 1:47 ... and *my spirit rejoices in God my Savior*, ...

The spirit and soul are linked with one's desires

Ps 143:6 I stretch out my hands to you; *my soul thirsts for you like a parched land*. Selah

Ps 84:2 *My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD*; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Ps 119:81 *My soul longs for your salvation*; I hope in your word.

Isa 26:9a *My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you*.

2Sam 13:39 And *the spirit of the king^x longed to go out^y to Absalom*, because he was comforted about Amnon, since he was dead.

^x Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Hebrew *David*

^y Compare Vulgate *ceased to go out*

Job 24:12 From out of the city the dying groan, and *the soul of the wounded cries for help*; yet God charges no one with wrong.

The spirit is involved in one's thinking

See also:

▪ Phil 1:27 ↓

Job 32:8 But *it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand*.



Psa 77:6-7 I said,^z "Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart." Then *my spirit made a diligent search*: ⁷"Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? 📖

^z Hebrew lacks *I said*

Mark 2:8 And immediately *Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves*, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 📖

Note that this verse also links the heart with one's thoughts.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit himself *bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*, ... 📖

The Holy Spirit enables the believer's spirit to confidently know that she or he is a child of God.

1Cor 2:11 For *who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him?* So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 📖

Eph 4:23 ... and to *be renewed in the spirit of your minds*, ... 📖

Here "the spirit" may be referring more to "the attitude" (NIV®) of our minds than to the human spirit. Even so, the use of "spirit" in this way arguably still reflects that the spirit is involved in one's thinking.

Col 2:5 For though I am absent in body, yet *I am with you in spirit*, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. 📖

With this figurative use of "spirit", Paul seems to be indicating that his thoughts and heart are with them (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT).

The spirit is fundamental to one's attitude and actions

Deut 2:30 But *Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate*, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day. 📖

Job 32:18 For I am full of words; *the spirit within me constrains me*. 📖

Prov 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and a *haughty spirit* before a fall. 📖

Prov 18:14 *A man's spirit will endure sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?* 📖

Isa 66:2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is *humble and contrite in spirit* and trembles at my word. 📖

To be "contrite in spirit" is to be repentant and remorseful.

Matt 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 📖

The "poor in spirit" are those who in their spirit humbly acknowledge that they are impoverished in spiritual matters.

Matt 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. *The spirit indeed is willing*, but the flesh is weak. 📖

Ezek 13:3 Thus says the Lord GOD, Woe to the foolish prophets *who follow their own spirit*, and have seen nothing! 📖

2Cor 12:18 I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? *Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?* 📖

Paul speaks of Titus and himself acting alike as being of the same "spirit" or "motives" (GNT), alluding to their individual spirits being alike in will and attitude. In Philippians 1:27 below Paul speaks similarly of the Philippians' "one spirit".

Phil 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy^a of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that *you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side* for the faith of the gospel, ... 📖

^a Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

Note that the association of "spirit" and "mind" make this verse also very pertinent to the previous subsection.

↳ The spirit and the mind contrasted:

1Cor 14:14-16 For *if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful*. ¹⁵What am I to do? *I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also*. ¹⁶*Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit*, how can anyone in the position of an outsider^b say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? 📖

^b Or *of him that is without gifts*

In the light of this verse and 1 Corinthians 2:11a in the previous subsection, it would appear that the spirit is tuned in to the thoughts of the mind, but the mind does not always comprehend the spirit.



People are dead without their spirit

James 2:26 For as *the body apart from the spirit is dead*, so also faith apart from works is dead. 

Ps 146:4 *When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.* 

Some translations use "spirit" here instead of "breath" (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV), making the verse relevant to this subsection.

Luke 8:53-55 And they laughed at him, *knowing that she was dead*.⁵⁴ But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise."⁵⁵ *And her spirit returned, and she got up at once.* And he directed that something should be given her to eat. 

Verse 55 implies that when the girl was dead (v. 53) her spirit was absent – i.e. she was dead without her spirit.

Job 34:14-15 *If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,* ¹⁵*all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.* 

The term "his spirit" could be speaking of one's spirit as that which God has given – making the verse pertinent to this subsection. However (as used earlier in this chapter) it may well be referring to the Holy Spirit.

People's spirits and souls exist after death

See also:

- [Ps 146:4](#) 

Eccl 3:20-21 All go to one place. All are from the dust, and *to dust all return*.²¹ *Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?* 

Following his assertion of the certainty of death (v. 20), the author states his uncertainty as to what happens to the spirit when it departs after a person dies. In doing so he implies that the spirit continues to exist. Note that some commentators think that in v. 21 the author is alluding to the immortality of man in contrast to animals.

Eccl 12:6-7 ... before *the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,* ⁷*and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.* 

The illustrations in v.6 may well simply be general representations of death – after which the spirit returns to God (v. 7) – although some commentators see them as portraying particular aspects of the extinguishing of life.

Isa 14:9 Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; *it rouses the shades to greet you*, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations. 

The Hebrew translated here as "shades" can also be rendered as "spirits of the dead" (NASB, NCV; cf. NIV).

Luke 23:46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!*" *And having said this he breathed his last.* 

The parallel verse in Matthew 27:50 says, "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit."

Acts 7:59 *And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* 

Heb 12:23 ... and to the assembly^c of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to *the spirits of the righteous made perfect,* ... 

^c Or church

The reference is to the spirits of righteous people who had died (cf. NLT). The verse implies that their spirits still exist.

1Pet 3:19-20 ... in which^d he went and proclaimed^e *to the spirits in prison,* ²⁰*because^f they formerly did not obey,* when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 

^d Or the Spirit, in whom

^e Or preached

^f Or when

These "spirits" could well be referring to spirits of people long dead. As such the passage would be relevant to this subsection. Alternatively, fallen angels or demons may be in view.

1Pet 4:6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to *those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.* 

This is most often taken to mean that God's people will be judged like all people in that their physical bodies will die, but they will live like God does in their spiritual existence (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT) – with their spirits continuing to exist.

Matt 10:28 And do not fear *those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.* Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.^g 

^g Greek *Gehenna*

Rev 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar *the souls of those who had been slain* for the word of God



and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰*They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"* ¹¹*Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants^h and their brothersⁱ should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.* 

^h Greek *fellow bondservants*

ⁱ Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Verses 10-11 indicate that "the souls of those who had been slain" (v. 9) were still very much in existence (cf. [Rev 20:4](#) ↓).

[Rev 20:4](#) Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw *the souls of those who had been beheaded* for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 

Here John appears to speak of the souls of dead believers existing even before they came back to life.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Uniqueness of People

Note that some of the points made in the previous section on *The Human Spirit* also point to the uniqueness of people amongst God's creation.

Subsections

- God has made people in his own image
- People have an able mind, with which to think and reason intelligently . . .
- . . . People can make judgments
- People have the moral capacity to know good from evil and right from wrong . . .
- . . . People can choose between good and evil

- People are of much more value than other creatures
- God has made people ruler over all other creatures
- People are to care for other creatures
- People are to act responsibly towards all creation

God has made people in his own image

That God has made people in his own image is evident in that they reflect such things as his personal traits – e.g. aspects of his character and intellect – and that they have a spirit (as discussed in the previous section). Additionally, it is noteworthy that although God essentially is spirit, Ezekiel 1:26-28 below speaks of him in terms of a human-like form (cf. [Ezek 1:26-28](#) ↓).

[Gen 1:26-27](#) Then God said, "Let us make manⁱ in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 

ⁱ The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

[Gen 5:1](#) This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. 

[Gen 9:6](#) Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. 

[1Cor 11:7](#) For a man ought not to cover his head, since *he is the image and glory of God*, but woman is the glory of man. 

Paul appears to have in view Adam being made in the image of God and then Eve being made from Adam (cf. v. 8). As such, ultimately both male and female have been made in the image of God (cf. [Gen 1:27](#) ↑).

[Col 3:10](#) ... and have put on *the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*. 

"Creator" could be referring to either God (cf. GNT) or Jesus Christ (cf. NLT). Particularly if the former is the case, Paul would probably have the above verses from Genesis in view. As such he would be implying that having been created in God's image but flawed by sin, God's people are to be renewed in his image.

[James 3:9](#) With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse *people who are made in the likeness of God*. 



Prov 14:31 *Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.* 

Some commentators understand this to imply that oppressing the poor shows contempt for God their Maker because they have been made in his image. (The same could then be said of why being kind to them honors God.) However the writer may well simply mean that mistreating anything God has made is being contemptuous of God as its maker and of the purpose for which he has created it.

✦ **A manifestation of the likeness of the glory of the LORD had a human appearance:**

Ezek 1:26-28 And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire;^k and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance. ²⁷And upward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were gleaming metal, like the appearance of fire enclosed all around. And downward from what had the appearance of his waist I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him.¹²⁸Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. *Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.* And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking. 

^k Or *lapis lazuli*

¹ Or *it*

People have an able mind, with which to think and reason intelligently . . .

Note that most of the following verses make reference to one's "heart" rather than "mind". As noted earlier, in the Bible "heart" can be understood to signify one's conscious inner-self – encompassing one's emotions, thoughts and will. As such, less literal translations mostly use "mind" in the following verses, reflecting modern terminology for the concept/s involved.

Job 38:36 Who has put wisdom in the inward parts^m or given understanding to the mind?ⁿ 

^m Or *in the ibis*

ⁿ Or *rooster*

Ecc 2:3 I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—*my heart still guiding me with wisdom*—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. 

Ecc 7:25 *I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness.* 

Ecc 8:16 *When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, ...* 

Dan 5:14 I have heard of you [Daniel] that the spirit of the gods^o is in you, and that *light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.* 

^o Or *Spirit of God*

Acts 17:2-3 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days *he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,* ³*explaining and proving* that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." 

Neh 5:6-7a I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. ⁷*I took counsel with myself,* and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, "You are exacting interest, each from his brother." 

On hearing of a significant problem (v. 6), Nehemiah "thought it over" (AMP, CEV, NIV) – giving the problem "serious thought" (NKJV) – and took appropriate action (v. 7; cf. vv. 8-13).

Rom 14:5 *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* 

. . . People can make judgments

See also:

▪ **Neh 5:6-7** ; **Rom 14:5** 

As with some of the verses in the surrounding subsections, most of the following verses contain examples illustrating the assertion in this subsection's heading.

2Sam 24:13-14 So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall three^p years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me." ¹⁴Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. *Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man.*" 

^p Compare 1 Chronicles 21:12, Septuagint; Hebrew *seven*



David needed to decide or judge which of the three punishments (v. 13) would be his preferred option – which he quickly did (v. 14).

1Cor 7:40 Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

Luke 14:31 Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

Acts 15:38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

Acts 25:27 For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.

Luke 1:3-4 ... it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

The premise that people are able to intelligently make judgments is supported not only by Luke's reasoning in v. 3, but also in the assumption that Theophilus would be able to know the certainty of what he had been taught (v. 4), for to do so would likewise require him to reason intelligently.

Acts 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

People have the moral capacity to know good from evil and right from wrong . . .

Gen 3:22a Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.

1Ki 2:44 The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your own heart all the harm that you did to David my father. So the LORD will bring back your harm on your own head.

Ps 51:3-4 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

Ps 119:128 Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.

Luke 23:41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.

Rom 2:14-15 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ...

People have an intrinsic awareness of the requirements of God's moral law, with their consciences and thoughts giving indication as to what is morally right and wrong.

. . . People can choose between good and evil

See also:

- [Ps 119:128](#)
- [We have the choice of whether or not to respond to God and Jesus Christ](#), p. 1028

Isa 7:15 He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Ps 37:27 Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you dwell forever.

Ps 119:30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me.

Prov 3:31 Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways, ...

Amos 5:14-15 Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. ¹⁵Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

People are of much more value than other creatures

Matt 6:26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Matt 10:31 Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Matt 12:12a Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!



Ps 8:4-5 ... what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings^a and crowned him with glory and honor.

^a Or *than God*; Septuagint *than the angels*

It is feasible to conclude from this – particularly in light of the subsequent verses (vv. 6-8) – that such a status implies that people are indeed much more valuable than other earthly creatures.

‡ **God has made people more knowledgeable and wiser than other creatures:**

Job 35:10-11 But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, ¹¹who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?'

God has made people ruler over all other creatures

Gen 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let us make man^r in our image, after our likeness. And *let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*" ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and *fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*"

^r The Hebrew word for *man* (*adam*) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name *Adam*

Note that a number of commentators consider that being in God's image indicates that people are in a sense God's representatives, and that it is as his representatives that they are to rule over all other creatures.

Gen 2:19-20a Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed^s *every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.* ²⁰*The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.*

^s Or *And out of the ground the LORD God formed*

Adam's naming of the animals is understood to be indicative of his – and all humankind's – authority over them.

Gen 9:2-3 *The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens,*

upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³*Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.*

"Into your hand they are delivered" (v. 2b) indicates that God placed all creation under the control and power of humankind (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT) – as alluded to by the fact that all creatures would "fear" and "dread" (v. 2a) humans and by them even being given to humans for food (v. 3).

Ps 8:6-8 *You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ⁷all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

Ps 115:16 The heavens are the LORD's heavens, but *the earth he has given to the children of man.*

God is the ultimate ruler of the earth, but he has granted humankind dominion over it.

Heb 2:6b-8 "What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor,^t ⁸*putting everything in subjection under his feet.*" *Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.* At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

^t Some manuscripts insert *and set him over the works of your hands*

Note that the last statement is often taken to be referring to humankind's power over creatures not being complete – a result of sin.

‡ **All kinds of creatures have been tamed by people:**

James 3:7 *For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ...*

People are to care for other creatures

See also:

▪ **Hab 2:17**

Ex 23:10-11 For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, ¹¹*but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.*



In addition to providing a year of rest for the land (cf. [Lev 25:3-5](#) ↴) this law made provision for the wild animals (as well as the poor).

Deut 22:4 *You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and ignore them. You shall help him to lift them up again.* 📖

Deut 22:6-7 *If you come across a bird's nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. ⁷You shall let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long.* 📖

Most likely this command was aimed at the preservation of the species and so also this particular food source. Taking the mother would have meant that the young would also die, whereas leaving her would allow her to reproduce.

Deut 22:10 *You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.* 📖

The unequal strengths of the animals presumably would cause them discomfort in such work.

Deut 25:4 *You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.* 📖

An ox was not to have its mouth covered to prevent it from eating of the grain as it worked, for this would have been unfair to the animal, not allowing it to renew its strength while it did the work.

Prov 12:10 *Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.* 📖

Prov 27:23 *Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, ...* 📖

Matt 12:11 He said to them, *"Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?"* 📖

Luke 13:15b *Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?* 📖

People are to act responsibly towards all creation

Gen 2:15 The LORD God *took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.* 📖

Adam's responsibility to take care of the Garden of Eden is readily applicable to the relationship of humankind with all of creation.

Lev 25:3-5 For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, ⁴*but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land.* 📖

Such a sabbath year of rest would replenish the land, ensuring that it maintained its fertility – and hence its goodness.

Deut 20:19 When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, *you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you?* 📖

Num 35:33 *You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.* 📖

Although this is actually referring to "polluting" the land (specifically the promised land) by bloodshed, arguably it can also be applied to polluting the land in other ways. As such it would be applicable to this subsection.

Hab 2:17 *The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.* 📖

The Babylonians' desolation of the forests of Lebanon (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT) and their destruction of animals contravened humankind's responsibility towards nature – and they would be punished for such "violence to the earth", as well as their shedding of blood. Note that "them" may be referring to the forests of Lebanon.

John 6:12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, *"Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost."* 📖

Food – as with all resources – should not be wasted.

Rev 11:18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants,^u the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for *destroying the destroyers of the earth.* 📖



^u Greek *bondservants*

If "destroyers of the earth" is referring to or applicable to the destruction of nature, then this of course underlines the necessity for people to care for all creation. But note that some commentators at least, interpret it to be referring to those who actively work against God to the detriment of the earth – in Revelation primarily Satan, the beast, and the false prophet.

✦ Israel's land still belonged to God:

Lev 25:23 The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for *the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.* 

This truth can be applied to all land, for – as Scripture says a number of times – God made the whole earth and it belongs to him; people are merely strangers and temporary residents on the earth. This underlines the need for people to act responsibly towards the land.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Epilogue: God's Self-Revelation to People

See also:

- *God communicates . . .*, p. 23
- *. . . and people can communicate with God*, p. 23
- *God interacts with people, responding to their requests and needs*, p. 24
- *b) God's Communication of His Word*, p. 301

Subsections

- People cannot in themselves perceive or know God
- God reveals himself to people
- God reveals himself by what he does
- God's creation of the world and heavens perpetually evidence and reveal God to all people . . .
- . . . God's ongoing control over nature likewise testifies to him
- God is revealed in his acts of judgment and of salvation
- God is revealed and known through Jesus Christ
- Note: God reveals his plans and will

People cannot in themselves perceive or know God

See also:

- *God cannot be seen by people . . .*, p. 6

John 5:37 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. *His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ...* 

Job 9:11 *Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him.* 

Job 23:3, 8-9 *Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!*  *...⁸Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; ⁹on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.* 

Job 37:23 *The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate.* 

Isa 45:15 *Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior.* 

This appears to be speaking of or at least pointing to God being beyond people's grasp. More specifically it may be speaking of God concealing himself or possibly of God working in what seems to people as "strange and mysterious ways" (NLT).

Matt 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and *no one knows the Father except the Son* and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 

This and the following references indicate or suggest that by themselves people cannot know God.

1Cor 1:21 For since, in the wisdom of God, *the world did not know God through wisdom*, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 

Acts 17:23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, *'To the unknown god.'* *What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.* 

Similarly in John 4:22a Jesus says of the Samaritans, "You worship what you do not know ..."

1Thes 4:5 ... not in the passion of lust like *the Gentiles who do not know God*; ... 



Ex 5:2 But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”

God reveals himself to people

Deut 5:24 And you said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live.’

1Sam 2:27 And there came a man of God to Eli and said to him, “Thus the LORD has said, ‘Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh?’”

The implication of the rhetorical question is that this was indeed the case.

Ezek 20:5 ... and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore^v to the offspring of the house of Jacob, making myself known to them in the land of Egypt; I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God.

^v Hebrew I lifted my hand; twice in this verse; also verses 6, 15, 23, 28, 42

Isa 65:1 I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, “Here am I, here am I,” to a nation that was not called by^w my name.

^w Or that did not call upon

Note that there is debate amongst scholars as to whether this is speaking of the nation of Israel – the first nation that God revealed himself to – or to the Gentiles. Paul applies it to the latter in Romans 10:20.

Num 12:6 And he said, “Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream.”

1Sam 3:7, 10, 21 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ...
¹⁰And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.” ...
²¹And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

These verses indicate that God revealed himself to Samuel through his word, including (or in particular) his spoken word.

Jer 24:7 I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

This suggests that God enables people to know him (cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV) – or at least to know key things about him.

God reveals himself by what he does

See also:

- Rom 1:18 ↓
- God's great power is shown in his deeds, p. 36
- God's judgment shows his might and his sovereignty . . . , p. 435
- God's saving of his people reveals God's great power, p. 923

Note that the following three subsections further illustrate that God is revealed and made known in his works or deeds.

Ex 9:16-18 But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. ¹⁷You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go. ¹⁸Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.

By sending Egypt's worst hailstorm (v. 18) – and other plagues (cf. 7:14-12:30) – God revealed his power, leading to him being made known throughout the earth (v. 16).

Deut 3:24 O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours?

1Ki 8:41-43 Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake ⁴²(for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, ⁴³hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

Isa 40:3-5 A voice cries:^x “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be



revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." 

^x Or *A voice of one crying*

This initially refers to God's deliverance of the Jews from captivity in Babylon. One interpretation is that vv. 3-4 are speaking metaphorically of the preparation of God's way for the return of his people – by which God would be revealed (v. 5a). Another interpretation is that vv. 3-4 speak of the need to address the spiritual barrenness of God's people, before the coming of the King (v. 5). The passage is also understood to have a final fulfillment in God's redemption that would come through Jesus Christ.

Ezek 20:9 But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, *in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.* 

God revealed himself to the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt. Furthermore, this verse implies that by doing so in the sight of other nations, this act of deliverance also revealed God to some extent to these other nations.

Dan 2:45b, 47 [Daniel, to King Nebuchadnezzar:] *A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.*  ... ⁴⁷*The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."* 

God's revelation (through Daniel) of both the content and meaning of the king's mysterious dream (cf. vv. 1-11) showed him to be "God of gods and the Lord of kings" (v. 47) – as well as "a revealer of mysteries" (v. 47).

God's creation of the world and heavens perpetually evidence and reveal God to all people . . .

See also:

- [Isa 40:26](#) ; [Isa 41:20](#) 
- [Creation attests to God's greatness and glory](#), p. 219
- [Creation attests to God's power](#), p. 220
- [Creation and God's control over it show his power and wisdom to be incomparable . . .](#), p. 220
- [. . . God made this point very clear to Job](#), p. 221

Rom 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For *what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.* ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal

power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 

Job 36:24-25 Remember to extol *his work, of which men have sung.* ²⁵*All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar.* 

In v. 24, "work" probably refers primarily to creation. One can infer from these verses that in his work – which is most praiseworthy (v. 24b) – God is evidenced or revealed, with such traits as his power and goodness clearly being demonstrated.

Ps 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, *how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.* 

The exclamation "how majestic is your name in all the earth!" appears to be implying that God's majesty is displayed throughout the earth, the earth being so wonderfully created. Likewise the second part of the verse may well be speaking of God's glory being displayed by the creation of the heavens, with the stars, sun and moon (cf. v. 3; [Ps 19:1-4a](#) ; [Ps 97:6](#) .

Ps 19:1-4a *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above^y proclaims his handiwork. ²Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴Their voice^z goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.* 

^y Hebrew *the expanse*; compare Genesis 1:6-8

^z Or *Their measuring line*

The marvelous heavens and skies are wonderful examples of God's work. Their magnificence is evidence – perpetually displayed to all – that there is a glorious Creator-God.

Acts 17:24-27 *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,^a ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ...* 

^a Greek *made by hands*

Verse 27 indicates that God's creation of all things (v. 24) including all people (vv. 25-26a) – along with his providence over the nations (v. 26b) – should move people to seek him, for these things reveal God's existence and his concern with people.



... God's ongoing control over nature likewise testifies to him

Acts 14:17 Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness. 

God's provision through his regulation of nature testifies to people of his existence and reveals his kindness.

Job 37:6-7 For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth,' likewise to the downpour, his mighty downpour. ⁷He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom he made may know it. 

The powerful effects of God's work in nature can inhibit people's activities – "seals up the hand of every man" – making them stop and recognize his works and power (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT). As such God's works in nature are evidence of God's existence and reveal his power.

Isa 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing. 

God not only created the stars, he controls or oversees the continuation of their display night by night. The first part of the verse suggests that one should stop and consider these things – and so realize that God is responsible for the universe and its continuance.

Ps 19:4b-6 In them [the heavens] he has set a tent for the sun, ⁵which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. ⁶Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. 

Following on from the preceding verses regarding the heavens in general (cf. 1-4a ) , this suggests that the sun and its daily appearance are likewise evidence of God, revealing God and his glory to all things, with "nothing hidden from its heat" (v. 6).

Ps 97:3-6 Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around. ⁴His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles. ⁵The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. 

This may be speaking of dramatic physical occurrences in nature as revealing God and his reign (cf. vv. 1-2) before "all the peoples" (v. 6) – hence its inclusion here. However some commentators understand it to be referring to God coming and imposing his absolute reign over the earth.

Isa 41:17-20 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the LORD will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them. ¹⁸I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. ¹⁹I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, ²⁰that they may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it. 

Note that this is often understood to initially at least refer to God's provision for the Israelites returning from exile in Babylon (cf. 43:19-20). Some commentators, however, think it refers to conditions in the future renewed Israel.

God is revealed in his acts of judgment and of salvation

See also:

- d) *God's Judgment Reveals God*, p. 434
- e) *God Is Revealed in Saving His People*, p. 921

Ps 9:16 The LORD has made himself known; he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. Higgsion.^b Selah 

^b Probably a musical or liturgical term

Ezek 35:10-11 Because you said, 'These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them'—although the LORD was there— ¹¹therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them. *And I will make myself known among them, when I judge you.* 

By his judgment of Edom, God would make himself known – i.e. make known that he exists and that he is God.

Ezek 38:22-23 With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. ²³So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD. 

Ezek 39:4-7, 21-22 You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. ⁵You shall fall in the open field, for I



have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. ⁶I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD. ⁷And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. ... ²¹And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. ²²The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward.

2Ki 19:19, 35 So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone." ... ³⁵And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

God's saving of his people makes him known to the nations. In conjunction with this, it makes known: his salvation and righteousness (cf. [Ps 98:1-3 ↓](#)); and his mighty power (cf. [Ps 106:8 ↓](#)).

Ps 98:1-3 Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for *he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.* ²The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. ³He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

In v. 1 God's "right hand" and "arm" signify his great power (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Ps 106:8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.

Isa 60:16 You shall suck the milk of nations; you shall nurse at the breast of kings; and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

God's salvation makes known unequivocally to his people that he is their Savior and Redeemer – "the Mighty One of Jacob".

God is revealed and known through Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Jesus Christ is the image of God](#), p. 113
- [Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God – equality in nature](#), p. 114

- [To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father](#), p. 120
- [Jesus came to enable us to know God](#), p. 511

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God,^c who is at the Father's side,^d he has made him known.

^c Or the only One, who is God; some manuscripts the only Son

^d Greek in the bosom of the Father

The phrase "the only God" refers to Jesus Christ.

John 17:6, 26 [Jesus:] "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ... ²⁶I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

The references to "your name" are indicative of God himself. Jesus made God known to a deeper, more comprehensive extent than previous revelation had done, revealing more about such things as attributes of God and matters of his will.

Matt 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

John 8:19 They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. *If you knew me, you would know my Father also.*"

In coming to know Jesus Christ, one comes to know God (cf. [John 14:6-7 ↓](#)).

John 12:45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.

John 14:6-7 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. *No one comes to the Father except through me.* ⁷*If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.*^e From now on you do know him and have seen him."

^e Or *If you know me, you will know my Father also*, or *If you have known me, you will know my Father also*

Note that the final statement may be speaking of the disciples knowing God more fully through Jesus following Jesus' forthcoming death and resurrection.

1Jn 5:20 And we know that *the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true*; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.



John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants,^f for the servant^g does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for *all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

^f Greek *bondservants*

^g Greek *bondservant*; also verse 20

In conjunction with making God known, Jesus made known everything that he had heard from the Father.

Note: God reveals his plans and will

See also:

- *The gospel reveals God's hidden mystery concerning Jesus Christ*, p. 1761

Gen 41:25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, *"The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.*

1Chr 17:19, 25 For your servant's sake, O LORD, and *according to your own heart, you have done all this greatness, in making known all these great things.* ... ²⁵*For you, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him. Therefore your servant has found courage to pray before you.*

The "great things" (v. 19) that God made known to David concerned God's will and "all this greatness" (v. 19) that God had done in determining to build a "house" or dynasty for David (v. 25; cf. v. 19).

Ps 25:14 *The friendship^h of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.*

^h Or *The secret counsel*

Note that the alternative rendering in the text note would make the first half of this verse more pertinent to this subsection.

Ps 103:7 *He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.*

Here God's "ways" may refer to God's "plans" (GNT, NIV), "character" (NLT) or his "law" (CEV).

Dan 2:45b [Daniel, to King Nebuchadnezzar:] *A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.*

Amos 3:7 *For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.*

God's "secret" would primarily be his plan/s.

Amos 4:13 For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and *declares to man what is his thought*, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!

God's thoughts that he reveals to people would be inclusive of his plans and will.

Acts 22:14 And he said, *'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ...*

Acts 27:22-24 Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³*For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.'*

Through an angel God revealed to Paul aspects of his plans for him, including his will regarding Paul's near future (v. 23) and his immediate will regarding the hazardous storm (v. 24).

Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,ⁱ as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."^j*

ⁱ Or *beginning and ending in faith*

^j Or *The one who by faith is righteous shall live*

Rom 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to *the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—*

Pray for persecuted Christians



God's Sovereignty

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I. God's Supreme Authority

See also:

- *d) Jesus Christ as Lord of All*, p. 684

As the one and only God, God reigns supreme in the world. He has supreme power over all things. As such, God defeats his enemies and he fulfills his plans. A realization of this produces submission to and worship of the one and only God.

a) The LORD Is God – the Only God

Note that God stated that the "LORD" was the name by which he was to be known (cf. *Note: God declared his actual name to be the "LORD"*, p. 51).

Subsections

- The LORD is God
- The LORD is God of heaven and earth
- The Lord is God of all people
- The LORD is the true and living God . . .
- . . . He is the one and only God
- God's deeds show that he is the only God . . .
- . . . God's deeds show that he is indeed the LORD

The LORD is God

Ps 100:3a *Know that the LORD, he is God!* 

Josh 22:34 The people of Reuben and the people of Gad called the altar Witness, "For," they said, "*it is a witness between us that the LORD is God.*" 

The altar was set up as a witness and a reminder between the tribes on both sides of the Jordan River that the LORD is God.

1Ki 18:21, 36-39 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If *the LORD is God*, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word.  ... ³⁶And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, *let it be known this day that you are God in Israel,*

and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. ³⁷Answer me, O LORD, answer me, *that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God*, and that you have turned their hearts back." ³⁸Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "*The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.*" 

2Sam 7:28 And now, *O Lord GOD, you are God*, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. 

When the Hebrew word for "Lord" (*Adonai*) immediately precedes the word for "the LORD" (*YHWH*), in English translations it is usually rendered as "Lord GOD" – as is the case in this verse – rather than as "Lord the LORD" or "Lord LORD".

Ps 46:10 "*Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*" 

✦ **The LORD is a great God:**

Ps 95:3 *For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.* 

The LORD is God of heaven and earth

See also:

- *God is both Jesus Christ's God and his Father*, p. 132

Gen 24:3 ... that I may make you swear by *the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth*, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, ... 

Deut 4:39 ... know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that *the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath*; there is no other. 

Josh 2:11 And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for *the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.* 

Ezra 5:11 And this was their reply to us: 'We are the servants of *the God of heaven and earth*, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished. 



Isa 54:5 For your Maker is your husband, *the LORD of hosts is his name*; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, *the God of the whole earth he is called*.

Note that the title “the LORD of hosts” is probably speaking of God’s power or authority over all things or all forces in the universe – physical and spiritual. Other possibilities are that “hosts” refers in particular to Israel’s army or to angels.

Matt 11:25 At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, *Father, Lord of heaven and earth*, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ...

The fact that the LORD is the God of heaven and earth is reflected in him being acknowledged as the “Lord of heaven and earth” (cf. Luke 10:21; Acts 17:24).

✦ God makes peace in heaven:

Job 25:2 Dominion and fear are with God;^a *he makes peace in his high heaven*.

^a Hebrew *him*

This points to God’s authority in heaven, where he establishes peace.

The LORD is God of all people

2Ki 19:15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: “O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, *you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth*; you have made heaven and earth.

Num 27:16 Let the LORD, *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, appoint a man over the congregation ...

Jer 32:27 *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh*. Is anything too hard for me?

Luke 20:38 Now *he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him*.

The last clause appears to mean that all people remain “in definite relationship to Him” (AMP); no one ceases to exist and drops off God’s “radar”. In saying that to God all people including the physically dead are in this sense alive to God, Jesus has at least partially in view the resurrection of the dead (cf. vv. 27-37). He may also have in view people’s spirits existing after death (cf. *People’s spirits and souls exist after death*, p. 233).

Acts 3:13 *The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers*, glorified his servant^b Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him.

^b Or *child*; also verse 26

Rom 3:29 Or *is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also*, ...

Rev 22:6 And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, *the God of the spirits of the prophets*, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”

This speaks of God as the one who “controls the spirits of his prophets” (CEV).

Ps 42:8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to *the God of my life*.

The LORD is the true and living God . . .

See also:

- *God is alive*, p. 24

Jer 10:10 But *the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King*. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation.

1Thes 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve *the living and true God*, ...

1Jn 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know *him who is true*; and we are in *him who is true*, in his Son Jesus Christ. *He is the true God* and eternal life.

The last statement is most likely referring to God, although possibly Jesus Christ is in view. Particularly in view of the last statement, the earlier references to God being “true” may well more specifically be speaking of him as “the true God” (CEV, GNT, NLT). (Also note the comment on John 7:28 below.)

John 7:28 So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. *He who sent me is true*, and him you do not know.

In saying here that God is “true” Jesus could have had in view one or more of the following: God is real, the true God (as in this subsection’s theme); God is truthful (cf. CEV, GNT);



and/or God is faithful. The same can be said of "true" in Revelation 6:10, where God is called "Sovereign Lord, holy and true".

Dan 6:26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for *he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.* 

Acts 14:15 Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should *turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.* 

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of *the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ...* 

... He is the one and only God

See also:

- *God is one*, p. 6
- *Note: There is one God, the Father – and one Lord, Jesus Christ*, p. 126

Deut 4:39 ... know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that *the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.* 

2Sam 22:32 *For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God?* 

Isa 44:6, 8b Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; *besides me there is no god.*  ...⁸ ... *Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.*" 

References to God as a "Rock" (v. 8) depict him as a secure mountain or stronghold of infallible strength, to whom his people can go for protection. With this use of "Rock", Isaiah is in effect saying that there is no other "powerful god" (GNT).

Isa 45:21-22 Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And *there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.* ²²*Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.* 

Hos 13:4 But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; *you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.* 

1Cor 8:4 Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "*there is no God but one.*" 

1Tim 1:17 To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, *the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.*^c Amen. 

^c Greek *to the ages of ages*

God's deeds show that he is the only God . . .

See also:

- *... Things God does which show that there is no one like him*, p. 30
- *God's saving of his people makes known that he is the LORD – the only God*, p. 922

Deut 32:39 *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.* 

Ps 86:10 *For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.* 

2Ki 19:15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said: "O LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, *you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.*" 

1Chr 16:26 *For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.* 

All other "gods" are only idols – not real gods at all. In contrast the LORD is certainly not an idol, as shown by the fact that he made the heavens – evidencing that he is the only God.

Isa 43:9-13 All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble. *Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right, and let them hear and say, It is true.* ¹⁰*You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.* ¹¹*I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.* ¹²*I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and I am God.* ¹³*Also henceforth I am he;*



there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?" 

Amongst other things, this speaks of God's declaration of future events and their fulfillment as evidencing that he is the only God. In v. 9, "this" probably refers to the rise of Cyrus the Great and/or the deliverance of the Jews through him (cf. AMP); and "the former things" speaks of previous prophecies that had been or were being fulfilled (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV). In v. 12, "I declared and saved and proclaimed" likely has in view God stating that he would save Israel and then doing so (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Isa 45:5-7, 18 *I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.*  ...
¹⁸For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other." 

Isa 46:9-10 ... remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' 

The first clause refers to things that God had done long before, possibly also alluding to his ability to foretell future events, which he has done throughout history (v. 10).

Isa 64:4 *From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.* 

Ps 46:8-10 *Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"* 

2Ki 5:14-15 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. ¹⁵Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant." 

... God's deeds show that he is indeed the LORD

See also:

- [God's saving of his people makes known that he is the LORD – the only God](#), p. 922

When God's speaks of his deeds making known that he is "the LORD", he is in effect speaking of them making known that he is "the LORD, the God of Israel" ([Isa 45:3 ↓](#); cf. [Ezek 28:26 ↓](#)) – the only true God.

1Ki 20:13, 21, 28-29 And behold, a prophet came near to Ahab king of Israel and said, "Thus says the LORD, Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will give it into your hand this day, and you shall know that I am the LORD."  ...
²¹And the king of Israel went out and struck the horses and chariots, and struck the Syrians with a great blow.  ...
²⁸And a man of God came near and said to the king of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because the Syrians have said, "The LORD is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys," therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" ²⁹And they encamped opposite one another seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle was joined. And the people of Israel struck down of the Syrians 100,000 foot soldiers in one day. 

Neh 9:6 ^d "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you." 

^d Septuagint adds *And Ezra said*

Isa 45:3 *I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.* 

The reference is to Cyrus, the Persian king.

Isa 49:23 *Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.* 

Ezek 12:15, 20 *And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them among the countries.*  ... ²⁰And the inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the LORD. 

The fulfillment of God's threatened judgment for the people's persistent unfaithfulness to him would make known that is the LORD.



Ezek 16:62 *I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, ...* 

This speaks of an “everlasting covenant” (v. 60). Some think it refers to the New Covenant, but other commentators claim that it is speaking of renewing the covenant with Abraham. In either case it would or will demonstrate God’s power and faithfulness, affirming that he is the LORD.

Ezek 25:17 *I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I lay my vengeance upon them.* 

Ezek 20:38, 42, 44 *I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. ...*  ... ⁴²*And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your fathers.*  ... ⁴⁴*And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name’s sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.* 

Ezek 28:26 *And they shall dwell securely in it, and they shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall dwell securely, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God.* 

Ezek 34:27 *And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them.* 

Ezek 36:11 *And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the LORD.* 

Ezek 37:13 *And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people.* 

Here God speaks figuratively of restoring the shattered and dispersed nation of Israel.

✦ God’s deeds show that he is “God of gods and Lord of kings”:

Dan 2:27-28, 47 Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸but *there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these:*  ... ⁴⁷*The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.”* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Reigns Supreme

See also:

- *c) The Kingdom of God*, p. 677
- *God’s reign* [reasons for which to exalt God], p. 1277

Subsections

- God reigns . . .
- . . . God is enthroned in heaven
- God rules over all – over all the earth
- God rules over all nations and authorities
- God will reign forever
- God will impose his absolute rule on all
- Note: All things belong to God

God reigns . . .

Ps 93:1 *The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.* 

Speaking of God as being “robed in majesty” immediately following the assertion that he reigns, appears to further point to his sovereignty.



Ps 96:10 *Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."*

Ps 99:1 *The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!*

As well as alluding to God's presence between the cherubim above the atonement cover of the ark of the covenant, this may be referring to such angelic beings being adjacent to his throne in heaven. From there God reigns, enthroned with mighty angelic beings at his side, to obey his command.

Isa 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

The "good news", "peace" and "salvation" refer to the Jews return from exile – illustrating and leading to the assertion: "Your God reigns."

Acts 4:24 And when they heard it, *they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ...*

The term "Sovereign Lord" acknowledges God as supreme ruler.

Job 25:2 *Dominion and fear are with God;*^e *he makes peace in his high heaven.*

^e Hebrew *him*

... God is enthroned in heaven

See also:

- **Ps 99:1**
- *Note: God primarily dwells in heaven . . .*, p. 11

1Ki 22:19 And Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: *I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; ...*

Ps 2:4 *He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.*

Ps 11:4 The LORD is in his holy temple; *the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.*

Ps 103:19 *The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.*

Ps 123:1 To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!

Isa 66:1 *Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?"*

Note that this portrays heaven itself as being God's throne (cf. **Matt 5:34**) rather than simply being where his throne is.

Matt 5:34-35 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by *heaven, for it is the throne of God,*³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

Matt 23:22 And *whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.*

Heb 8:1 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of *the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ...*

Rev 4:2-3 At once I was in the Spirit, and *behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.*³ *And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.*

Isa 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died *I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train^f of his robe filled the temple.*

^f Or *hem*

Here Isaiah tells of his vision of God enthroned in heaven.

God rules over all – over all the earth

See also:

- *c) God Has Power over All Things*, p. 255

1Chr 29:11-12 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. *Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.*¹² Both riches and honor come from you, and *you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.*

Ps 103:19 The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and *his kingdom rules over all.*



Eph 4:6 ... *one God and Father of all, who is over all* and through all and in all. 📖

The phrase “is over all” means he rules over all – “rules everything” (NCV™).

Ps 47:2, 7 For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth. 📖 ... ⁷For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!^g 📖

^g Hebrew *maskil*

Ps 97:5 The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. 📖

Ps 83:18 ... that they may know that *you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.* 📖

Matt 11:25 At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ... 📖

Job 34:13 *Who gave him charge over the earth, and who laid on him^h the whole world?* 📖

^h Hebrew lacks *on him*

The implication is that God has always ruled over all the earth; he did not need anyone to grant him this authority.

Ps 50:1, 4 *The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.* 📖 ... ⁴He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: ... 📖

God’s summoning of the earth and the heavens – and by implication, all that is in them – portrays and illustrates his rule over all people and all things.

God rules over all nations and authorities

Ps 22:28 *For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.* 📖

Ps 47:8 *God reigns over the nations;* God sits on his holy throne. 📖

Jer 10:7 Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you. 📖

2Chr 20:6 ... and said, “O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? *You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.* 📖

Ps 9:5 *You have rebuked the nations;* you have made the wicked perish; you have blotted out their name forever and ever. 📖

Being able to effectively rebuke the nations illustrates God’s sovereignty over them.

Dan 4:32 ... and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that *the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.* 📖

1Tim 6:15 ... which he will display at the proper time—he who is *the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ...* 📖

Rev 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servantⁱ of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!^j 📖

ⁱ Greek *bondservant*

^j Some manuscripts *the ages*

Dan 8:25b And he shall even rise up against *the Prince of princes*, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand. 📖

The title “the Prince of princes” – indicative of authority over all other authorities – is often understood to be a reference to God (cf. CEV), although some think it refers to Jesus Christ.

Ps 95:3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 📖

God is “King over all gods” (NCV™; cf. CEV, GNT) – which is indicative of the fact that he is King over all other authorities.

✦ The LORD is God of all other powers:

Deut 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. 📖

“God of gods” and “Lord of lords” are superlatives, “gods” not actually being indicative of the existence of such divine beings. The terms are used to describe God as sovereign over all other powers. (cf. ZBC)



God will reign forever

See also:

- [Dan 7:27](#) ↴

Ex 15:18 *The LORD will reign forever and ever.*

Ps 146:10 *The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!*

Lam 5:19 *But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations.*

Ps 66:6b-7 *There did we rejoice in him, ⁷who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations— let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah*

Ps 10:16 *The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land.*

Ps 145:13a *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

Dan 6:26 *I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.*

Dan 2:44 *And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ...*

This is part of Daniel's explanation of the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Most understand the kingdom spoken of to be what the NT refers to as "the kingdom of God", the spiritual and ultimately definitive kingdom inaugurated by the first coming of Jesus Christ (cf. [Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God](#), p. 566). Others think that it is speaking of the setting up of a millennial kingdom on Christ's return.

1Tim 1:17 *To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.^k Amen.*

^k Greek *to the ages of ages*

God is "the eternal King" (CEV, GNT, NLT) – "the King that rules forever" (NCV™).

Rev 1:8 *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

The assertion, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," implies that God is sovereign throughout all ages from the beginning to the end (cf. NKJV, NLT). This is reinforced by the second part of the verse, which indicates that God exists eternally ("who is...was...is to come") as the all powerful God.

Rev 15:3 *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant^l of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!^m"*

^l Greek *bondservant*

^m Some manuscripts *the ages*

The text note indicates that the final clause is in some manuscripts as: "O King of the ages", which would make the verse pertinent to this subsection.

↳ **God has reigned forever:**

Ps 93:2 *Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.*

Similarly Ps 55:19 describes God as: "... he who is enthroned from of old".

God will impose his absolute rule on all

See also:

- [The kingdom of God will come in all its fullness in the future](#), p. 678
- [f\) Jesus Christ's Universal Rule](#), p. 717

Isa 24:21-23 *On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth. ²²They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished. ²³Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.*

Note that v. 23 indicates that such will be the LORD's reign and the manifestation of his glory, that the sun and moon will be "confounded and ... ashamed" at their inferior light.

Dan 7:27 *And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.ⁿ*

ⁿ Or *his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him*

This empowerment and rule of God's people will be one aspect of his imposition of his absolute rule on all.



Obad 1:21 Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and *the kingdom shall be the LORD's*.

This refers to the implementation of God's absolute rule – from Jerusalem, figuratively or otherwise.

Zec 14:9, 16 And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one. ... ¹⁶Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.

Note that the context suggests that the reference here may be to the Messiah's rule or God's rule through him.

1Cor 15:24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

After Jesus Christ has destroyed all demonic and worldly powers, he will hand the kingdom over to God as the ultimate ruler – with all opposition removed.

Rev 11:15-17 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."* ¹⁶And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for *you have taken your great power and begun to reign*."

The proclamation in v. 15 and the final phrase "have begun to reign" (v. 17) may mean that at this point God has begun to impose his rule on all – the actualization of the kingdom (v. 15) implemented with the imposition of God's great power (v. 17). Alternatively the past tense may be used here to indicate the certainty of God doing so in the future. Some view these verses, particularly v. 15, as anticipating Christ's millennial reign. Note that 10:7 also likely refers to the event in question, describing it as "the mystery of God" – "But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

Rev 19:6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For *the Lord our God the Almighty reigns*."

Some commentators point out that the statement can be interpreted as saying that God "has begun to reign," or, "now rules as king" (CEV; cf. AMP). As such it would parallel 11:17 above, and signify God imposing his absolute rule.

✦ Everyone will submit to and acknowledge God's sovereignty:

Isa 45:23-24 By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: *"To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance."* ²⁴*"Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him."*

◦ Septuagint *every tongue shall confess to God*

Note that v. 23 is quoted in Romans 14:11 – "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." It is also alluded to in reference to Jesus Christ in Philippians 2:10.

Note: All things belong to God

See also:

- *All things belong to God* [implications of God being creator], p. 218

All things belong to God – as he made all things – and it is because of this that God has the right to his sovereignty over all things. This point is suggested by a number of the following verses. The subsection cross-referenced above makes it very clear.

1Chr 29:11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for *all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all*.

This verse clearly indicates that God's sovereignty over all things arises from the fact that everything belongs to him.

1Cor 10:26 For *"the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."*

Gen 14:22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand^p to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ...

^p Or *I have taken a solemn oath*

Ex 9:29 Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD. *The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD's*."

Ex 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for *all the earth is mine; ...*



Deut 10:14 Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. 

Job 41:11 Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine. 

Ps 50:9-12 I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. ¹⁰For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. ¹²If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. 

"I know all the birds" (v. 11a) appears to suggest that God owns them (cf. GNT, Nlrv, NLT), in keeping with the context.

Ps 95:4-5 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. ⁵The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. 

"In his hand are the depths of the earth" (v. 4) is either implying that he owns them (cf. NCV, NLT) – as per the sense of the following clauses – or that he has control over them (cf. GNT).

1Sam 2:8b For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world. 

Ezek 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die. 

Ps 47:9 The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted! 

The second sentence may be indicating that all the forces of the world belong to God, including their leaders/kings (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT).

Ps 82:8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations! 

God "possesses all the nations" (NASB). The verse may be suggesting that they will all submit to God as such.

Hag 2:8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. 

The context is the building of the new temple in Jerusalem. God appears to be implying that he would provide the silver and gold necessary as all silver and gold – like all things – belongs to him.

c) God Has Power over All Things

See also:

- *b) God's Power (I): Ultimate Power*, p. 32
- *d) Jesus Christ as Lord of All*, p. 684

Subsections

- God has power over the forces of evil
- God has power over death, to raise the dead
- God has power over all aspects of nature, including: the earth; the skies; . . .
- . . . and the waters
- God has power over nations . . .
- . . . God can devastate or destroy nations
- God has power over rulers and can bring them down . . .
- . . . Examples of God bringing rulers down

God has power over the forces of evil

See also:

- *Note: Satan stands condemned*, p. 187
- *c) The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment*, p. 452
- *Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil*, p. 605
- *On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed*, p. 704
- *God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world, including Satan*, p. 919
- *God protects his people from all evil, including Satan*, p. 943

Col 2:15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities[¶] and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.[†] 

[¶] Probably demonic rulers and authorities

[†] Or in it (that is, the cross)

Rom 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 

In view of the preceding verses (vv. 17-19), Paul may be referring to God soon crushing the work of Satan carried out by false teachers. Alternatively he may have in view God's final comprehensive crushing of Satan himself (cf. **Rev 20:7-10** ↓), the fulfillment of the promise in Genesis 3:15 which he appears to be alluding to here.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Rev 20:7-10 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven^s and consumed them, ¹⁰and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

^s Some manuscripts from God, out of heaven, or out of heaven from God

"Gog and Magog" (v. 7) are symbolic of the enemies of God's people in the end times. The names allude to identities in Ezekiel 38-39, from which extracts are included below; see comment there.

Ezek 39:1-6, 17-21 And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech^t and Tubal. ²And I will turn you about and drive you forward, and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. ³Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. ⁴You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. ⁵You shall fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. ⁶I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD. ... ¹⁷"As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field, 'Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. ¹⁸You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of he-goats, of bulls, all of them fat beasts of Bashan. ¹⁹And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. ²⁰And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors,' declares the Lord GOD. ²¹"And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them.

^t Or Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech

Commentators are generally hesitant to identify this Gog with the Gog of Revelation 20:8 and this event with the final battle, but the consensus appears to be that the passage

does refer to an event of the end times. It obviously illustrates God's overwhelming power over the forces of evil.

Dan 9:27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week,^u and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.

^u Or seven; twice in this verse

Many commentators consider that the antichrist is most likely in view here. God's complete power over him is demonstrated by the fact that God has determined what and when his ending will be – and will bring it to fruition.

Job 9:13 God will not turn back his anger; beneath him bowed the helpers of Rahab.

Rahab was a mythical sea monster, associated with chaos and evil (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT text notes). "Rahab" is also at times used to denote Egypt.)

God has power over death, to raise the dead

See also:

▪ [God raised Jesus from the dead, by his power . . .](#), p. 579

Deut 32:39 See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

"I make alive" may be speaking of God raising the dead (cf. CEV). Alternatively it may refer to him creating and so bringing to life (cf. ZBC). The same likely applies to "brings to life" in 1 Samuel 2:6 below.

1Sam 2:6 The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

1Ki 17:21-22 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life^v come into him again." ²²And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.

^v Or soul; also verse 22

2Ki 4:32-35 When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. ³³So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. ³⁵Then he got up again and walked once back and



forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. *The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.* 

2Ki 5:7 And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “*Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me.*” 

Using rhetorical questions, the king accentuates what is obvious – he is not God; he cannot kill and bring back to life as God can.

Hos 13:14a [God:] *Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?* 

The first two rhetorical questions point to the fact that God can indeed do such things. As such, God can take away the power of death, as indicated by the second two rhetorical questions.

John 5:21 For as *the Father raises the dead and gives them life*, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. 

Acts 26:8 *Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?* 

Rom 4:17 ... as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, *who gives life to the dead* and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 

2Cor 1:9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on *God who raises the dead.* 

God has power over all aspects of nature, including: the earth; the skies; . . .

See also:

- Ps 135:6-7 ; Ps 114:3-8 
- *b) God Has Control over Nature* + ref., p. 276

The language in some of the following verses is figurative, but nevertheless illustrative of God's power over nature.

Rom 8:20-21 For *the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope* ²¹*that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* 

God has subjected creation “to frailty (to futility, condemned to frustration)” (AMP) in accordance with his will (v. 20), by which it also will be renewed at the end of the age (v. 21). The glorious “freedom” (v. 21) would appear to encompass freedom from decay and anything harmful. These verses categorically illustrate God's power over nature.

Job 26:11 *The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke.* 

Mountains are possibly what is referred to here as the “pillars of heaven” – poetically portrayed as holding up the skies/heavens.

Amos 9:5 *The Lord GOD of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile, and sinks again, like the Nile of Egypt; ...* 

This and the following two references (Mic 1:4; Nah 1:5) use largely metaphorical language which possibly alludes to earthquakes. The images portray God's power as he comes in judgment.

Mic 1:4 *And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.* 

Nah 1:5 *The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it.* 

Hab 3:6 *He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low.* His were the everlasting ways. 

This is taken from a passage that some commentators think to be a poetically heightened description of the manifestation of God at Sinai. Alternatively, the comment on Amos 9:5 above may also apply here.

Job 9:5-7 ... *he who removes mountains, and they know it not, when he overturns them in his anger, ⁶who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; ⁷who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; ...* 

Verse 6 appears to be another reference to earthquakes. Verse 7 is probably not speaking of God controlling the cycle of day and night, but rather of his power to seal off the light of the sun and stars (cf. GNT, NLT).

Ps 29:5-9 *The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. ⁶He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. ⁷The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire. ⁸The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. ⁹The*



voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth^w and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!" 

^w Revocalization yields *makes the oaks to shake*

This speaks of God's power in a thunderstorm – with thunder (his "voice") and lightning – and its effect on various parts of nature. Note the text note on v. 9.

Ezek 32:7-8 When I blot you out, *I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light.* ⁸*All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord GOD.* 

Hab 3:11 *The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear.* 

This may allude to the Israelite's victory at Gibeon – where due to God's intervention "... the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies ..." – Joshua 10:13.

Ps 78:26 *He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and by his power he led out the south wind; ...* 

... and the waters

See also:

- [Ps 65:7](#) ↓ 

Ps 135:6-7 *Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.* ⁷*He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses.* 

Ex 15:8 *At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.* 

This speaks of God dividing the Red Sea (cf. Ex 14; [Ps 18:15](#) ↓; [Ps 74:13](#) ↓; [Ps 77:16, 19](#) ↓).

Job 26:8, 12 *He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not split open under them.*  ... ¹²*By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab.* 

Ps 18:15 *Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.* 

This may be alluding to the parting of the Red Sea. Alternatively David may be using figurative language with

images from nature to depict God's intervention to deliver him.

Ps 29:3, 10 *The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters.*  ... ¹⁰*The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.* 

Verse 3 is quite possibly referring to God's power over the seas. In v. 10 "the flood" may denote the great flood of Noah's time.

Ps 74:13, 15 *You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monsters^x on the waters.*  ... ¹⁵*You split open springs and brooks; you dried up ever-flowing streams.* 

^x Or the great sea creatures

The use of "the sea monsters" apparently is drawing upon Canaanite mythology, possibly in reference to Egypt in its defeat at the Red Sea. But note also the alternative rendering in the text note.

Ps 77:16, 19 *When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; indeed, the deep trembled.*  ... ¹⁹*Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.^y* 

^y Hebrew unknown

This appears to portray God's forging a path through the Red Sea.

Ps 89:9 *You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.* 

Ps 93:4 *Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!* 

Ps 107:24-25, 29 ... they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. ²⁵*For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.*  ... ²⁹*He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.* 

Ps 114:3-8 *The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back.* ⁴*The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.* ⁵*What ails you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back?* ⁶*O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs?* ⁷*Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,* ⁸*who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.* 

Elements of nature are personified and spoken of as having a great fear of God, to portray God's supreme power over them. Note that v. 8 is referring to the occasion when God brought water from a rock (Ex 17; Num 20) to provide for the



wandering Israelites. God's power over other forms of water in nature besides the seas and oceans is also evident above (cf. Job 26:8; Ps 74:15).

Isa 50:2b *Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst.* 

Jer 5:22 Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? *I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.* 

God has power over nations . . .

See also:

- *God rules over all – over all the earth*, p. 251
- *God rules over all nations and authorities*, p. 252
- *God is in control of the nations*, p. 282
- *God has been in control of the nations throughout history*, p. 283

Dan 4:35 *... all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"* 

Job 12:23 *He makes nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away.* 

Ps 33:10 *The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples.* 

Ps 47:3 *He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet.* 

Ps 65:7 *... who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, ...* 

Ps 66:7 *... who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations— let not the rebellious exalt themselves.* Selah 

Ps 78:55 *He drove out nations before them; he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.* 

The middle clause refers to God apportioning the land of the nations that were driven out of Canaan to the tribes of Israel as their possession.

Ps 94:10a *He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke?* 

Isa 17:13 *The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm.* 

Isa 33:3 *At the tumultuous noise peoples flee; when you lift yourself up, nations are scattered, ...* 

The "tumultuous noise" appears to speak of that caused by God – or the instrument/s of his wrath – in bringing judgment against nations.

Isa 54:15-17a *If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you. ¹⁶Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy; ¹⁷no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment.* 

The assertion that God is the one who created both the blacksmith who makes weapons (v. 16a) and the nations that use these weapons to wreak havoc (v. 16b), carries the implication that God has power over such nations and their weapons. As such, God is able to prevent them from prevailing over his people (vv. 15b, 17a).

Ezek 36:7 *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer reproach.* 

Hab 2:13 *Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing?* 

God determined that all that the nations – primarily the Babylonians – had labored to build would go up in flames.

Mal 1:4-5 *If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.'" ⁵Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!"* 

On seeing God's dealings with Edom, the Israelites will realize how great God is – sovereign over all nations, "beyond the border of Israel!" (v. 5)



... God can devastate or destroy nations

See also:

- Job 12:23 [↑](#); Mal 1:4 [↑](#)
- Jer 25:17-27 [↓](#)

Jer 12:17 *But if any nation will not listen, then I will utterly pluck it up and destroy it, declares the LORD.* [📖](#)

Josh 11:20 *For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.* [📖](#)

Because of the Canaanite people's prolonged depravity, God led them into judgment – at the hands of the Israelites.

Ps 46:6, 8 *The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.* [📖](#) ... ⁸*Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth.* [📖](#)

The first phrase may be speaking of the nations being in uproar (cf. NASB, NIV, NLT, NRSV), quite possibly due to being in terror (cf. GNT, NCV). Verse 6 appears to be implying that the nations and kingdoms face calamity brought upon them by God – particularly with v. 8 speaking of "how he has brought desolations on the earth." Alternatively, it may be implying that amidst all the chaos, God is in control.

Isa 23:11 *He has stretched out his hand over the sea; he has shaken the kingdoms; the LORD has given command concerning Canaan to destroy its strongholds.* [📖](#)

Isa 30:28 *... his breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck; to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction, and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray.* [📖](#)

Isa 31:8 *And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man; and a sword, not of man, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor.* [📖](#)

Isa 41:2 *Who stirred up one from the east whom victory meets at every step?^z He gives up nations before him, so that he tramples kings underfoot; he makes them like dust with his sword, like driven stubble with his bow.* [📖](#)

^z Or *whom righteousness calls to follow?*

This refers to God handing nations over to the Persian king Cyrus the Great.

Jer 25:12-16 *Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste. ¹³I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. ¹⁴For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands." ¹⁵Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. ¹⁶They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them."* [📖](#)

Jer 27:8 *"But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, declares the LORD, until I have consumed it by his hand.* [📖](#)

Amos 9:8 *Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD.* [📖](#)

Hab 3:6, 12 *He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.* [📖](#) ... ¹²*You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger.* [📖](#)

Zeph 3:6 *I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant.* [📖](#)

Hag 2:21-22 *Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, ²²and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.* [📖](#)



God has power over rulers and can bring them down . . .

See also:

- *God has control over rulers . . .*, p. 286
- *. . . God can use rulers in order to accomplish his purposes*, p. 287

Job 12:18-21, 24-25 *He looses the bonds of kings and binds a waistcloth on their hips. ¹⁹He leads priests away stripped and overthrows the mighty. ²⁰He deprives of speech those who are trusted and takes away the discernment of the elders. ²¹He pours contempt on princes and loosens the belt of the strong. . . . ²⁴He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander in a pathless waste. ²⁵They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man.*

The clause "binds a waistcloth on their hips" (v. 18b) may be referring to the kings, in which case it would signify their humiliation by God and possibly even enslavement. Alternatively it may be referring to those from whom the bonds put on by kings were torn off (v. 18a).

Job 34:18-19, 24-25 *... [God] who says to a king, 'Worthless one,' and to nobles, 'Wicked man,' ¹⁹who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands? . . . ²⁴He shatters the mighty without investigation and sets others in their place. ²⁵Thus, knowing their works, he overturns them in the night, and they are crushed.*

"Worthless" (v. 18) may have wickedness in view (cf. CEV, NRSV), as per the remainder of the verse. God has the authority and power to address rulers with such a rebuke. In v. 19, the fact that princes are "the work of his hands" – as with the rich and the poor – points to God's sovereignty and power over them.

Ps 76:12 *... [God] who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.*

Isa 40:23-24 *... [God] who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. ²⁴Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.*

Jer 25:17-27 *So I took the cup from the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to whom the LORD sent me drink it: ¹⁸Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a desolation and a waste, a hissing and a curse, as*

at this day; ¹⁹Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his officials, all his people, ²⁰and all the mixed tribes among them; all the kings of the land of Uz and all the kings of the land of the Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); ²¹Edom, Moab, and the sons of Ammon; ²²all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coastland across the sea; ²³Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who cut the corners of their hair; ²⁴all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed tribes who dwell in the desert; ²⁵all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media; ²⁶all the kings of the north, far and near, one after another, and all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth. And after them the king of Babylon^a shall drink. ²⁷"Then you shall say to them, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink, be drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you."

^a Hebrew *Sheshach*, a code name for Babylon

Verse 17 speaks figuratively of Jeremiah pronouncing upon the nations God's judgments of destruction – the "cup of the wine of wrath" (v. 15 ↑).

Jer 49:19b *For who is like me? Who will summon me? What shepherd can stand before me?*

Here "shepherd" signifies a ruler or leader.

Luke 1:52 *... he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ...*

Rev 6:15-17 *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave^b and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

^b Or servant; Greek *bondservant*

. . . Examples of God bringing rulers down

1Ki 22:23, 34-35 *Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you." . . . ³⁴But a certain man drew his bow at random^c and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded." ³⁵And the battle continued that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians, until at evening he died. And the blood of the wound flowed into the bottom of the chariot.*



^c Hebrew in his innocence

2Ki 19:28, 35-36 *Because you have raged against me and your complacency has come into my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.*  ... ³⁵And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁶Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. 

As with his utter defeat here in attempting to capture Jerusalem, Sennacherib's final demise can also be attributed to God (cf. 2Ki 19:7, 37).

2Chr 22:7-9a *But it was ordained by God that the downfall of Ahaziah should come about through his going to visit Joram. For when he came there, he went out with Jehoram to meet Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab.* ⁸And when Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he met the princes of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's brothers, who attended Ahaziah, and he killed them. ⁹He searched for Ahaziah, and he was captured while hiding in Samaria, and he was brought to Jehu and put to death. 

2Chr 25:15-16, 21-23 Therefore the LORD was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of a people who did not deliver their own people from your hand?" ¹⁶But as he was speaking, the king said to him, "Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?" So the prophet stopped, but said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel."  ... ²¹So Joash king of Israel went up, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another in battle at Bethshemesh, which belongs to Judah. ²²And Judah defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his home. ²³And Joash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Bethshemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem for 400 cubits,^d from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. 

^d A cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

Ps 135:10-11 ... [God] who struck down many nations and killed mighty kings, ¹¹Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, ... 

Dan 5:18-21 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. ¹⁹And because of the greatness that he

gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. ²⁰But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. ²¹He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. 

Dan 5:26-28, 30 This is the interpretation of the matter: *MENE, God has numbered^e the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷TEKEL, you have been weighed^f in the balances and found wanting; ²⁸PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.* ^g ... ³⁰That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 

^e MENE sounds like the Aramaic for numbered

^f TEKEL sounds like the Aramaic for weighed

^g PERES (the singular of Parsin) sounds like the Aramaic for divided and for Persia

Dan 8:25 By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and *he shall be broken—but by no human hand.* 

The reference is to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, an evil king of the Seleucid dynasty which ruled over Syria and much of western Asia. He persecuted the Jews from about 171 B.C. to 165 B.C.

† The ungodly rulers of this world are doomed to perish:

1Cor 2:6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. 

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) God Defeats His Enemies

Subsections

- No one can effectively oppose God . . .
- . . . The plans of God's enemies cannot succeed against him
- God takes vengeance on his enemies
- God repays his enemies for their deeds
- God destroys his enemies

No one can effectively oppose God . . .

See also:

- Ps 2:1-6 ↴
- *No one can thwart God's purposes and plans . . .*, p. 270
- *. . . Nor can anyone alter what God does*, p. 271
- *God is far more powerful than our enemies*, p. 1124

Job 11:10 *If he passes through and imprisons and summons the court, who can turn him back?*

The phrase "summons the court" appears to speak of God calling a person to account or trial.

Job 23:13 *But he is unchangeable,^h and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does.*

^h Or *one*

Job 9:3-4, 12, 14-15 *If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times. ⁴He is wise in heart and mighty in strength—who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?— ... ¹²Behold, he snatches away; who can turn him back? Who will say to him, 'What are you doing?' ... ¹⁴How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him? ¹⁵Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.ⁱ*

ⁱ Or *to my judge*

Verse 12b indicates that no one is in a position to dare question God.

Job 37:19-20 *Teach us what we shall say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of darkness. ²⁰Shall it be told him that I would speak? Did a man ever wish that he would be swallowed up?*

In v. 19 "darkness" refers to ignorance or lack of understanding – particularly in comparison to God. Verse 20 is suggesting that daring to oppose or quiz God is in effect

asking "to be swallowed up". God's unmatched wisdom/knowledge and power both appear to be in view.

Job 40:1-5 *And the LORD said to Job: ²'Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.'³Then Job answered the LORD and said: ⁴'Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. ⁵I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.'*

Job 42:1-3 *Then Job answered the LORD and said: ²'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ³Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*

Job acknowledges that he was in no position to question or interpret God's counsel (cf. **Job 40:3-5** ↑), for in comparison to God he was "without knowledge", and he had spoken of things beyond his comprehension. Note that in v. 3a Job repeats an earlier question of God to him.

Jer 49:19b *And I will appoint over her whomever I choose. For who is like me? Who will summon me? What shepherd can stand before me?*

Job 41:10 *No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up [the leviathan]. Who then is he who can stand before me?*

The leviathan may be the crocodile.

2Chr 13:12b *O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your fathers, for you cannot succeed.*

2Chr 20:6 ...and [Jehoshaphat] said, "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that *none is able to withstand you.*"

No one can stand against God (cf. NASB, NCV, NLT).

Acts 5:39a ...but *if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!*

John 10:29 *My Father, who has given them to me,^j is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

^j Some manuscripts *What my Father has given to me*

God's supremacy means that no one can snatch his people from him.



... The plans of God's enemies cannot succeed against him

See also:

- *God can thwart the plans of the nations*, p. 285

Ps 21:11 *Though they plan evil against you, though they devise mischief, they will not succeed.*

Prov 21:30 *No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD.*

Ps 2:1-6 *Why do the nations rage^k and the peoples plot in vain? ²The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ³“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” ⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”*

^k Or nations noisily assemble

God's initial reaction in v. 4 shows how pathetic the nations' plots are in his eyes; they are no threat to him whatsoever. In v. 6 God states that he will install his "King" in Jerusalem. In the context this is generally understood to point to a messianic king who will rule over all the nations, crushing any opponents (cf. vv. 8-9).

Nah 1:9-12a *What do you plot against the LORD? He will make a complete end; trouble will not rise up a second time. ¹⁰For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried. ¹¹From you came one who plotted evil against the LORD, a worthless counselor. ¹²Thus says the LORD, “Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away.*

In speaking of this plotting "against the LORD" (vv. 9, 11), the prophet probably has primarily in view plotting against God's people, which ultimately is against him. Such plots cannot succeed (vv. 9b, 12a).

✦ **God's power is so great that his enemies cringe before him:**

Ps 66:3 *Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.*

God takes vengeance on his enemies

See also:

- [Jer 51:6](#)
- *Note: God will take vengeance on those who persecute his people*, p. 2004

God takes vengeance for the sake of his people and because of his justice – the latter leading God to punish the guilty and exact judgment on sin. God's vengeance will be evident to all at the end of the age.

Nah 1:2 *The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.*

Deut 32:34-35, 40-43 *“Is not this laid up in store with me, sealed up in my treasuries? ³⁵Vengeance is mine, and recompense,¹ for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.’ ... ⁴⁰For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, As I live forever, ⁴¹if I sharpen my flashing sword^m and my hand takes hold on judgment, *I will take vengeance on my adversaries and will repay those who hate me. ⁴²I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh— with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired heads of the enemy.’ ⁴³“Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods,ⁿ for he avenges the blood of his children^o and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him^p and cleanses^q his people's land.”^r**

¹ Septuagint and I will repay

^m Hebrew the lightning of my sword

ⁿ Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text *Rejoice his people, O nations*

^o Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text *servants*

^p Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text lacks *He repays those who hate him*

^q Or atones for

^r Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew *his land his people*

Ps 94:1 *O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth!*

Isa 1:24 *Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.”*

Jer 46:10 *That day is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, to avenge himself on his foes. The sword shall devour and be sated and drink its fill of their blood. For the Lord GOD of hosts holds a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.*



The last statement speaks figuratively of God slaughtering his enemies.

Jer 50:14-15 *Set yourselves in array against Babylon all around, all you who bend the bow; shoot at her, spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the LORD. ¹⁵Raise a shout against her all around; she has surrendered; her bulwarks have fallen; her walls are thrown down. For this is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance on her; do to her as she has done.* 

Mic 5:15 *And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.* 

God repays his enemies for their deeds

See also:

- [Deut 7:10](#) ↴
- [God judges and repays people according to what they have done](#), p. 430

Isa 59:18 *According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment.* 

Isa 66:6 *The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies!* 

Jer 51:6 *Flee from the midst of Babylon; let every one save his life! Be not cut off in her punishment, for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance, the repayment he is rendering her.* 

Jer 50:29-30 *Summon archers against Babylon, all those who bend the bow. Encamp around her; let no one escape. Repay her according to her deeds; do to her according to all that she has done. For she has proudly defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. ³⁰Therefore her young men shall fall in her squares, and all her soldiers shall be destroyed on that day, declares the LORD.* 

‡ **The descendants of those who hate God also bear his punishment:**

Deut 5:9-10 *You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰but showing steadfast love to thousands^s of those who love me and keep my commandments.* 

^s *Or to the thousandth generation*

This appears to speak of the ongoing effects of severe punishment still being felt by future generations. Some commentators think that it alludes to the sin itself filtering through to later generations, and so being accompanied by appropriate punishment; certainly repentant children would not be subject to such punishment. Note the contrasting blessings for those who love God, with God blessing them with his love to a thousand generations (v. 10).

God destroys his enemies

Ex 15:6-7 *Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. ⁷In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.* 

Num 14:35 *I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.* 

Deut 7:9-10 *Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face.* 

1Sam 2:10a *The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven.* 

Ps 68:21 *But God will strike the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways.* 

The "hairy crown" refers to long hair, with the term quite possibly being used to allude to the wickedness of God's enemies.

Ps 78:66 *And he put his adversaries to rout; he put them to everlasting shame.* 

Ps 92:9 *For behold, your enemies, O LORD, for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered.* 

Ps 97:3 *Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around.* 

This may be using poetic imagery or possibly be prophetic of God's final judgment.



Jer 50:23-24 *How the hammer of the whole earth is cut down and broken! How Babylon has become a horror among the nations! ²⁴I set a snare for you and you were taken, O Babylon, and you did not know it; you were found and caught, because you opposed the LORD.* 📖

Nah 1:8 But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries,[†] and will pursue his enemies into darkness. 📖

[†] Hebrew of her place

‡ God's enemies will vanish:

Ps 37:20 But the wicked will perish; *the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) God Fulfills His Plans

See also:

- *God fulfills his promises through Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 532
- *a) God Has Plans and Purposes for His People* + ref., p. 956

Subsections

- God carries out his purposes and plans
- God's plans were determined long ago – from the beginning
- When the time comes, God's plans are promptly fulfilled
- God does not change his purposes and plans . . .
- . . . though God may have reason to alter something he did – or relent from something he proposed
- No one can thwart God's purposes and plans . . .
- . . . Nor can anyone alter what God does
- God works everything for his purposes and plans

God carries out his purposes and plans

See also:

- *. . . and what God's word foretells comes true*, p. 307

Isa 14:24 *The LORD of hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand, ...* 📖

Isa 44:28 *... who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'* 📖

Isa 46:10-11 *... declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' ¹¹calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.* 📖

Note that the "bird of prey from the east" is the Persian king Cyrus (cf. **Isa 44:28** †), who God would use in fulfilling his purposes.

Gen 41:31-32 *... and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. ³²And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.* 📖

2Sam 7:21 *Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it.* 📖

This speaks of the fact that God's prophetic word is fulfilled; his will is carried out.

Prov 19:21 *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.* 📖

Isa 48:16 *Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there." And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.* 📖

The words "from the time it came to be I have been there" imply that God is always present to ensure each "announcement" (NIV®) of his plans comes true (cf. GNT).

Isa 55:11 *... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.* 📖

God's word accomplishes the purpose for which he imparts it.



Jer 23:20 *The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. In the latter days you will understand it clearly.* 

Jer 51:12, 29 Set up a standard against the walls of Babylon; make the watch strong; set up watchmen; prepare the ambushes; for *the LORD has both planned and done what he spoke concerning the inhabitants of Babylon.*  ... ²⁹*The land trembles and writhes in pain, for the LORD's purposes against Babylon stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabitant.* 

Ezek 17:24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. *I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.* 

The "trees" symbolize nations.

Ezek 39:8 *Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, declares the Lord GOD. That is the day of which I have spoken.* 

Dan 11:36 And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for *what is decreed shall be done.* 

Zec 1:6 *But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.* 

The rhetorical question indicates that God's warnings and plans that he proclaimed through his prophets caught up with their forefathers. They were fulfilled and so the forefathers suffered the punishment prophesied.

Rev 10:7 ... but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, *the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants^u the prophets.* 

^u Greek *bondservants*

Commentators generally consider that the "the mystery of God" refers to – or at least encompasses – the establishment of God's kingdom and his absolute rule. This had been announced to and spoken of by the prophets, but aspects of it – such as the time of its fulfillment – remain a mystery.

Rev 17:17 ... for God has put it into their hearts *to carry out his purpose* by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, *until the words of God are fulfilled.* 

† **God's will is good and perfect:**

Rom 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world,^v but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern *what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*^w 

^v Greek *age*

^w Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

See also *Note: God and his ways are perfect*, p. 58.

God's plans were determined long ago – from the beginning

See also:

- *God's choice and call were determined before creation*, p. 762

2Ki 19:25 Have you not heard that *I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass*, that you should turn fortified cities into heaps of ruins, ... 

The phrases "long ago" and "days of old" do not necessarily denote the beginning of time, before creation, but quite possibly that is what is implied. This may also be the case in the use of "long ago" and "of old" below in Isaiah 22:11; 25:1; and Isa 48:3.

Isa 22:11 You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to him who did it, or see *him who planned it long ago.* 

Isa 25:1 O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for *you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.* 

Isa 46:9b-10 *I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' ...* 

Isa 48:3 *The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth, and I announced them; then suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.* 



Matt 25:34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit *the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*



God has planned since the creation of the world that his people will inherit his kingdom.

1Cor 2:7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

This "secret and hidden wisdom of God" is the gospel of salvation, which God purposed before time began to effect our glorification.

Titus 1:2 ... in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began^x ...

^x Greek *before times eternal*

1Pet 1:20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ...

This suggests that God's purposes for Jesus Christ were determined before the creation of the world.

When the time comes, God's plans are promptly fulfilled

See also:

- [Isa 48:3](#)

Hab 2:3 For still *the vision awaits its appointed time*; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. *If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.*

At the appointed time God's revealed plan would come about without delay.

Isa 60:22 The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; *I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it.*

The use of "hasten" is indicative of prompt fulfillment.

Ezek 12:25, 28 For *I am the LORD; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord GOD.* ...²⁸Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: *None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord GOD.*

God's may delay or prolong fulfillment of some of his plans. But when the right time comes – here, "in your days" (v. 25) – they are fulfilled.

Rom 9:28 ... for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.

Luke 1:19-20 And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe *my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.*"

✦ God has a right time for everything:

Ecc 3:11a He has made everything beautiful in its time.

This is usually understood to mean that God has a designated time for every activity in which each activity is "appropriate" (NASB) – God "has set the right time for everything." (GNT; cf. CEV, NCV).

God does not change his purposes and plans . . .

See also:

- [God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises](#), p. 65

Num 23:19 God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. *Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

Ps 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.

Isa 31:2 And yet he is wise and brings disaster; *he does not call back his words*, but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.

Isa 45:23 By myself I have sworn; *from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return*: "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance."^y

^y Septuagint *every tongue shall confess to God*

Acts 2:23 ... this Jesus, delivered up according to the *definite plan and foreknowledge of God*, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

This exemplifies that God's plans are "definite" – "definite and fixed ... and settled" (AMP).



Eph 3:11 This was according to *the eternal purpose that he has realized* in Christ Jesus our Lord, ...

Heb 6:17 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise *the unchangeable character of his purpose*, he guaranteed it with an oath, ...

Heb 7:21 ... but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "*The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'*"

Rom 11:29 For *the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

This illustrates that God's purposes and plans are irrevocable.

... though God may have reason to alter something he did – or relent from something he proposed

See also:

- ... *Thus God allows for repentance and for punishment to be averted*, p. 433

As seen also in some of the above cross references, in some of God's intentions or plans he makes allowances for different outcomes, whether expressly stated or not. Reasons prominent amongst the following passages as to why God would change something he did or proposed, include: people's sin; God's grief; God's control of his anger; God's love and compassion; and the prayers of his people. A further reason shown in the above cross references is people's repentance.

Gen 6:5-7 *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."*

Humankind's wickedness was such that God was grieved about having created them. So in a sense he changed or altered what he had done – though this is not shown to be outside of his plans – by wiping them out and continuing on with just Noah's family.

1Sam 15:11, 22-23, 29, 35 *"I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments."* And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night. ... ²²And Samuel said [to Saul], "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and

sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. ²³For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. *Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.* ... ²⁹And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret. ... ³⁵And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. *And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.*

Note that vv. 11, 35 speak of God having regret, in contrast to v. 29 which states that God does not have regret. This appears to be due to differences in the way that the Hebrew term involved can be translated. It can speak of sorrow (as per vv. 11, 35) or of actually changing one's mind (as per v. 29). (ESVSB)

Hos 11:5-10 They shall not^z return to the land of Egypt, but *Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. ⁶The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. ⁷My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all. ⁸How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.*^a ¹⁰They shall go after the LORD; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west; ...

^z Or surely

^a Or into the city

The LORD is the Holy God; he does not act out of unbridled wrath. Even amidst his great wrath and judgment there is allowance for his great love and compassion. He would not simply destroy his people because of their refusal to repent – an option he appears to propose or air (vv. 5-6). Rather, because of his great compassion (v. 8) he would turn them trembling to him (v. 10).

Isa 38:1-5 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "*Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die, you shall not recover.*"^b ²Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, ³and said, "Please, O LORD, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.



⁴Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: ⁵"Go and say to Hezekiah, *Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.*"^c 

^b Or *live*; also verses 9, 21

^c Hebrew *to your days*

Ex 32:9-14 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰Now therefore let me alone, *that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.*" ¹¹But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" ¹⁴And the LORD relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. 

Some translations render v. 14 to indicate that God had earlier "threatened" (CEV, GNT, NIV, NLT) the punishment spoken of earlier (v. 10) – as opposed to resolving to carry it out. As such, God did not change any firm plan here.

✦ **God may relent from implementing proposed plans, but not from any firm plan:**

Amos 7:1-9 *This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. ²When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, "O Lord GOD, please forgive! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" ³The LORD relented concerning this: "It shall not be," said the LORD. ⁴This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, the Lord GOD was calling for a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. ⁵Then I said, "O Lord GOD, please cease! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" ⁶The LORD relented concerning this: "This also shall not be," said the Lord GOD. ⁷This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel; I will never again pass by them; ⁹the high places*

of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." 

With the first two proposed judgments God relents at Amos's intercession, but with the third proposed judgment it is implicit that no allowance will be made. Note that in the third judgment specific mention is made of improper worship and the house of the idolatrous King Jeroboam (v. 9), two of the main things characterizing or behind the people's sin.

No one can thwart God's purposes and plans . . .

See also:

- *No one can effectively oppose God . . .*, p. 263

Job 42:2 I know that you can do all things, and that *no purpose of yours can be thwarted.* 

Ps 33:10-11 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. ¹¹*The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.* 

Following on the teaching in v. 10 that God is well able to foil the plans of the nations, v. 11 appears to be implying that not only does God not change his plans and purposes, neither can anyone else foil or alter them.

Isa 14:27 *For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?* 

Dan 4:35 ... all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and *none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"* 

No one can stop God doing what he wants to, neither can anyone call him to account for what he does.

Acts 5:38-39a So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for *if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ³⁹but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them.* You might even be found opposing God! 

1Sam 14:6b It may be that the LORD will work for us, for *nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few.* 



... Nor can anyone alter what God does

See also:

- [Ps 33:10-11](#) ↑
- [Eccl 6:10](#) ↓

Isa 43:13 Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; *I work, and who can turn it back?* 

Eccl 3:14 *I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.* 

Eccl 7:13 Consider the work of God: *who can make straight what he has made crooked?* 

The question posed may be making the general point that no one can change what God has done. But some scholars interpret “what he has made crooked” to refer in particular to things that appear to be incongruous or unfair, with possibly adversity primarily in view.

Job 12:14 *If he tears down, none can rebuild; if he shuts a man in, none can open.* 

Ps 104:5 *He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.* 

‡ **No one can deliver someone from God:**

Ps 50:22 Mark this, then, you who forget God, *lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!* 

Isaiah 43:13 and Job 12:14 above also speak of this truth.

God works everything for his purposes and plans

Eph 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of *him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ...* 

Rom 8:28 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^d for those who are called according to his purpose.* 

^d Some manuscripts *God works all things together for good, or God works in all things for the good*

God works in all things for the good of his people, in accordance with his purpose in calling them.

Phil 2:13 *... for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* 

God works in his people, so that they both desire to act in line with his purposes and actually do so. As such, this illustrates that God works things for his purposes and plans.

Prov 16:4 *The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.* 

God has an end or purpose for everything – even evil and negative things fit into his purposes and plans.

‡ **God predetermines all things:**

Eccl 6:10 *Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.* 

“Whatever has come to be has already been named” appears to mean that everything that happens has already been predetermined by God (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT). The clause “it is known what man is” may mean that God also predetermines each person’s nature, although his foreknowledge of them may instead be in view. The “one stronger” is quite possibly referring to God (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). As such the final clause may be teaching that no one can alter what God does (the theme of the previous subsection).

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. God's Control over the World

God has power over everything. This includes control over evil powers, nature, the nations of the world and each person's life. Comprehending this is vital to having a sound understanding of God and of his relationship to the world – including his relationship with ourselves.

a) God Has Control over Evil

See also:

- *Satan can only tempt and afflict as God permits*, p. 190
- *God has power over the forces of evil*, p. 255

Subsections

- God exerts control over evil
- God can use evil
- God can use evil to fulfill his purposes
- God can use evil and wrongdoing to punish
- God can use evil for the benefit of people

God exerts control over evil

Gen 31:7 ... yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But *God did not permit him to harm me*. 📖

God had kept in check Laban's ill treatment of Jacob.

Num 24:12-13 And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, ¹³*If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will. What the LORD speaks, that will I speak?*" 📖

Balaam was a pagan diviner who Balak, the king of Moab, hired to curse the Israelites. But due to God's intervention Balaam could not, or would dare not. Instead God made him bless the Israelites (cf. Num 23:11-12; and *God can use evil for the benefit of people*, p. 275).

1Sam 2:25 [Eli, to his sons:] If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But *they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death*. 📖

Eli's wicked sons were unwilling to respond to their father's rebuke to change their ways. This is attributed in part at least to God's will – no doubt as a judgment, so that punishment for their past wickedness would not be averted. Thus it illustrates God's control over such evil people – and over their destiny.

2Sam 7:10-11a And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And *violent men shall afflict them no more*, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And *I will give you rest from all your enemies*. 📖

God has control over the activities of evil people. At times he allows them to oppress and at other times prevents them from doing so.

Job 12:16 With him are strength and sound wisdom; *the deceived and the deceiver are his*. 📖

Those who deceive – as well as those who are deceived – "are in his power" (GNT, NLT).

Prov 16:4 *The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble*. 📖

God has a purpose for everything – even the wicked fit into his purposes and plans. In fact this verse may imply that God makes the wicked for a time of punishment (cf. NLT).

Ezek 14:9 And *if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet*, and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 📖

This is speaking of false prophets, reflecting God's sovereignty over them and their words – as well as their end. It would appear that God's deceiving of such a prophet would be part of his judgment of them, culminating in destruction.

1Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and *he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it*. 📖

God has control over and limits any temptation, whether it originates from Satan or from our own sinful nature. This is indicative of God's control over evil.



2Thes 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. 

The "mystery of lawlessness" refers to that which is expressed through the "man of lawlessness" (v. 3) who is quite likely the final antichrist. There are a number of theories as to whom or what is "he who now restrains it" (vv. 6-7) – ensuring that the man of lawlessness is revealed at the right time and not before (ESVSB). It would appear to be one who will be both given power to do so and "taken out of the way" (NIV®) by God. As such this demonstrates God's control over this force of "lawlessness", initially through "he who now restrains it".

✦ God prevented David from doing wrong:

1Sam 25:26, 34, 39a [Abigail, to David:] Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, because *the LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt* and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal.  ... [David, to Abigail:] ³⁴For as surely as *the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you*, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male."  ... ³⁹When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and *has kept back his servant from wrongdoing*. The LORD has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head." 

God can use evil

See also:

- Num 24:12-13 ; Prov 16:4 

1Sam 18:10a The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. 

The "harmful spirit" is generally understood to have been an "evil spirit" (AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NRSV). For further comment, see 16:14-16 in [God can use evil and wrongdoing to punish](#), p. 275.

2Sam 16:10-11 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? *If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,'* who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'" ¹¹And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and *let him curse, for the LORD has told him to.*" 

David considered that the ill treatment he was receiving may well have been of God.

2Sam 24:1 Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and *he incited David against them*, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah." 

1 Chronicles 21:1 says that it was Satan who incited David. It seems reasonable then to conclude from these two accounts that God used Satan to do this – illustrating God's use of evil. Even apart from Satan's involvement, this incident still illustrates God's use of evil as the action of taking a census was itself sinful. For taking a census – in particular of the fighting men (cf. v. 2) – displayed a lack of trust in God by David, who by doing this was looking to the strength of his own forces. God used the ramifications of this to bring judgment on Israel (cf. v. 15), apparently as punishment for something Israel had done earlier for which God's anger "was kindled against Israel".

Ps 105:24-25 And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes. ²⁵*He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants.* 

The reference is to the Egyptians, in particular Pharaoh, reflecting that God's sovereignty over his people's destiny can involve even the malice of their enemies against them.

John 11:49-52 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰Nor do you understand that *it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.*" ⁵¹*He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,* ⁵²*and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.* 

Caiaphas wickedly oversaw the trial of Jesus which was engineered to condemn Jesus. But despite this evil context, God used Caiaphas – who "did not say this of his own accord" (v. 51) – to make a profound prophecy of Jesus' death and what it would accomplish.

Eph 4:6 ... one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 

The phrase "through all" may well mean "works through all" (GNT, cf. CEV). Note that "all" quite likely means all things or all people – arguably then inclusive of evil – but all Christians may instead be primarily in view.



Matt 2:1-2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, *wise men^a from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose^b and have come to worship him."* 📖

^a Greek *magi*; also verses 7, 16

^b Or *in the east*; also verse 9

A number of commentators think it likely that the "wise men" or magi (cf. text note) practiced astrology, a practice spoken of as evil or forbidden elsewhere in the Bible (cf. Isa 47:13-15; Jer 8:2). If this was the case, then it would appear that God used astrology – something understood as evil – to make a revelation to pagan people.

God can use evil to fulfill his purposes

See also:

- Ps 105:24-25 ⬆
- *God may actually use his people's troubles in fulfilling his purposes for them . . .*, p. 959
- *. . . God may even initiate seemingly bad things to fulfill his purposes for his people*, p. 960

Note that some of the verses in the previous subsection, to varying degrees, reflect that God can use evil to fulfill his purposes. The ones in this subsection do so more pointedly.

Acts 2:23 *... this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* 📖

Acts 4:27-28 *... for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.* 📖

Those mentioned were not all necessarily particularly evil in themselves, but their actions against Jesus basically were evil.

Rom 9:17 *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."* 📖

Rom 11:15, 25, 32 *For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? 📖 ... ²⁵Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers:^c a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of*

the Gentiles has come in. 📖 ... ³²*For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.* 📖

^c Or *brothers and sisters*

The phrase "their rejection" (v. 15) may refer to the Jew's rejection of God's way of salvation (cf. CEV). This sinful rejection by the Jews was part of God's plan to fulfill his purpose of providing salvation to the Gentiles (vv. 25, 32) – hence the inclusion of v. 15 here. However it could instead be speaking of God rejecting the Jews (cf. GNT, NCV, NKJV).

Verse 32 can be interpreted as speaking of God sovereignly binding all people over to disobeying him, which is essentially to do evil, for his purpose of offering his mercy to all. However it is probably more often understood to mean that "God has imprisoned all people in their own disobedience" (NLT, cf. CEV).

Rev 17:17 *... for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.* 📖

This speaks of kings or world powers of the end times cooperating with the beast or anti-Christ, to unwittingly accomplish God's purpose.

Ezek 38:16-18, 21-23 *You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. ¹⁷"Thus says the Lord GOD: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them? ¹⁸But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. 📖 ... ²¹I will summon a sword against Gog^d on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. ²²With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. ²³So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.* 📖

^d Hebrew *against him*

Note v. 17 appears to refer to prophecies in general that speak of future attacks on Israel by sizable enemy forces.

⚡ **God's apparent use of insincere preachers to spread the gospel:**

Phil 1:15, 17-18a *Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. 📖 ... ¹⁷The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in*



my imprisonment. ¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. 📖

God can use evil and wrongdoing to punish

Judg 9:23-24 And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, ²⁴that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers. 📖

1Sam 16:14-16 Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him. ¹⁵And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. ¹⁶Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well." 📖

It would appear that the "harmful" spirit was an evil spirit from God sent as a punishment for Saul's disobedient.

1Ki 22:20-23 ... and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. ²¹Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' ²²And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' ²³Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you. 📖

The "lying spirit" is often considered to be an evil spirit or demon, used by God to instigate Ahab's downfall.

Isa 10:5-7 Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! ⁶Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few; ... 📖

Verse 7 shows the Assyrians to have been wicked. Despite this God used them to punish other godless people (vv. 5-6).

Isa 54:16 Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy; ... 📖

As shown in 10:5-7 above, God raises up destructive and often wicked nations to execute his judgment. Assyria (cf. **Isa 10:5-7** ↑) and Babylonia (cf. **Hab 1:6-13** ↓), who God had used to punish Israel, are primarily in view – but arguably this can be said of all such destructive nations.

Hab 1:6-13 For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. ⁷They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. ⁸Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. ⁹They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. ¹⁰At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. ¹¹Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!" ¹²Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. ¹³You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? 📖

God's use of the evil Babylonians "to execute judgment" and so "to punish" (v. 12) led to Habakkuk questioning God about it (v. 13). Note that v. 6b is indicating that the Babylonians acted only as they themselves saw fit.

† God may use evil people's wickedness in bringing punishment on them:

Josh 11:20 For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses. 📖

Note that one such occurrence in view here is contained in Deuteronomy 2:30 – "But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day."

God can use evil for the benefit of people

Gen 45:4-8 So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother,



Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now *do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.* ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷And *God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.* ⁸*So it was not you who sent me here, but God.* He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. 

Gen 50:20 [Joseph:] As for you, *you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people^e should be kept alive, as they are today.* 

^e Or a numerous people

Ex 10:1-2 Then the LORD said to Moses, *“Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, ²and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.”* 

God hardened Pharaoh's heart for the good of the Israelites – i.e. that through God's miraculous signs they would know that he was the LORD (as well as set free).

Num 23:11-12 And Balak said to Balaam, *“What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have done nothing but bless them.” ¹²And he answered and said, “Must I not take care to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?”* 

As noted earlier, Balaam was a pagan diviner hired by Balak to curse the Israelites. Instead God used this evil man to bless the Israelites.

2Cor 12:7-9 *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,^f a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.* ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* 

^f Or hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. *So to keep me from becoming conceited*

God – or Christ – used Paul's affliction, which apparently came from Satan, to both keep him from becoming

conceited (v. 7) and make him receptive to Christ's power working in him (v. 9).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Has Control over Nature

See also:

- *b) God Maintains Creation*, p. 207
- *God has power over all aspects of nature, including: the earth; the skies; . . .*, p. 257
- *. . . and the waters*, p. 258

Subsections

- God directs nature
- Nature serves God
- God can control the elements of nature to bring plentiful provision . . .
- . . . and God can control nature so as to bring depravation
- God has control over all creatures
- God can perform miracles of nature . . .
- . . . God can miraculously use nature for his purposes

God directs nature

Note that *God Maintains Creation*, cross-referenced above, has a number of subsections pertinent to this subsection's theme. The verses in this subsection are somewhat distinct in that they have a more authoritative tone, emphasizing God's direction or control over nature. Arguably they should be generally understood as speaking of God as having created nature and set its forces in motion, while maintaining his control over it – rather than meaning that God necessarily needs to direct every occurrence of natural phenomena.

Job 36:32 *He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark.* 

Job 37:11-12, 14-15 *He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. ¹²They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world.*  . . . ¹⁴“Hear this, O



Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God. ¹⁵Do you know how *God lays his command upon them and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine?*

Ps 78:23-24 Yet he commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven, ²⁴and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven.

Ps 89:9 You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.

Ps 147:15-18 He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. ¹⁶He gives snow like wool; he scatters hoarfrost like ashes. ¹⁷He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? ¹⁸He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow.

Lev 14:34-35 When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession, ³⁵then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, "There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house."

The term translated here as "leprous disease" may refer to a "spreading mildew" (GNT). Even such things as the blight of mildew are portrayed as being under God's control.

Nature serves God

See also:

- [Ps 78:23-24](#)

Ps 104:3-4 He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind; ⁴he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.

Verse 3b appears to be figuratively portraying clouds and winds as God's servants (cf. Nlrv), being subservient to God. Verse 4 may well be similarly speaking of winds and lightning (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) as his "messengers" and "ministers", i.e. his servants.

Ps 119:91 By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants.

All things serve God, including all aspects of "nature".

Ps 148:7-8 Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, ⁸fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word!

Isa 48:13 My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together.

When God summons the earth and the heavens, "they come at once and present themselves" (GNT), ready to "obey my every command" (CEV). This portrays all creation as being at God's "beck and call".

† God uses elements of nature as combative forces:

Job 38:22-23 Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, ²³which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war?

God can control the elements of nature to bring plentiful provision . . .

See also:

- [God's provision of rain and food is abundant . . .](#), p. 209

Lev 25:21 I will command my blessing on you in the sixth year, so that it will produce a crop sufficient for three years.

Deut 33:13-16 And of Joseph he said, "Blessed by the LORD be his land, with the choicest gifts of heaven above,⁸ and of the deep that crouches beneath, ¹⁴with the choicest fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months, ¹⁵with the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills, ¹⁶with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwells in the bush. May these rest on the head of Joseph, on the pate of him who is prince among his brothers.

⁸ Two Hebrew manuscripts and Targum; Hebrew with the dew

Jacob's blessing of Joseph implies that God is able to provide such abundant blessings of nature. Note that "him who dwells in the bush" (v. 16) refers to God's manifestation to Moses in the burning bush.

Ps 78:15-16 He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. ¹⁶He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers.

Ps 107:35-38 He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. ³⁶And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in; ³⁷they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. ³⁸By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish.



Isa 41:18-20 *I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. ¹⁹I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, ²⁰that they may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.* 

This is usually understood to refer initially at least to God's rich provision for the Israelites returning from exile in Babylon. Some commentators think it refers to conditions in the renewed Israel in the Millennium. Note that similar references to God providing "water" in harsh and dry conditions are made in 35:6-7; 43:19-20; 44:3. These and the passage here may well have both literal and figurative (or spiritual) applications.

Joel 2:19, 22-24 The LORD answered and said to his people, "Behold, *I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied*; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.  ... ²²Fear not, you beasts of the field, for *the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. ²³Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. ²⁴The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.* 

Zec 8:12 For there shall be a sowing of peace. *The vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its produce, and the heavens shall give their dew. And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.* 

James 5:17-18 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸*Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.* 

... and God can control nature so as to bring deprivation

See also:

- [James 5:17](#) ↑
- [Joel 2:25](#) ↓
- [Nature](#) [means of God's judicial retribution], p. 442

Lev 26:19-20 ... and *I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. ²⁰And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.* 

Ps 107:33-34 *He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, ^{34a} fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants.* 

Jer 51:36 Therefore thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you. *I will dry up her sea and make her fountain dry, ...* 

The second half of the verse appears to be speaking of God drying up the Euphrates River and therefore Babylon's water supply, presumably through lack of rain. Alternatively, the language may be figurative.

Amos 4:7 *I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither; ...* 

Hag 1:10-11 Therefore *the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.* 

Hag 2:17 *I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD.* 

Blight is a disease affecting plants and crops.

Job 12:15 *If he withholds the waters, they dry up; if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.* 

Note that second part of the verse speaks of God using rains to devastate the land (cf. [Job 37:13](#) ↓).

‡ God can use nature both to punish and, in contrast, to show his love:

Job 37:11-13 He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. ¹²They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world. ¹³*Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen.* 



God has control over all creatures

See also:

- Num 22:28 ↴

Gen 7:15-16 *They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. ¹⁶And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.* 

God caused two of every kind of creature to come to Noah, as God had said (cf. 6:19-20).

1Ki 17:4-6 You shall drink from the brook, and *I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.*" ⁵So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan. ⁶And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. 

Ps 78:27-29 ... he rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas; ²⁸he let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. ²⁹And they ate and were well filled, for he gave them what they craved. 

Isa 34:15-16 *There the owl nests and lays and hatches and gathers her young in her shadow; indeed, there the hawks are gathered, each one with her mate. ¹⁶Seek and read from the book of the LORD: Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the LORD has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them.* 

Note that the reference is to judgment on Edom. Such will be its desolation that the land will only be inhabited by such creatures – gathered there by the command and Spirit of God.

Jer 27:6 Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and *I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him.* 

Dan 6:22 *My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.* 

Hos 2:18 *And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish^h the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.* 

^h Hebrew *break*

God will cause all creatures to live in peace with the renewed Israel of the future – no longer will they harm the people or their crops.

Jonah 2:10 *And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.* 

In addition to birds and animals (which are largely in view in the above passages) God also has control over fish – and insects (cf. Joel 2:20, 25 ↴).

Joel 2:20, 25 *I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguardⁱ into the eastern sea, and his rear guard^j into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things.  ... ²⁵I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.* 

ⁱ Hebrew *face*

^j Hebrew *his end*

Verse 20 speaks of God driving away a great locust plague, which he had also sent (v. 25).

God can perform miracles of nature . . .

See also:

- a) *Jesus Christ's Miracles*, p. 559

Numerous other references used in the above subsections also illustrate that God can perform miracles of nature. The ones in this and the following subsection are generally more miraculous.

Ex 3:2 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, *the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.* 

Num 22:28 *Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"* 

Judg 13:3, 24a *And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.  ... ²⁴And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson.* 

1Ki 17:12-16 And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." ¹³And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do



as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth." ¹⁵And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah. 

2Ki 2:19-22 Now the men of the city said to Elisha, "Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful." ²⁰He said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. ²¹Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it." ²²So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke. 

Exodus 15:25a tells of a similar miracle concerning water that was bitter – "And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet."

2Ki 3:17, 20 For thus says the LORD, 'You shall not see wind or rain, but that streambed shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, you, your livestock, and your animals.'  ... ²⁰The next morning, about the time of offering the sacrifice, behold, water came from the direction of Edom, till the country was filled with water. 

2Ki 4:32-35 When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. ³³So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. ³⁵Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 

Although not always expressly stated, Elisha – God's prophet – performed such miracles through God's power (cf. **2Ki 2:19-22** ↑; **2Ki 3:17, 20** ↑). Note that the woman was a Shunammite who had shown much hospitality to Elisha (cf. vv. 8-10).

2Ki 4:40-41 And they poured out some for the men to eat. But while they were eating of the stew, they cried out, "O man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they could not eat it. ⁴¹He said, "Then bring flour." And he threw it into the pot and said,

"Pour some out for the men, that they may eat." And there was no harm in the pot. 

2Ki 5:14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. 

The man, Naaman, had had leprosy.

2Ki 6:4-7 So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. ⁵But as one was felling a log, his axe head fell into the water, and he cried out, "Alas, my master! It was borrowed." ⁶Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, he [Elisha] cut off a stick and threw it in there and made the iron float. ⁷And he said, "Take it up." So he reached out his hand and took it. 

... God can miraculously use nature for his purposes

See also:

- **b) God Has Control over Nature** [means of God's judicial retribution], p. 442

Note that God also performed for his purposes the miracles mentioned in the previous subsection, but the extracts in this subsection generally show this more clearly.

Ex 4:2-9 The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." ³And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. ⁴But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— ⁵"that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." ⁶Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." ⁷And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous^l like snow. ⁷Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸"If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. ⁹If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." 

^k Hebrew into your bosom; also verse 7

^l Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13



Ex 16:12-15 "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'" ¹³In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. ¹⁴And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?"^m For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat." 

^m Or "It is manna." Hebrew *man hu*

God used the quail and the flakes that formed from the dew to not only satisfy the desires of the people but also to again make known that he was the LORD their God (v. 12b).

Num 17:5, 8 And the staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout. Thus I will make to cease from me the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against you."  ...
⁸On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds. 

Josh 4:23-24 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, ²⁴so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.ⁿ 

ⁿ Or all the days

Josh 10:11-14 And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword. ¹²At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."¹³And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. ¹⁴There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. 

2Ki 20:9-11 And Isaiah said, "This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he has promised:

shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or go back ten steps?"
¹⁰And Hezekiah answered, "It is an easy thing for the shadow to lengthen ten steps. Rather let the shadow go back ten steps." ¹¹And Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and he brought the shadow back ten steps, by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz. 

Ps 78:42-52 They did not remember his power^o or the day when he redeemed them from the foe, ⁴³when he performed his signs in Egypt and his marvels in the fields of Zoan. ⁴⁴He turned their rivers to blood, so that they could not drink of their streams. ⁴⁵He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them. ⁴⁶He gave their crops to the destroying locust and the fruit of their labor to the locust. ⁴⁷He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamores with frost. ⁴⁸He gave over their cattle to the hail and their flocks to thunderbolts. ⁴⁹He let loose on them his burning anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels. ⁵⁰He made a path for his anger; he did not spare them from death, but gave their lives over to the plague. ⁵¹He struck down every firstborn in Egypt, the firstfruits of their strength in the tents of Ham. ⁵²Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. 

^o Hebrew *hand*

‡ God's use of multiple elements of nature to teach Jonah a lesson:

Jonah 4:6-11 Now the LORD God appointed a plant^p and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort.^q So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." ⁹But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." ¹⁰And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" 

^p Hebrew *qiqayon*, probably the castor oil plant; also verses 7, 9, 10

^q Or his evil

Jonah had been angry that God had spared the people of Nineveh (cf. vv. 1-2). So, in conjunction with the sun, God maneuvered different elements of nature – vegetation, a



wind, the sun and a creature (vv. 6-8) – to teach Jonah a lesson (vv. 9-11). Earlier of course God had miraculously employed a great fish – “And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” (1:17)

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God Has Control over the Nations

Subsections

- God is in control of the nations
- God has been in control of the nations throughout history
- God appoints times for events affecting the nations
- God has control over the outcome of conflicts between nations
- God can thwart the plans of the nations
- God establishes all ruling authorities
- God has control over rulers . . .
- . . . God can use rulers in order to accomplish his purposes

God is in control of the nations

See also:

- *God rules over all – over all the earth*, p. 251
- *God rules over all nations and authorities*, p. 252
- *God has power over nations . . .*, p. 259
- . . . *God can devastate or destroy nations*, p. 260

Ps 67:4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah 

Isa 14:26-27 *This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. ²⁷For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?* 

What God determines for the whole world does take place, for his power to impose his will overshadows all nations. For

God “controls every nation” (CEV) – none can prevent him from implementing his purposes concerning them.

Gen 15:13-16 Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” 

This shows God’s sovereignty over not only his people Israel but also Egypt and the Amorites. The latter part of v. 16 refers to God’s plan to destroy the Amorites once their sin had “reached the point” (NIV®) where God determined that it could no longer go unpunished.

Jer 27:6-7 Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. ⁷All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave. 

Ezek 17:24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it. 

Here and in Ezekiel 31:14 below the trees symbolize nations.

Ezek 31:14 All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to towering height or set their tops among the clouds, and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height. For they are all given over to death, to the world below, among the children of man,^r with those who go down to the pit. 

^r Or of Adam

Proud Assyria (cf. v. 3) and its downfall are primarily in view. The verse speaks of God curtailing the power of nations, in particular those in the region of “the waters”, probably the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Dan 2:37-40, 44 You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, ³⁸and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. ³⁹Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰And there shall be a fourth



kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. [📖](#) ... ⁴⁴And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ... [📖](#)

Here Daniel explains to Nebuchadnezzar – the king of Babylon – what God has revealed in the king's dream of future empires. The empires spoken of as following the Neo-Babylonian Empire are: the Medo-Persian Empire; the Grecian Empire, established by Alexander the Great; and the Roman Empire. The dream implies that the rise and fall of such empires is according to what God has determined. Commentators generally understand the eternal, all-conquering kingdom of v. 44 to be the kingdom of God.

Dan 4:25b You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that *the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.* [📖](#)

Amos 3:6 Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? *Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?* [📖](#)

What is said here in regard to cities is readily applicable to nations. When disaster strikes a city or nation, God is ultimately behind it.

God has been in control of the nations throughout history

See also:

- [Dan 2:37-40, 44](#) [↑](#)

Acts 17:26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ... [📖](#)

Deut 32:8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders^s of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.^t [📖](#)

^s Or territories

^t Compare Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text Israel

This speaks of God determining where nations would live. Note that the second part of the verse may mean that in determining the boundaries for the nations, God ensured

that the land he would give to Israel would be of sufficient size (cf. text note).

Isa 41:4 Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. [📖](#)

God "has controlled history" (NCV™, cf. GNT, NLT) since the first generation; and he will continue to do so through to the last.

Amos 9:7 "Are you not like the Cushites to me, O people of Israel?" declares the LORD. "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?" [📖](#)

Acts 14:16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. [📖](#)

The implication is that the nations had this liberty only because God allowed it. This points to God being in control of the nations in the past.

God appoints times for events affecting the nations

See also:

- [Acts 17:26](#) [↑](#)
- [Note: Jesus Christ's mission took place at a time chosen by God . . .](#), p. 514
- [God has set times for the end of the age and related events . . .](#), p. 696
- [. . . God has set times for Jesus Christ's return and subsequent events](#), p. 697

In the following verses, references to appointed times all refer to times appointed by God.

Ps 75:2 At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity. [📖](#)

God's judgment spoken of here may well primarily be judgment on the nations (cf. v. 3); it is at least inclusive of this. As such the verse speaks of God choosing the times for his judgments of nations – presumably primarily the times of their downfall.

Ps 102:13 You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come. [📖](#)

Dan 8:19 He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end." [📖](#)



The "appointed time of the end" (v. 19) appears to refer to the end of the period of history in view, with "the indignation" referring to manifestation/s of God's wrath (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV) amongst nations.

Dan 11:27-29 And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for *the end is yet to be at the time appointed*.²⁸ And he shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. And he shall work his will and return to his own land.²⁹ *At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south*, but it shall not be this time as it was before.

The kings referred to here are Ptolemy Philometor of Egypt and Antiochus IV Epiphanes, with the events concerned eventuating around 170-168 B.C. In v. 27, "the end" may be speaking of the end of Antiochus' plans to expand his dominion into Egypt.

Hab 2:3 For still *the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end*—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.

This verse referred to and was initially fulfilled in "the end" of Babylon in 539 B.C. The writer to the Hebrews applies it to Jesus Christ's return (cf. Heb 10:37). The clause "it hastens to the end" may speak of the time fast approaching (cf. GNT) or be alluding to the certainty of its coming (cf. NLT).

Luke 21:24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and *Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*.

The "times of the Gentiles" appears to most likely refer to the period of the Gentiles' domination over Jerusalem, a period designated by God.

Acts 7:17 *But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt* ...

This is referring to God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would possess the promised land (cf. v. 5). The time designated by God not only involved events affecting the nation of Israel, but also Egypt and the nations of Canaan – the latter whom would be crushed and dispossessed by Israel.

✦ God controls the course of world events:

Dan 2:21 *He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ...*

"He changes times and seasons" likely means that God controls and "determines the course of world events" (NLT; cf. CEV), with the various eras or "epochs" (NASB).

God has control over the outcome of conflicts between nations

2Chr 25:8 *But go, act, be strong for the battle. Why should you suppose that God will cast you down before the enemy? For God has power to help or to cast down.*

1Sam 17:47 ... and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. *For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.*

The battle – including its outcome – belonged to God.

1Chr 5:21-22 They carried off their livestock: 50,000 of their camels, 250,000 sheep, 2,000 donkeys, and 100,000 men alive.²² *For many fell, because the war was of God. And they lived in their place until the exile.*

The expression "the war was of God" appears to mean that "the war was God's" (NKJV; cf. AMP, NIV), in that he provided Israel's victory (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). Alternatively, or in addition, it may be meaning that "the war was God's will" (GNT).

Prov 21:31 *The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD.*

Judg 11:27, 32 I therefore have not sinned against you, and you do me wrong by making war on me. *The LORD, the Judge, decide this day between the people of Israel and the people of Ammon.* ...³² *So Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight against them, and the LORD gave them into his hand.*

In v. 27 Jephthah acknowledges that the outcome of any battle between the Israelites and the Ammonites would be in God's hands – which indeed it was (v. 32).

2Sam 5:19-20 And David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? *Will you give them into my hand?*" *And the LORD said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand."*²⁰ *And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, "The LORD has burst through my enemies before me like a bursting flood."* Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim.^u

^u *Baal-perazim means lord of bursting through*



2Sam 10:12-13 Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may *the LORD do what seems good to him.*" ¹³So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. 

After encouraging his men (v. 12a), Joab then acknowledges God's sovereignty over the outcome of the battle (v. 12b). In conjunction with Joab's statement, God's sovereignty over the battle is also suggested by the outcome (v. 13).

Dan 1:1-2 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, *Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.* ²*And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand,* with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. 

✦ **No matter what events beset the nations, God is in control:**

Ps 75:3 *When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars.* Selah 

God can thwart the plans of the nations

See also:

▪ ... *The plans of God's enemies cannot succeed against him,* p. 264

Ps 33:10 *The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples.* 

Neh 4:15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that *God had frustrated their plan,* we all returned to the wall, each to his work. 

The peoples surrounding the Jews on their return from exile are in view here (cf. v. 7), with their antagonistic schemes.

Ps 2:1-6 *Why do the nations rage^v and the peoples plot in vain?* ²*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,* ³*Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.* ⁴*He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.* ⁵*Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,* ⁶*As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." *

^v Or *nations noisily assemble*

Isa 8:9-10 Be broken,^w you peoples, and be shattered;^x give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered. ¹⁰*Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.*^y 

^w Or *Be evil*

^x Or *dismayed*

^y The Hebrew for *God is with us* is *Immanuel*

Isa 19:3 ... and the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and *I will confound^z their counsel;* and they will inquire of the idols and the sorcerers, and the mediums and the necromancers; ... 

^z Or *I will swallow up*

The clause in question indicates that God would ruin the plans of the Egyptians.

Jer 19:7 And in this place *I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem,* and will cause their people to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth. 

Hab 2:13 *Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing?* 

God determined that the wicked nations' endeavors – their attempts to implement their plans – would come to nothing.

✦ **God frustrates the methods (and plans) of the crafty:**

Job 5:12 *He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success.* 

God establishes all ruling authorities

Rom 13:1-2 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For *there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.* ²*Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed,* and those who resist will incur judgment. 

Dan 4:17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that *the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.* 



1Sam 16:1 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over *Saul*, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." 

This is referring to God's choice of David as king of Israel, which David would recognize as shown in 2 Samuel 5:12 – "And David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel." (See also Psalms 18:43 below.)

1Ki 11:11-13 Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, *I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant*.¹² Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.¹³ However, *I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son*, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen." 

1Ki 19:15 And *the LORD said to him*, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria." 

2Chr 36:23a "Thus says *Cyrus king of Persia*, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth ...' 

Ps 18:43 [David:] You delivered me from strife with the people; *you made me the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me*. 

Dan 2:21 He changes times and seasons; *he removes kings and sets up kings*; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ... 

Dan 2:37-38 You [Nebuchadnezzar], *O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory*,³⁸ and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. 

John 19:10-11a So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?"¹¹ Jesus answered him, "*You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above*." 

Jesus asserts that Pilate's power – like that of all governing authorities – ultimately came from God.

✦ **Condemnation of Israel for setting up rulers without God's consent:**

Hos 8:4 *They made kings, but not through me. They set up princes, but I knew it not*. With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction. 

God has control over rulers . . .

See also:

- *God has power over rulers and can bring them down . . .*, p. 261
- *. . . Examples of God bringing rulers down*, p. 261
- *d) God Has Control over Each Person*, p. 288

Prov 21:1 *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will*. 

Ex 7:3-4, 13 But *I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt*,⁴ *Pharaoh will not listen to you*. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.  ...¹³ *Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said*. 

Note that nine times in Exodus chapters 7-14 God is spoken of as hardening Pharaoh's heart (cf. [Ex 10:1-2](#) ).

Deut 2:30 But *Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day*. 

2Ki 19:7 Behold, *I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land*. 

The reference is to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria.

2Chr 25:20-22 But *Amaziah would not listen, for it was of God, in order that he [God] might give them into the hand of their enemies*, because they had sought the gods of Edom.²¹ So Joash king of Israel went up, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah.²² And Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his home. 

God caused Amaziah not to listen to the sound warning of Jehoash, king of Israel, to avoid war between their countries (cf. vv. 18-20), for God had determined to use Jehoash to punish Amaziah for his idolatry.



2Chr 35:21-22 [Neco, king of Egypt:] But he sent envoys to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And *God has commanded me to hurry*. Cease opposing God, who is with me, lest he destroy you." ²²Nevertheless, Josiah did not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to *the words of Neco from the mouth of God*, but came to fight in the plain of Megiddo. 

Freely or otherwise, Neco had responded to God's command (v. 21). Knowingly or otherwise, Neco was used by God to speak his words (v. 22). As such, these verses appear to reflect even illustrate God's control over rulers.

... God can use rulers in order to accomplish his purposes

See also:

- [Deut 2:30](#) ↑
- [Rulers](#) ... [means of God's judicial retribution], p. 443
- ... [and nations](#), p. 443

Ex 9:16 But for this purpose I have raised you [Pharaoh] up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. 

Ex 10:1-2 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, ²and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD." 

Similarly in 14:4 God says of his purpose in likewise hardening Pharaoh's heart to pursue the Israelites after they had left Egypt was so that: "I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD."

1Ki 12:15 So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 

Here God uses King Rehoboam – with Rehoboam's contrariness and the repercussions – for the purpose of fulfilling his word (cf. [2Chr 36:22-23](#) ↓).

2Chr 36:22-23 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia,

so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ²³"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.'" 

This and the following three references all refer to the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian exile, but speak of three different kings that God used to accomplish the rebuilding – Cyrus (here and in [Isaiah 44:28](#)), Darius ([Ezra 6:22](#)) and Artaxerxes ([Ezra 7:27](#)).

Ezra 6:22 And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for *the LORD had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.* 

Note that "the king of Assyria" is actually a reference to the Persian king, with its territory now including that of the earlier Assyrian Empire.

Ezra 7:27 Blessed be *the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, ...* 

Isa 44:28 ... [God] *who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'* 

This and the following two passages ([46:11](#); [48:14-15](#)) speak of the Persian king, Cyrus the Great. The purposes of God referred to in these passages involved the defeat of Babylon, the ensuing return from exile of God's people and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, notably the temple.

Isa 46:10b-11 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' ¹¹*calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.* 

Isa 48:14-15 Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? *The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans.* ¹⁵*I, even I, have spoken and called him; I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way.* 

Acts 4:27-28 ... for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸*to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.* 



Rev 17:17 ... for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. 

As noted earlier in this chapter, this speaks of kings or world powers of the end times working with the beast or anti-Christ, to unwittingly accomplish God's purpose. No matter how evil rulers might be, God can still use them to accomplish his purposes.

✦ Rulers are in effect God's servants:

Rom 13:4a ... for he is God's servant for your good. 

The reference is to "governing authorities" (v. 1) or "rulers" (v. 3) in general. Note that Isaiah 41:2 speaks of God calling Cyrus "to his service".

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God Has Control over Each Person

See also:

- *God has control over rulers . . .*, p. 286

Subsections

- God has control over people's hearts and minds
- God has control over people's actions . . .
- . . . Despite people's plans, their steps are directed by God
- God controls the good and bad things that happen to people
- God brings people down and exalts others
- God determines the length of people's lives . . .
- . . . and God finishes people's lives
- Note: The life of every person is in God's hands

God has control over people's hearts and minds

See also:

- Ps 105:25 ↕; Isa 63:17 ↕
- . . . *God and Jesus Christ may even judicially blind ungodly people*, p. 1670

Ex 10:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, ... 

Ex 12:36 And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. 

Josh 11:20 For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses. 

As noted earlier in the chapter, it was because of the Canaanite people's prolonged depravity that God caused them to oppose Israel and suffer his judgment at their hands.

1Sam 2:25 If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death. 

For comment, see the comment on [1Sam 2:25](#) – under *God exerts control over evil*, p. 272.

1Sam 10:9 When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day. 

2Sam 17:14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the LORD had ordained^a to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom. 

^a Hebrew *commanded*

God caused Absalom and all the men of Israel to follow Hushai's advice, designed to fool them, rather than the sound advice of Ahithophel.

1Ki 18:37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back. 

Dan 1:9 And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ... 

Luke 9:43b-45 Jesus^b said to his disciples, ⁴⁴"Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." ⁴⁵But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so



that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. 

^b Greek *he*

It is implicit in this and the following passages from Luke that the lack of perception is caused by God.

Luke 18:31-34 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³²For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. ³³And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." ³⁴But they understood none of these things. *This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.* 

Luke 24:15-16, 30-31 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.  ... ³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 

John 12:40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." 

This is interpreted by many commentators to mean not that God prevented them from believing, but rather because the people had purposely and repeatedly rejected God's message (cf. vv. 37-38), God bestowed on them a judicial blindness and hardening of heart. This mirrors the fact that the consequence of rejecting God's message time after time is that one's capacity to believe is greatly curtailed. A similar point can be made regarding Romans 11:7-8 below; see also 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 and comment below.

Rom 11:7-8 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but *the rest were hardened*, ⁸as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day." 

2Thes 2:11-12 Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 

Note that those here that are so deluded by God (v. 11) are ones who themselves "did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (v. 12b).

God has control over people's actions . . .

See also:

- *God has control over rulers . . .*, p. 286
- *. . . God can use rulers in order to accomplish his purposes*, p. 287
- *. . . and God moves his people to do his work*, p. 966

Dan 5:23b *God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.* 

God "has power over your life and everything you do" (NCV™; cf. CEV, GNT).

Ecc 9:1a But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how *the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.* 

God has control over (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) that which is said to be in his hands. Here this would encompass what the righteous actually do, along with the success and effect of these deeds.

Ecc 3:1-8, 11a *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ²a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; ³a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; ⁴a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; ⁵a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; ⁶a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; ⁷a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; ⁸a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.*  ... ¹¹*He has made everything beautiful in its time.* 

This suggests that God determines a point in time for all the activities people have to do, times in which the activities are appropriate (v. 11). Often it is understood to mean that people will do these things "at the time God chooses" (GNT, v. 1) – making it applicable to this subsection. However, some take the view that it is meaning that God has chosen a fitting time for such things, with the implication that people should try to carry them out when appropriate, at God's chosen time.

1Sam 25:32 And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be *the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!*" 

There is no indication that God overtly directed Abigail to go to meet David; Abigail had acted apparently on her own initiative (cf. vv. 18-20). As such it can be inferred from this verse that Abigail's actions were unconsciously directed by God.



1Sam 26:12 So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head, and they went away. No man saw it or knew it, nor did any awake, for *they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen upon them.*

Ps 105:25 *He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants.*

The reference is to the Egyptians, in particular Pharaoh, who God used so as to allow him to provide a miraculous deliverance for his people.

Isa 63:17 *O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage.*

Some commentators understand this to be speaking of God confirming the people in their rebellion and sin; certainly he does not initiate it. Alternatively the prophet may be asking why God lets them wander from his ways (cf. GNT, Nlrv, NLT).

Zec 8:10 For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for beast, neither was there any safety from the foe for him who went out or came in, for *I set every man against his neighbor.*

The people had previously ignored the need to start building the temple. This led to God's punishment in the form of division and hostility against each other.

... Despite people's plans, their steps are directed by God

See also:

- *Note: The plans of God's people are subject to his will,* p. 960

Prov 16:1, 9 *The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. ...⁹The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.*

The clause "the answer of the tongue is from the LORD" (v. 1) quite possibly means that God has "the last word" (GNT, cf. CEV). As such v. 1 is saying that a person may make plans, but God has the say on whether or not they come to fruition. This interpretation is reflected in v. 9 – "the LORD directs his steps" (NASB, NKJV; cf. AMP, NRSV).

Prov 19:21 *Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.*

Prov 20:24 *A man's steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?*

Jer 10:23 *I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.*

The implication is that God directs people's steps or ways.

Lam 3:37 *Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?*

People's plans for their own activities may well be primarily in view (cf. CEV).

James 4:13-15 *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—¹⁴yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."*

This is not necessarily meaning that God directs people's steps or ways, but it certainly at least shows that people's steps or plans are subject to God's will.

‡ People die and then their plans come to nothing:

Ps 146:4 *When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.*

God controls the good and bad things that happen to people

See also:

- *a) God Has Control over Evil,* p. 272
- *Examples of God's people even attributing hard times to God,* p. 1936
- *Prayer despairingly speaking of God as even the source of one's suffering,* p. 1957

Lam 3:38 *Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?*

Ecc 7:14 *In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.*

Isa 45:7 *I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.*

God "sends good times and bad times" (NLT).



Ex 4:11 Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? *Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?*”

Job 2:4-7, 10 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” ⁶And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.” ⁷So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ... ¹⁰But he [Job] said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. *Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?*”^c In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

^c Or *disaster*; also verse 11

Although it was Satan who actually afflicted Job (v. 7), in v. 10 Job acknowledges that God was the ultimate source or regulator of the good and bad things that happened to him – as indicated by v. 6 (cf. [Job 42:11b-12](#) ↓). In regard to the use of “evil” (v. 10; [Job 42:11b](#) ↓), as the text note suggests, adversity is in view (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

Job 5:18 For he wounds, but he binds up; he shatters, but his hands heal.

Eliphaz may be indicating that he sees God as the ultimate source of all injury and healing.

Job 12:6-9 *The tents of robbers are at peace, and those who provoke God are secure, who bring their god in their hand.*^d ⁷“But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; ⁸or the bushes of the earth,^e and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. ⁹*Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?*”

^d The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

^e Or *speak to the earth*

Verses 7-9 appear to be referring to people’s circumstances being given them by God’s “hand” (v. 9) – including that of the wicked who often prosper, and righteous Job’s miserable lot. Note that the meaning of the Hebrew of “who bring their god in their hand” is uncertain (cf. text note). It may actually be referring to what such people have as being provided by God’s hand (cf. NASB, NKJV).

Job 42:11b-13, 16-17 And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for *all the evil^f that the LORD had brought upon him*. And each of them gave him a piece of money^g and a ring of gold. ¹²And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than

his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. ¹³He had also seven sons and three daughters. ... ¹⁶And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, four generations. ¹⁷And Job died, an old man, and full of days.

^f Or *disaster*

^g Hebrew a *qesitah*; a unit of money of unknown value

Ecc 2:24-25 There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment^h in his toil. *This also, I saw, is from the hand of God,* ²⁵*for apart from himⁱ who can eat or who can have enjoyment?*

^h Or *and make his soul see good*

ⁱ Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts *apart from me*

Ecc 5:19 *Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.*

Just as this verse shows that there are instances when God gives a man wealth and the “power to enjoy them” (cf. [Ecc 2:24-25](#) ↑), note that later the writer indicates that there are also instances of: “a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them” (6:2).

1Pet 4:19 Therefore let *those who suffer according to God’s will* entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Although this is not saying that suffering in general is according to God’s will, this does illustrate that some suffering at least is. As such, arguably it is reflective of God being in control of what happens to people.

‡ **An example of God appointing a time for an event in an individual’s life:**

Rom 9:9 For this is what the promise said: “*About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.*”

Note that one cannot necessarily conclude from this one instance that God appoints a time for every single event or even every key event in each person’s life – although there may be further verses supporting such an assertion.



God brings people down and exalts others

See also:

- *God has power over rulers and can bring them down . . .*, p. 261
- *. . . Examples of God bringing rulers down*, p. 261

1Sam 2:4-8 *The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. ⁵Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. ⁶The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. ⁷The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. ⁸He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world.*

Note that vv. 4-5, 8 in particular, illustrate God's capacity and inclination to reverse the roles of the privileged (who are often proud, cf. v. 3) and the disadvantaged. Luke 1:52-53 below has a similar theme. The phrase "the feeble bind on strength" (v. 4) speaks of weak people being strengthened.

Luke 1:52-53 *... he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.*

Ps 75:6-7 *For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, ⁷but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.*

2Sam 22:28 *You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down.*

Matt 23:12 *Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

These outcomes can be seen as inherent consequences of such actions. But Jesus may well be speaking primarily of God bringing them about.

God determines the length of people's lives . . .

Job 14:5 *Since his [man's] days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass, ...*

Ps 139:16 *Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

Ps 37:18 *The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; ...*

This may be implying that God controls both the content and number of the days of the blameless. A similar comment could be made regarding Psalms 139:16 above.

Ecc 3:1-2a *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ^{2a}a time to be born, and a time to die ...*

Some commentators interpret this to mean that God has appointed a time for each person to be born and to die.

Isa 38:5 *Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.ⁱ*

ⁱ Hebrew *to your days*

. . . and God finishes people's lives

See also:

- [Ecc 3:1-2a](#)

Note that not all of the following verses are necessarily meaning or implying that God finishes every person's life, but arguably they at least suggest that this is the case.

Ps 90:3, 5-6 *You return man to dust and say, "Return, O children of man!"^k ...⁵You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: ⁶in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.*

^k Or *of Adam*

Isa 40:6-7, 24 *A voice says, "Cry!" And I said,¹ "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty^m is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. ...²⁴Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when *he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.**

¹ Revocalization based on Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint, Vulgate; Masoretic Text *And someone says*

^m Or *all its constancy*

Deut 32:39 *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.*

Note that this and the following reference also speak of the converse of God bringing death – which is that he brings to



life. God gives life in the first place and is even able to raise people from the dead.

1Sam 2:6 *The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.* 📖

Job 14:20 *You prevail forever against him [man], and he passes; you change his countenance, and send him away.* 📖

Job 27:8 For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts him off, when *God takes away his life?* 📖

Job 30:23 For *I know that you will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living.* 📖

Job 34:20 *In a moment they die; at midnight the people are shaken and pass away, and the mighty are taken away by no human hand.* 📖

The last clause may be implying that the lives of the mighty are taken away by God.

Luke 12:20 But *God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'* 📖

✦ **No one can prevent or postpone their day of death:**

Eccl 8:8a *No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death.* 📖

Note: The life of every person is in God's hands

See also:

- *Every creature's life is dependent on God*, p. 207

Job 12:10 *In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.* 📖

Ps 31:15 *My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!* 📖

Eccl 9:1 But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how *the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God*. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. 📖

Dan 5:23b *God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.* 📖

Ex 21:12-13 Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. ¹³*But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee.* 📖

The reference in v. 13 is to killing a person unintentionally. The verse offers clear support for God's sovereignty over human life and death.

Matt 10:29-31 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?ⁿ And *not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.* ³⁰*But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.* ³¹*Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.* 📖

ⁿ Greek *assarion*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/16 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a laborer)

Even the life of a sparrow is in God's hands; how much more then are the lives of Jesus' disciples. The fact that even the hairs of their head are all numbered implies that God is sovereign over and cares for even the minutest details of their lives. This teaching appears to be applicable to all people.

✦ **Time and chance undermine a person's control over their own life:**

Eccl 9:11 Again I saw that under the sun *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.* 📖

Note that some commentators understand "time and chance" to allude to God's control over people's lives including the apparently indiscriminate events that often occur in them.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Addendum: God's Early Dealings with Humankind

From the time he created the first people, God has ruled over them, exerting his authority and control when necessary – as evidenced throughout this section.



Subsections

- God's creation of the first people, in an ideal environment
- Humankind's original sin and the judgment – including death and expulsion from the Garden of Eden
- The flood and Noah: Escalated sin and judgment; righteousness and salvation
- The Tower of Babel: Sinful pride and the dispersion of humankind

God's creation of the first people, in an ideal environment

Gen 2:7-10, 15 ... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.  ... ¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 

Gen 2:18, 21-25 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for^o him."  ... ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made^p into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."^q ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. 

^o Or corresponding to; also verse 20

^p Hebrew built

^q The Hebrew words for woman (*ishshah*) and man (*ish*) sound alike

‡ God's command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Gen 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat^r of it you shall surely die." 

^r Or when you eat

A number of commentators understand the reason for God prohibiting eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was that the acquisition of such knowledge would lead to independence from God, with people trusting in their own limited knowledge and perception of what is and is not good. As such God would not allow people to live forever (cf. Gen 3:22 ↓).

Humankind's original sin and the judgment – including death and expulsion from the Garden of Eden

See also:

- *Sin results in physical death – through Adam's original sin*, p. 381

Gen 3:1-7, 11-13 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You^s shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,^t she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.  ... ¹¹He [God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 

^s In Hebrew you is plural in verses 1-5

^t Or to give insight

Generally Satan is understood to be behind the serpent's action, speaking through the serpent.

Gen 3:16-19, 22-24 To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for^u your husband, and he shall rule over you." ¹⁷And to Adam he said, "Because you have



listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." ¶ ... ²²Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. ¶

^u Or against

"Your desire shall be for your husband," (v. 16) probably refers to the woman's attraction and/or devotion to the man, but some interpret it to mean a desire to usurp or breakout of the husband's leadership. The following clause, "he shall rule over you," possibly alludes to a degree of anguish under his rule. Verse 2 effectively speaks of the punishment of death (v. 19; cf. v. 3 ↑), with people no longer able to eat from the tree of life and live forever.

† Cain's murder of Abel and the judgment:

Gen 4:8-12 Cain spoke to Abel his brother.^v And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." ¶

^v Hebrew; Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate add *Let us go out to the field*

Cain and Abel were sons of Adam and Eve. Cain's motive arose from his anger over God's acceptance of Abel's offering and rejection of his less than wholehearted offering (cf. vv. 3-5).

The flood and Noah: Escalated sin and judgment; righteousness and salvation

Gen 6:5-14, 17-19 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹²And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh,^w for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴Make yourself an ark of gopher wood.^x Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. ¶ ... ¹⁷For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ¶

^w Hebrew *The end of all flesh has come before me*

^x An unknown kind of tree; transliterated from Hebrew

Gen 7:1, 4-7 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. ¶ ... ⁴For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing^y that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." ⁵And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him. ⁶Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. ⁷And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. ¶

^y Hebrew *all existence*; also verse 23

Gen 7:20-24 The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits^z deep. ²¹And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. ²²Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath



of life died. ²³He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. ²⁴And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days. 

^z A cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

Gen 8:1, 14-19 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.  ... ¹⁴In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out. ¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶“Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” ¹⁸So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. ¹⁹Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark. 

✦ God's covenant with Noah and the earth:

Gen 9:8-17 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹²And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on

the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.” 

The Tower of Babel: Sinful pride and the dispersion of humankind

Gen 11:1-9 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ²And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” ⁵And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” ⁸So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused^a the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth. 

^a Babel sounds like the Hebrew for *confused*

Verse 4 suggests that human pride was behind the building of this tower, known as the Tower of Babel. With the people’s pride fuelling their aspirations and accomplishments, God would have foreseen the potential for self-reliance and rebellion against him. As such God confused their language (v. 7), so that they did not speak the same language (v. 6). Moreover – in direct contrast to the people’s second objective for the tower (v. 4b) – God scattered them throughout the earth (v. 9b).

Pray for persecuted Christians



CHAPTER 8

God's Word

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I. General

God's word is our window to God. For through it we learn about God and his relationship with us. Moreover, its unique characteristics and functions have the imprint of God.

Note that in the headings of this chapter "word" is generally used to refer to, or at least apply to, God's written word – the Bible or Scripture. In the verses themselves, more specifically "word" usually refers to either: Scripture itself (as a whole or in particular to God's laws, promises or prophecies); words that God spoke (many of which have been included in Scripture); or the gospel message (which of course is contained in Scripture).

a) What God's Word Comprises

Subsections

- God's word primarily is Scripture
- God's word includes his laws
- God's word includes his covenants and promises
- God's word includes his prophecies
- God's word includes the gospel, proclaimed by his people
- Note: Jesus Christ is the Word of God

God's word primarily is Scripture

Scripture is the writings contained in the Bible.

2Tim 3:16a *All Scripture is breathed out by God ...* 

All Scripture "is inspired by God" (GNT, NASB, NLT, NRSV), which means that effectively all Scripture "is God's Word" (CEV).

Dan 9:2 ... in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, *perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.* 

The "books" were, or included, the writings of the prophets – the "Scriptures" (NCV™, NIV®).

John 10:35 If he called them gods to whom *the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—* 

This speaks of Scripture as "the word of God".

Rom 3:2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were *entrusted with the oracles of God.* 

This refers to the Jews being entrusted with the "the oracles of God" (AMP) in the OT Scriptures. In doing so it indicates that the Scriptures are – or at least contain – "the very words of God" (NIV®).

Ecc 12:11 *The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.* 

This appears to be a claim of God's inspiration for Ecclesiastes – it being "given by one Shepherd" – and perhaps also for the other "wisdom" books of the Bible.

2Pet 3:15-16a And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother *Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶as he does in all his letters* when he speaks in them of these matters. 

This is not expressly saying that what Paul wrote was God's words – referring to wisdom from God rather than actual words from God – but it does point to this. Additionally, note that in 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul claims: "...the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord."

Rev 19:9 And the angel said^a to me, "*Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*" And he said to me, "*These are the true words of God.*" 

^a Greek *he said*

The final statement is referring to the earlier one and the preceding verses, but it is also applicable to the whole of the book of Revelation (cf. 22:6) – and the Scriptures in general.

God's word includes his laws

See also:

- [Ex 34:28](#) 
- [God's word makes known his commands](#), p. 310

Ex 20:1-3 And *God spoke all these words*, saying, ²"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³*You shall have no other gods before^b me.* 

^b Or *besides*

This introduces the Ten Commandments (cf. vv. 1-17) – as being spoken by God – followed shortly afterwards by further laws of the old covenant (cf. chs 21-23).



Ex 24:3-4a, 12 Moses came and told the people *all the words of the LORD and all the rules.*^c And all the people answered with one voice and said, “*All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.*”⁴ And Moses wrote down *all the words of the LORD.* ...¹² The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with *the law and the commandment, which I have written* for their instruction.”

^c Or *all the just decrees*

Note that 32:16 says of the tablets, “The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.” As such they were “written with the finger of God” (Deut 9:10), who “wrote on the tablets ... the Ten Commandments” (Deut 10:4).

Ps 147:19 *He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules^d to Israel.*

^d Or *and just decrees*

Isa 2:3b *For out of Zion shall go the law,^e and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

^e Or *teaching*

Isa 5:24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rotteness, and their blossom go up like dust; for *they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

God's word includes his covenants and promises

Ex 34:27-28 And the LORD said to Moses, “Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”²⁸ So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets *the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.*^f

^f Hebrew *the ten words*

This speaks of words of God forming God's covenant with Israel.

Deut 33:9b *For they observed your word and kept your covenant.*

This associates, even correlates, God's word and his covenant.

Ps 105:8-9 *He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, ⁹the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, ...*

2Sam 7:28 And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and *your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.*

1Ki 8:25-26 Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, *keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.’*²⁶ Now therefore, O God of Israel, *let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father.*

Ps 119:49 Remember *your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.*

Here God's “word” is his “promise” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

God's word includes his prophecies

2Ki 20:16-17 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “*Hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁷Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD.*”

Jer 36:2 *Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today.*

Prophecies regarding the future of nations are referred to here, ones which are included in the book of Jeremiah.

Ezek 6:1-4 *The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, ³and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. ⁴Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols.*”

Dan 9:2 ... in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, *perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.*



Zeph 2:5 Woe to you inhabitants of the seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites! *The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left.* 

Rev 1:1-3 *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants^g the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant^h John, ²who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.* 

^g Greek *bondservants*

^h Greek *bondservant*

God's word includes the gospel, proclaimed by his people

Most of the following verses do not actually use the word "gospel", but it is clearly what is being referred to in the references to God's word.

Acts 8:25 Now when they had testified and *spoken the word of the Lord*, they returned to Jerusalem, *preaching the gospel* to many villages of the Samaritans. 

Acts 13:5 When they arrived at Salamis, *they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues* of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. 

1Cor 15:1-2 Now I would remind you, brothers,ⁱ *of the gospel I preached to you*, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to *the word I preached to you*—unless you believed in vain. 

ⁱ Or brothers and sisters; also verses 6, 31, 50, 58

The "word" (v. 2) Paul preached to the Corinthians was essentially God's word – "the gospel" (v. 1).

Phil 1:14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are *much more bold to speak the word^j* without fear. 

^j Some manuscripts add *of God*

The text note indicates that some manuscripts add "of God", clearly indicating that the gospel spoken by the believers was "the word of God".

Col 1:25 ... of which I became a minister according to *the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known*, ... 

1Thes 2:13 And we also thank God constantly^k for this, that when you received *the word of God, which you heard from us*, you accepted it not as the word of men but as *what it really is, the word of God*, which is at work in you believers. 

^k Or *without ceasing*

Titus 1:3 ... and *at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior*; ... 

Note: Jesus Christ is the Word of God

See also:

- [God's word was spoken by Jesus Christ](#), p. 304

Many people link the description of Jesus Christ as the "Word" of God with God acting by or through his word (cf. [God made and maintains all things by his word or command](#), p. 214; and [Note: God acts by his word](#), p. 315). This link reflects the fact that God works through Jesus Christ (cf. [d\) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ](#), p. 530).

Rev 19:13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in^l blood, and *the name by which he is called is The Word of God.* 

^l Some manuscripts *sprinkled with*

John 1:1, 14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*  ... ¹⁴*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 

John's description of Jesus Christ as "the Word" points to Jesus Christ's deity, as well as the claim that God spoke through Jesus Christ, with him being the Word of God.

1Jn 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning *the word of life*— 

Commentators differ over whether "the word of life" refers to Jesus Christ or to the gospel message. Most modern translations capitalize "word", implying the former. One could argue from this that the title "the word of life" alludes to Jesus Christ as being the one in whom God's message of life was manifested, and as such to him being "the word of God".

‡ **Paul's writings included Jesus Christ's commands:**

1Cor 14:37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that *the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.* 



In Paul's letters, "Lord" is usually understood to refer to Jesus Christ. Thus this indicates that what Paul wrote contained or included commands of Jesus Christ and so – in light of the above teaching – was in effect God's word.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God's Communication of His Word

See also:

- *Angels give God's people messages, such as instructions*, p. 175
- *Angels also give messages about future events*, p. 176
- *God's word includes the gospel, proclaimed by his people*, p. 300

Subsections

- God has given his word by the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . Further mention of Scripture coming by the Holy Spirit
- God gave his law through Moses
- God has spoken through prophets
- God has spoken through visions and dreams
- God's word was spoken by Jesus Christ

God has given his word by the Holy Spirit . . .

See also:

- . . . *Examples of the Holy Spirit enabling believers to speak in other languages and to prophesy*, p. 1432

2Pet 1:20-21 ... knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 

Neh 9:30 Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. 

Zec 7:12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and *the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit* through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. 

Undoubtedly many of these "words" that God sent by his Holy Spirit through the prophets include passages recorded in the OT.

2Sam 23:1-4 Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel:^m ²*The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.* ³*The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,* ⁴*he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rainⁿ that makes grass to sprout from the earth.* 

^mOr *the favorite of the songs of Israel*

ⁿHebrew *from rain*

As with the following passages, it can be inferred from this that God spoke by the Holy Spirit (recorded here through David).

Ezek 11:5 And *the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the LORD: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind.* 

Acts 4:25 ... [God] *who through the mouth of our father David, your servant,^o said by the Holy Spirit, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?* 

^o Or *child*; also verses 27, 30

Heb 3:7-11 Therefore, *as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice,⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways. ¹¹As I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."* 

The fact that God was speaking through the Holy Spirit is reflected by the quotation being attributed to the Holy Spirit (v. 7), while in the quotation "I" refers to God (vv. 9-11). This assertion is supported by Hebrews 4:3 which in quoting Psalm 95:11 (quoted here in v. 11) directly attributes the words to God, "...as he [God] has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest'".

Heb 10:15-17 And *the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶"This is the covenant that I will make with them*



after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,"¹⁷ then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." 

As per 3:7-11 above, the quotation is attributed to the Holy Spirit (v. 15), while in the quotation "I" refers to God (vv. 16-17) – thus implying that God was speaking through the Holy Spirit.

... Further mention of Scripture coming by the Holy Spirit

Mark 12:36 David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet." 

As with the following couple of references from Acts, this illustrates Scripture or God's Word coming by the Holy Spirit in attributing an OT quotation to him.

Acts 1:16 Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 

Acts 28:25-26 And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ²⁶"Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." 

Eph 3:4-5 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 

The "mystery of Christ" – God's message about Christ – was revealed through the Holy Spirit to God's "holy apostles and prophets" (v. 5), presumably inclusive of all the writers of the NT. As such this points to the NT generally as being God's word revealed through the Holy Spirit.

1Pet 1:10-11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 

That referred to here as what the prophets spoke of (v. 10) is that which the Holy Spirit "predicted" (v. 11) – i.e. the sufferings of the Messiah given by the Holy Spirit in OT prophecies.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. 

The book of Revelation is the word of God as testified to by Jesus Christ (cf. 1:1-2). The fact that here Jesus Christ specifically refers to parts of it as being "what the Spirit says" (cf. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) suggests that the Holy Spirit played a key role in the imparting of it (cf. [Rev 1:10-11](#) ↓).

✦ John was "in the Spirit" when he began receiving Revelation:

Rev 1:10-11 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." 

The term "in the Spirit" is understood by a number of commentators as referring to a heightened state of spirituality, through the Holy Spirit. Two other possibilities, similar to this one, are that: it speaks of the Holy Spirit's enablement and influence – "the Spirit took control of me" (CEV, GNT); and it refers to John being "in tune" with or in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. These interpretations are not mutually exclusive and all three point to the Spirit having a critical role in John writing Revelation.

God gave his law through Moses

See also:

▪ *Note: Angels played a role in the introduction of the Mosaic Law*, p. 177

Ex 24:12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." 

Lev 26:46 These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. 

Deut 4:1-2 [Moses:] "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules^p that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ²You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you." 

^p Or just decrees; also verses 5, 8, 14, 45



Deut 5:4-5a [Moses:] The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, ⁵while I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD.

Deut 31:9, 24 Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. ... ²⁴When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, ...

1Ki 2:3 ... and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, ...

The Law is sometimes referred to as “the Law of Moses” indicative of it being given through him.

2Chr 34:14 While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given through Moses.

Neh 10:29 ... join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes.

Mal 4:4 Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules^a that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

^a Or and just decrees

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 7:19a Has not Moses given you the law?

1Cor 9:9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

God has spoken through prophets

See also:

- Num 12:6 ; Hos 12:10
- Many times God called and warned his wayward people, through his prophets, p. 469

Heb 1:1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ...

2Ki 17:13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.”

Jer 7:25-26 From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. ²⁶Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.

Neh 9:30 Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

Jer 1:7, 9 But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. ... ⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

To signify that he had given (or would give) Jeremiah his words to speak, God touched Jeremiah’s mouth. This may have occurred in a vision; some think this actually took place, in a physical sense.

Dan 9:10 ... and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

Note that in referring to God’s “laws”, in the latter part of the verse Daniel may have Moses primarily in view or may more generally be speaking of the “teachings” (CEV, NASB, NCV) and commands given by the prophets.

Mic 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Micah subsequently spoke the “word” that God gave him.

Hag 1:1, 12-13 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: ... ¹²Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as



the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. ¹³Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD." 

Zec 7:12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. 

God has spoken through visions and dreams

See also:

- *Examples of divine guidance through dreams and visions*, p. 979

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." 

Num 12:6 And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. 

Num 24:15-16 And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, ¹⁶the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: ... 

1Ki 3:5 At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." 

Job 33:14-16 For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. ¹⁵In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds, ¹⁶then he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings, ... 

Psa 89:19 Of old you spoke in a vision to your godly one,^r and said: "I have granted help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. 

^r Some Hebrew manuscripts *godly ones*

Hos 12:10 I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and through the prophets gave parables. 

Acts 10:10-15 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance

¹¹and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." ¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." 

† God showed Ezekiel things in visions, which he was to tell the people:

Ezek 40:1-4 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me to the city.^s ²In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south. ³When he brought me there, behold, there was a man whose appearance was like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand. And he was standing in the gateway. ⁴And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you. Declare all that you see to the house of Israel." 

^s Hebrew *brought me there*

In addition to actual words of God, descriptions of things that God shows in a vision are in effect also part of his word or message. Note that God gave Ezekiel a number of visions.

God's word was spoken by Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Note: Jesus Christ is the Word of God*, p. 300
- *Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God*, p. 566

Luke 5:1 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him [Jesus] to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ... 

John 3:34 For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. 

Note that the last clause probably means that God gave to Jesus Christ the Spirit without any limit (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).



John 14:24 Whoever does not love me does not keep *my words*. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. 

John 12:49-50 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me. 

John 17:14 [Jesus, to God:] I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 

Heb 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 

Rev 1:1-2, 5, 9 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants^t the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant^u John, ²who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.  ... ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood  ... ⁹I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 

^t Greek *bondservants*

^u Greek *bondservant*

In v. 2, “the word of God and ... the testimony of Jesus Christ” appears to refer to the book of Revelation, which God gave Jesus Christ to disclose (v. 1). In contrast, “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (v. 9) may instead refer to the gospel and Jesus’ testimony to God’s word during his mission, with it being given as the reason for John’s imprisonment or exile on Patmos. In v. 5, “Jesus Christ the faithful witness” is speaking of Christ’s faithfulness in his conveying of God’s word.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Characteristics of God’s Word

Subsections

- God’s word is holy, righteous and good
- God’s word is true . . .
- . . . and what God’s word foretells comes true
- God’s word is living and active
- God’s word is powerful
- God’s word is everlasting
- Note: God’s word surpasses everything of this world

God’s word is holy, righteous and good

See also:

- Ps 119:160 ; Eccl 12:10 
- . . . *The law is still good*, p. 659

Jer 23:9 Concerning the [false] prophets: My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the LORD and because of his holy words. 

Rom 1:2 ... which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ... 

Ps 105:42 For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. 

Rom 7:12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. 

Deut 4:8 And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? 

Ps 12:6 The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. 

The description of God’s words as being “pure” (cf. Ps 19:8 ) reflects that they are holy and righteous.

Ps 19:8-9 ... the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules^v of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. 

^v Or just decrees

In v. 9, “fear” is understood by many as a reference to the law, alluding to the fact that one of its purposes was to inspire



fear of God (cf. NIV) and/or that fear of God leads one to obey his law. In a sense the fear of the LORD is effectively what the law requires of us (cf. NSB).

Ps 33:4 For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness.

Ps 119:7, 123, 137-138, 144, 172 I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.^w ... ¹²³My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise. ... ¹³⁷Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules. ¹³⁸You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness. ... ¹⁴⁴Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live. ... ¹⁷²My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right.

^w Or your just and righteous decrees; also verses 62, 106, 160, 164

The occurrences of "right" (vv. 137, 172; cf. **Ps 19:8 ↑**; **Neh 9:13 ↓**) indicate or reflect that God's commands are righteous or upright (cf. NASB, NRSV). Here "testimonies" (vv. 138, 144) denote rules or decrees.

Neh 9:13 You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, ...

Heb 6:5 ... and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ...

1Ki 8:56 Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant.

God's word is true . . .

See also:

- **Ps 19:9 ↑**; **Neh 9:13 ↑**
- *The gospel is not made up by men – it is true*, p. 1760

2Sam 7:28 And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.

Ps 18:30 This God—his way is perfect;^x the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

^x Or blameless

Ps 119:142, 151 Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true. ... ¹⁵¹But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true.

Prov 30:5 Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

John 21:24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

Rev 19:9 And the angel said^y to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

^y Greek he said

Rev 21:5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

1Ki 17:24 And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

Ps 119:43, 160 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules. ... ¹⁶⁰The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

"The sum of your word" (v. 160) means all of God's word.

Ecc 12:10 The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

"The Preacher" refers to the person who wrote Ecclesiastes, possibly Solomon or a later editor. As such this speaks of what is ultimately God's word as being true.

John 17:17 Sanctify them^z in the truth; your word is truth.

^z Greek Set them apart (for holy service to God)

Here "your word" may be referring to Scripture generally, the gospel message primarily or, possibly, Jesus himself.

Ps 19:7, 9 The law of the LORD is perfect,^a reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; ... ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules^b of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

^a Or blameless

^b Or just decrees

In conjunction with being true (v. 9) God's word/law is perfect (v. 7; cf. **James 1:25 ↓**) and sure (v. 7; cf. **Ps 119:86 ↓**).



Ps 111:7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; *all his precepts are trustworthy*; ...

Ps 119:86 *All your commandments are sure*; they persecute me with falsehood; help me!

James 1:25 But the one who looks into *the perfect law*, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Matt 5:18 For *truly, I say to you*, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

As he does here, Jesus often introduced his teachings with “truly, I say to you”, underlining the importance and truthfulness of the words to follow.

Luke 1:1-4 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ²*just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us*, ³*it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus*, ⁴*that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught*.

Luke’s Gospel was based on eyewitnesses’ accounts and careful investigation, to show the certainty – or truth – of gospel teaching (cf. [John 21:24](#) ↑).

John 10:35 If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and *Scripture cannot be broken*—

The clause “Scripture cannot be broken” is often understood to be a reference to the inerrancy of God’s word, meaning that it cannot be faulted, being true and remaining so. Hence the inclusion of this verse here. However it may instead mean that Scripture cannot be “altered” (NLT) or “annulled” (NRSV).

... and what God’s word foretells comes true

See also:

- *God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises*, p. 65
- *When the time comes, God’s plans are promptly fulfilled*, p. 268
- c) *Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus*, p. 494

1Ki 8:56 Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. *Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant*.

2Ki 10:10 Know then that *there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the LORD has done what he said by his servant Elijah*.

The phrase “fall to the earth” speaks of failure.

Isa 44:26 ... [God] *who confirms the word of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers*, who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited,’ and of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins’; ...

Jer 1:12 Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for *I am watching over my word to perform it*.”

Jer 39:16 Go, and say to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, *I will fulfill my words against this city for harm and not for good, and they shall be accomplished before you on that day*.”

The fulfillment spoken of here is testified to in Lamentations 2:17 below.

Lam 2:17 The LORD has done what he purposed; *he has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago*; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.

Ezek 12:25 For *I am the LORD; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord GOD*.

Zec 1:6 But *my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers?* So they repented and said, *As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us*.

God’s words – primarily threatened judgments – “caught up with” (CEV) the people’s ancestors.

Matt 2:14-18, 22-23 And *he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt* ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. *This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”* ¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and *he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two*



years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." ... ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Acts 1:16 Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

Acts 3:17-18 And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

Rev 10:7 ... but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.

^c Greek *bondservants*

This "mystery of God" which he had announced (by his word) to the prophets appears to primarily refer to his quashing of all evil and enforcement of his rule, eternally (cf. 11:15-18).

✦ It is God's word that stands:

Jer 44:28 And those who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who came to the land of Egypt to live, shall know whose word will stand, mine or theirs.

God's word is living and active

See also:

- *Note: God acts by his word*, p. 315
- *Note: God's word and truth dwell in his people – but not in others*, p. 869

Two reasons for describing God's word as "living" are that it never ceases to be pertinent and it keeps on influencing and affecting people. The latter reason also shows it to be active. Note that the following subsection also reflects that God's word is living and active.

Heb 4:12a For the word of God is living and active ...

Acts 7:38b He [Moses] received living oracles to give to us.

1Pet 1:23 ...since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ...

1Jn 2:14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

God's word "lives" (GNT, NCV, NIV; cf. NLT) in believers.

2Jn 1:1-2 The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ²because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: ...

Acts 12:24 But the word of God increased and multiplied.

1Thes 2:13 And we also thank God constantly^d for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

^d Or *without ceasing*

2Tim 2:8-9 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

Although Paul was imprisoned – with his activities curtailed – in contrast God's word was not. It continued to spread and change people's lives.

God's word is powerful

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

God's word can penetrate to the very depths of our inner-selves, exposing our thoughts and intentions for what they really are.

Jer 5:14 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts: "Because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire, and this people wood, and the fire shall consume them."

The use of "fire" (cf. Jer 20:9 ↓; Jer 23:29 ↓) depicts the power and intensity of God's words, particularly applicable in the case of his words of judgment. The declaration that it would



consume the people probably alludes to its fulfillment, which would bring their destruction (cf. [Jer 23:29 ↓](#); [Hos 6:5 ↓](#)).

Jer 20:9 *If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.* 

Jeremiah found that he was not able to refrain from speaking the word of God given to him to proclaim. Its intensity was such that he could not hold it in.

Jer 23:29 *Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?* 

The second simile depicts the destructive power of the fulfillment of God's words of judgment.

Hos 6:5 *Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light.* 

God's words, spoken by the prophets, cut and slew the unrepentant people, pronouncing their condemnation with frightening judgments – which if not heeded would kill the people on their fulfillment (cf. [Jer 5:14 ↑](#)).

Acts 19:20 *So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.* 

This speaks of God's word triumphing in power over spiritual opposition.

Eph 6:17 ... and take the helmet of salvation, and *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,* ... 

The description of God's word as "the sword of the Spirit", the only offensive weapon listed in "the whole armor of God" (cf. vv. 13-17), emphasizes its power and thrust.

✦ God's word accomplishes his purpose for it:

Isa 55:10-11 *For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.* 

Romans 9:6a similarly refers to the fact that God's word does not fail – "... it is not as though the word of God has failed."

God's word is everlasting

1Pet 1:23-25 ...since you have been born again, *not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and*

abiding word of God; ²⁴for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵but *the word of the Lord remains forever.*" And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 

A number of commentators assert that the imperishable "seed" refers to "the living and abiding word of God" (cf. CEV). Alternatively it may allude to God's own immortality (cf. GNT).

Ps 111:7-8 The works of his hands are faithful and just; *all his precepts are trustworthy;* ⁸*they are established forever and ever,* to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. 

In v. 8, "they" may well be referring to God's precepts (v. 7b; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NirV, NLT), hence the inclusion of the verse here. But note that the reference could instead be to his works (v. 7a), being "performed" in faithfulness and uprightness (v. 8b).

Ps 119:89, 144, 152, 160 *Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.*  ... ¹⁴⁴*Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live.*  ... ¹⁵²*Long have I known from your testimonies that you have founded them forever.*  ... ¹⁶⁰*The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.* 

Verse 89b may be implying that God's word "stands firm as the heavens" (AMP; cf. CEV, [Matt 5:18 ↓](#)). Or it may have in view the authority or standing of God's word over all things.

Matt 5:18 For truly, I say to you, *until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.* 

The phrase "until all is accomplished" refers to Jesus fulfilling "all" of which the law spoke. Presumably this will come to pass in full at the consummation of his work at the end of the age.

Matt 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but *my words will not pass away.* 

Note: God's word surpasses everything of this world

Ps 138:2 I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you *have exalted above all things your name and your word.*^e 

^e Or *you have exalted your word above all your name*

Ps 19:10 *More to be desired are they* [the ordinances of God] *than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.* 



God's word is "sweeter ... than honey" in that it brings pure enjoyment, like honey, but even more so.

Ps 119:96 *I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.* 

The most perfect things of this world have limitations – but not God's commands. The implication may well be that God's word is the only thing in this world that is entirely perfect (cf. CEV, GNT).

✦ God's promises are precious and very great:

2Pet 1:4 ... by which he has granted to us *his precious and very great promises*, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 

God's word is also spoken of as great in Psalms 119:162 – "I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil."

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Functions of God's Word (I): General

See also:

- *a) What to Teach: God's Word*, p. 1505
- *Use God's word to avoid sin and counter evil*, p. 1856

Note the introductory comment on *II. Key Old Testament Covenants*, p. 321.

Subsections

- God's word makes known his commands
- God's word makes known his plans
- God's word plays a role in salvation
- God's word plays a role in sanctification
- God's word helps people avoid sin
- God's word helps people learn to fear God
- God's word encourages people
- Other roles of God's word
- Note: God acts by his word

God's word makes known his commands

See also:

- *God's word includes his laws*, p. 298

Deut 5:4-22 *The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire,*⁵*while I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD. For you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up into the mountain. He said:*⁶*"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ⁷"You shall have no other gods before^f me. ⁸"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁹You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰but showing steadfast love to thousands^g of those who love me and keep my commandments. ¹¹"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. ¹²"Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵You shall remember that you were a slave^h in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. ¹⁶"Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁷"You shall not murder.ⁱ ¹⁸"And you shall not commit adultery. ¹⁹"And you shall not steal. ²⁰"And you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ²¹"And you shall not covet your neighbor's wife. And you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.'²²"These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. *

^f Or besides

^g Or to the thousandth generation



^h Or *servant*

ⁱ The Hebrew word also covers causing human death through carelessness or negligence

That the Ten Commandments (vv. 7-21; cf. Ex 20:1-17) are made known by God's word – in what he said and wrote – is clearly indicated in vv. 4-5, 22.

Num 15:31 Because he has *despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment*, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him. 

Although having a negative context, this and 1 Kings 13:21b below do indicate or at least imply that God's word makes known his commands.

1Ki 13:21b Because *you have disobeyed the word of the LORD and have not kept the command that the LORD your God commanded you*, ... 

Ps 119:172 My tongue will *sing of your word, for all your commandments* are right. 

Ps 147:19 *He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules* to Israel. 

^j Or *and just decrees*

Isa 1:10 *Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching^k of our God, you people of Gomorrah!* 

^k Or *law*

The "teaching of our God" primarily has God's law in view (cf. text note).

Isa 2:3 ... and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, *that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.*" *For out of Zion shall go the law,^l and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.* 

^l Or *teaching*

God makes known his "ways" or law through his word.

✦ Through God's word one knows God's will:

Rom 2:18 ... and [you] *know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;* ... 

Through learning God's word or law, one is able to gain a good knowledge of God's will – here primarily God's will for us, regarding how he wants us to live. The term "what is excellent" quite possibly is speaking of what is best or "what is right" (CEV, GNT, Nlrv) as in knowing "right from wrong" (NLT).

God's word makes known his plans

See also:

- [Rom 2:18](#) 
- [God's word includes his covenants and promises](#), p. 299
- [God's word includes his prophecies](#), p. 299

1Ki 6:11-13 *Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, ¹²"Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. ¹³And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel."* 

God's word make known to Solomon God's plan, which was dependant on Solomon's obedience. God planned to fulfill his covenant promise to David and to remain amongst the people, most prominently in the newly completed temple (v. 12a).

Isa 38:4-6 Then *the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: ⁵"Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.^m ⁶I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city.* 

^m Hebrew *to your days*

Isa 46:11b [God:] *I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.* 

Jer 29:10 *For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.* 

Lam 2:17 *The LORD has done what he purposed; he has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.* 

Heb 6:13-14 For when *God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you."* 

✦ **God's gospel of Jesus Christ is made known – in part at least – through the prophetic writings in God's word:**

Rom 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to *my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but has now been disclosed and through*



the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— 

God's word plays a role in salvation

See also:

- *The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it*, p. 1768
- *The gospel brings life to those who respond*, p. 1768
- *The gospel is the power and wisdom of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world*, p. 1770

1Cor 15:1-2 Now I would remind you, brothers,^a of *the gospel I preached to you*, which you received, in which you stand, ²and *by which you are being saved*, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 

^a Or brothers and sisters; also verses 6, 31, 50, 58

Eph 1:13 *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ...* 

On believing God's word, the gospel of our salvation, one is included in Christ and marked as such with a seal – the Holy Spirit – providing and ensuring one's salvation.

2Tim 3:15 ... and how from childhood you have been acquainted with *the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* 

James 1:18, 21 Of his own will *he brought us forth by the word of truth*, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.  ... ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness *the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.* 

Verse 18 speaks of the key role of God's word in the rebirth of believers (cf. **1Pet 1:23** ↓), which of course leads to salvation (v. 21).

1Pet 1:23 ... since *you have been born again*, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, *through the living and abiding word of God; ...* 

1Pet 2:2 Like newborn infants, *long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—* 

The "pure spiritual milk" most likely primarily refers to God's word – "the pure milk of the word" (NKJV).

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.* He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. 

‡ **Salvation is far from those who ignore God's word:**

Ps 119:155 *Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes.* 

God's word plays a role in sanctification

Sanctification refers to the process in which believers are made holy. This is primarily achieved through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death. Additionally, believers are continually being transformed by God, becoming more like Jesus Christ and increasingly devoid of sin.

John 15:3 *Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.* 

By Jesus imparting his God-given words to the disciples, they were cleansed of that which is sinful.

John 17:17 *Sanctify them^o in the truth; your word is truth.* 

^o Greek *Set them apart* (for holy service to God)

Here Jesus effectively prays that God would sanctify his people by his word.

Acts 20:32 And now I commend you to God and to *the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.* 

This suggests that God's word sanctifies, by virtue of the fact that it builds up believers and qualifies them for an inheritance that belongs to those who are sanctified.

Eph 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶*that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷*so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*^p 

^p Or *holy and blameless*

The phrase "washing with water" (v. 26) is understood by some to be a reference to baptism, but more often it is seen simply as a figurative description of Christ's cleansing of the church through its exposure to God's word (v. 26). As such, in conjunction with his death, through the word Jesus Christ makes the church holy.

1Tim 4:4-5 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵*for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.* 



Although food is primarily in view here (cf. v. 3), v. 5 illustrates that God's word sanctifies.

Deut 32:2 *May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb.* 

Here Moses asserts that his teaching rejuvenates and nourishes, fostering spiritual growth. This can be applied to all God's word and the spiritual growth and renewal that it brings to believers – aspects of their sanctification.

‡ God's word is at work in those who believe:

1Thes 2:13 And we also thank God constantly^a for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, *the word of God, which is at work in you believers.* 

^a Or *without ceasing*

This in part points to the sanctifying work of God's word in believers.

God's word helps people avoid sin

See also:

- [Use God's word to avoid sin and counter evil](#), p. 1856

Ps 119:9-11, 127-128, 165 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.* ¹⁰With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! ¹¹*I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*  ... ¹²⁷*Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.* ¹²⁸*Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.*  ... ¹⁶⁵*Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.* 

In v. 165, "stumble" is quite possibly a reference to committing sin, as is the similar expression "his steps do not slip", below in Psalms 37:31.

Ps 17:4 With regard to the works of man, *by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent.* 

Ps 37:31 *The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.* 

2Pet 1:4 ... by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 

1Jn 2:1 My little children, *I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.* But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 

John 16:1 *I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.* 

Jesus told his disciples about coming persecutions (cf. 15:18-25), so that when these did come his disciples would not fall away – which is indeed sin. Likewise, taking such words of Jesus to heart helps keep us from faltering or falling away in times of persecution and hardship.

‡ God's people are warned by his word:

Ps 19:11 Moreover, *by them* [God's rules] *is your servant warned;* in keeping them there is great reward. 

God's word helps people learn to fear God

God's word helps people learn to revere and fear God by teaching about who he is, what he has done, what he requires of us and the consequences of not obeying him.

Deut 4:10 ... how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, '*Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.*' 

Deut 17:18-19 And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, *he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by^r the Levitical priests.* ¹⁹*And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ...* 

^r Hebrew *from before*

Deut 31:12-13 Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, *that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law,* ¹³*and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.* 

Prov 2:1-2, 5 My son, *if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you,* ²*making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding;*  ... ⁵*then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.* 



God's word encourages people

Rom 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through *the encouragement of the Scriptures* we might have hope. 📖

1Thes 4:16-18 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore *encourage one another with these words.* 📖

Heb 12:5-6 And have you forgotten *the exhortation that addresses you as sons?* "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." 📖

In exhorting us (v. 5), God's word encourages us (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) to think and act as God wants.

Rom 16:25 *Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ...* 📖

Strengthening is an aspect and goal of encouragement. This verse may be meaning that God strengthens people in the faith through the proclamation of the gospel (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV); hence the verse's inclusion here. Alternatively, it may be speaking of God strengthening people as being consistent with the gospel's message (AMP; cf. GNT, NLT).

✦ God's word brings comfort:

Ps 119:50, 52 *This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.* 📖 ... ⁵²*When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD.* 📖

In v. 50 the psalmist says that his comfort in suffering is God's promise which preserves or renews ("revives", NLT) his life, through the hope that it gives. Perhaps the reason the psalmist found comfort in God's laws (v. 52) was that in obeying them he could be confident that he remained in God's will and could look forward to the fulfillment of it, including God's promises.

Other roles of God's word

1Sam 3:21 And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for *the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.* 📖

Here "word" is probably referring to direct revelation or God's spoken word, rather than God's written word. But the concept of God revealing himself through his "word" can certainly be applied to his written word.

Hos 4:1 *Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; ...* 📖

This verse speaks of God making a charge against the people. It illustrates that God admonishes his people through his word, which is very common in the OT.

1Tim 4:4-5 For everything created by God is good, and *nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,* ⁵*for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.* 📖

The expression "the word of God and prayer" may have in view the use/role of God's word in prayer or as the basis for prayer. Alternatively "the word of God" could instead be referring to God's word teaching that all food is acceptable (cf. . . . *Believers are released from the food regulations of the law*, p. 656).

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and *discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* 📖

As noted earlier, a person's thoughts and attitudes are shown clearly for what they are in the light of God's word. Thus it allows a person's thoughts and attitudes to be judged, by the person themselves and also by others. But note that God's judgment may what is primarily in view here (cf. v. 13).

✦ On Judgment Day people will be judged in the light of Jesus' words, including their response to them:

John 12:48 *The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.* 📖



Note: God acts by his word

See also:

- [Deut 8:3](#) ↴
- [God made and maintains all things by his word or command](#), p. 214
- [Note: Jesus Christ is the Word of God](#), p. 300

The references to God's "word" in this subsection are essentially speaking of his command. These verses imply that God merely needs to command things to be done for them to happen.

Ps 33:6 *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.* 

2Pet 3:5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that *the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ...* 

Ps 147:15-18 *He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. ¹⁶He gives snow like wool; he scatters hoarfrost like ashes. ¹⁷He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? ¹⁸He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow.* 

This passage suggests that God controls nature by his word (vv. 15, 18a).

Ps 107:20 *He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.* 

Isa 55:11 *... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.* 

✦ **Jesus Christ sustains all things by his powerful word:**

Heb 1:3a He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and *he upholds the universe by the word of his power.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Functions of God's Word (II): Blessings

See also:

- [d\) Blessings of Obeying God](#), p. 1182

Subsections

- [Life . . .](#)
- [. . . including spiritual and eternal life](#)
- [Light](#)
- [Knowledge](#)
- [Wisdom](#)
- [Hope](#)
- [Joy](#)
- [Freedom](#)
- [Note: Rejecting and not keeping God's word brings his judgment](#)

Life . . .

See also:

- [God's word plays a role in salvation](#), p. 312

Lev 18:5 You shall therefore *keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.* 

Deut 8:3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you *know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word^s that comes from the mouth of the LORD.* 

^s Hebrew *by all*

The supernatural provision of manna by God through his command or word, demonstrated that it is God's word which is the ultimate source of life's sustenance. This is true of both his spoken and written word, and is applicable to both physical and spiritual life.

Deut 32:46-47 ... he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may *be careful to do all the words of this law.* ⁴⁷*For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.*" 

The Israelites' lives were to be based on God's word. By taking God's words to heart the Israelites would have life (cf.



Lev 18:5 †). Possibly a fullness of life is partly in view, along with longevity.

Ps 119:93 *I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.* 📖

The psalmist appears to have in view the strength and meaning he found in God's word reviving (cf. NASB, NLT) and/or preserving (cf. GNT, NIV) his life during affliction.

Prov 7:2 *... keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; ...* 📖

God is not the speaker here. Rather it appears that the writer is addressing a son. But biblical wisdom literature – as with all Scripture – is accepted as God's word, inspired by God. As such these "commandments" are correlated with God's word and commands.

Prov 19:16 *Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die.* 📖

... including spiritual and eternal life

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.* 📖

John 6:63, 68 [Jesus:] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. *The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.* 📖 ... ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? *You have the words of eternal life, ...* 📖

In v. 63b Jesus appears to be saying that his words are spiritual, producing spiritual or eternal life. With the preceding reference to the Holy Spirit giving life (v. 63a), Jesus may well be implying that it is by the Holy Spirit that his words produce this life.

John 8:51 Truly, truly, I say to you, *if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.* 📖

John 20:31 *... but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* 📖

John wrote in his gospel of certain miraculous signs of Jesus (cf. v. 30), so that in reading it people would believe in Jesus and so "have life in his name".

Phil 2:16 *... holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.* 📖

† **The Scriptures testify about Jesus Christ (in whom is eternal life):**

John 5:39 You search *the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ...* 📖

Jesus appears to be meaning that the Jewish leaders studied OT Scripture as an end in itself, thinking that doing this alone would lead to eternal life. Thus they failed to look beyond OT Scripture to whom the Scriptures testified, in whom is eternal life. In effect they failed to believe the Scriptures (cf. vv. 46-47).

Light

See also:

- *Instead of living in darkness, live according to the light and truth . . .*, p. 1862
- *. . . Insights on living in darkness and living in God's light and truth*, p. 1863

God's word gives "light" in the sense that it gives insight, which is largely what is in view in the verses here – and is reflected in the following pair of subsections. Also bear in mind that God's word also gives "light" in the sense that it leads to well-being or salvation, turning the darkness of one's circumstances to light (cf. . . . *God gives his people light even amidst darkness*, p. 910). Such outcomes are an effect of the insight and hope that God's word gives – and/or a product of God's favor towards those who live by his word.

Ps 19:8 *... the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; ...* 📖

God's commands "light up the way" (NCV™), "giving insight to life" (NLT).

Ps 119:105, 130 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* 📖 ... ¹³⁰*The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.* 📖

Prov 6:22-23 *When you walk, they^t will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.* ²³*For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, ...* 📖

^t Hebrew *it*; three times in this verse

Note that in saying "when you lie down, they will watch over you" (v. 22), the writer appears to be referring to the security and peace that is produced by following God's word.



John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." 

Jesus and his teaching give light (cf. *Jesus came to bring spiritual light into the world . . .*, p. 510).

Heb 10:32 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ... 

The spiritual light of the gospel is referred to here.

2Pet 1:19 And we have something more sure, *the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place*, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ... 

Knowledge

See also:

- *d) God's Knowledge and Wisdom* [blessings of obeying God], p. 40

Isa 51:7 Listen to me, *you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law*; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. 

Luke 1:3-4 ... it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, *to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.* 

Along with providing knowledge, Scripture provides confidence in the truthfulness of it.

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 

Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because *you have rejected knowledge*, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since *you have forgotten the law of your God*, I also will forget your children. 

In ignoring God's law the people had effectively rejected knowledge (cf. *Jer 8:9* ↓). Thus this correlates God's law with knowledge.

Dan 9:2 ... in the first year of his reign, *I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.* 

This and the remaining references illustrate that Scripture teaches and gives knowledge, by stating particular things that we learn or come to know through Scripture.

John 20:9 ... for as yet they did not *understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.* 

Gal 3:8 And *the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify^u the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."* 

^u Or *count righteous*; also verses 11, 24

Scripture made known elements of the gospel.

1Jn 5:13 *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.* 

‡ **Not knowing God's work leads to error:**

Matt 22:29 But Jesus answered them, "*You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.*" 

A corollary of God's word giving knowledge is that not knowing it leads to error (cf. *Hos 4:6* †).

Wisdom

See also:

- *Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge*, p. 1160

Deut 4:5-6 See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ⁶*Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'* 

God's laws give reliable instruction as to what is best to do in life. Those who observe them are recognized as wise by others (v. 6).

Ps 119:24, 98-100, 104 *Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.*  ... ⁹⁸*Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.* ⁹⁹*I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.* ¹⁰⁰*I understand more than the aged,^v for I keep your precepts.*  ... ¹⁰⁴*Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.* 

^v Or *the elders*



The psalmist could say that God's laws were his "counselors" (v. 24), for they gave him sound direction as to which paths to take.

Jer 8:8-9 How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. ⁹The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; *behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD, so what wisdom is in them?*

The people's assertion that wisdom came with the word of the LORD (v. 8a) was correct, but they were mistaken in thinking that they had the word of the LORD (v. 8b).

Dan 9:13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and *gaining insight by your truth.*

Matt 7:24, 26 *Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.* ... ²⁶*And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.*

† The Scriptures can make one wise for salvation:

2Tim 3:15 ... and how from childhood you have been acquainted with *the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation* through faith in Christ Jesus.

Hope

See also:

- *God's promises give his people hope*, p. 883
- *Put your hope in God's promises*, p. 1106
- *Put your hope in God's word*, p. 1944

Ps 119:49 *Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.*

God had given the psalmist hope by his word, or promise (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Rom 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and *through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Col 1:23 ... if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from *the hope of the gospel that you heard*, which has been proclaimed in all creation^w under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

^w Or to every creature

† The gospel tells of "the hope" stored in heaven:

Col 1:5 ... because of *the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel*, ...

Here "the hope" refers to the object of our hope, i.e. what we hope for.

Joy

Neh 8:8, 12 *They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly,*^x and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. ... ¹²*And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.*

^x Or with interpretation, or paragraph by paragraph

Note that v. 9 tells of the people weeping in response to what was being read. Thus it shows that God's word can also bring sorrow when it convicts people of how they have failed to live up to what it requires.

Ps 19:8a ... *the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;* ...

Ps 119:111 *Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.*

Jer 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, and *your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart*, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.

1Jn 1:4 And we are writing these things so that our^y joy may be complete.

^y Some manuscripts *your*

If the meaning given by the text note was intended (cf. NCV, NKJV), then this attests to the joy given by the writings of the Scriptures to its readers.

† God's word brings peace:

Ps 119:165 *Great peace have those who love your law;* nothing can make them stumble.



Those who love (and so live by) God's laws have great peace – peace with God, inner peace and no needless conflict with others.

Freedom

Ps 119:45 ... and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts. 

The psalmist appears to be speaking of freedom from things that ordinarily confine or burden a person. Possibly sin and its effects are in view (cf. **John 8:31-32** ↓), but in the context it is more likely emotional burdens and oppression that normally would have accompanied hard times.

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 

This is probably primarily referring to freedom from sin (cf. vv. 34-36).

James 1:25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, *the law of liberty*, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. 

The "law of liberty" (cf. **James 2:12** ↓) refers to God's word (cf. vv. 22-24) – seemingly including the OT moral law as interpreted by the NT. This "law" that Christians are under gives liberty/freedom from both OT rigorous regulations and sin.

James 2:12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under *the law of liberty*. 

Note: Rejecting and not keeping God's word brings his judgment

Isa 30:9, 12-13 For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD;  ... ¹²Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, "Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, ¹³therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; ... 

2Chr 36:16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy. 

Prov 13:13 Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded. 

Isa 5:24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. 

Jer 6:10-12, 19 To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it. ¹¹Therefore I am full of the wrath of the LORD; I am weary of holding it in. "Pour it out upon the children in the street, and upon the gatherings of young men, also; both husband and wife shall be taken, the elderly and the very aged. ¹²Their houses shall be turned over to others, their fields and wives together, for I will stretch out my hand against the inhabitants of the land," declares the LORD.  ... ¹⁹Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it. 

Hos 8:12-13 Were I to write for him my laws by the ten thousands, they would be regarded as a strange thing. ¹³As for my sacrificial offerings, they sacrifice meat and eat it, but the LORD does not accept them. Now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt. 

The clause "they shall return to Egypt" (v. 13b) speaks figuratively of Israel returning to slavery, which this time would be in Assyria.

Zec 7:12-14 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. ¹³"As I^z called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear," says the LORD of hosts, ¹⁴"and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate." 

^z Hebrew he

Matt 7:26-27 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. 



John 12:47-48 *If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.* 📖

Those who have known Jesus' words will be judged in accordance with having known the teaching and by the content of it. This means that those who have rejected and not obeyed it will be condemned (v. 48b).

1Cor 14:37-38 *If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that *the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.* ³⁸*If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.** 📖

The final clause may be speaking of being "not recognized" by God or Jesus Christ, presumably on judgment day. Alternatively, it may be speaking of church members expelling such people.

✦ **Those who fail to take hold of God's word:**

Luke 8:11-14 *Now the parable is this: *The seed is the word of God.* ¹²*The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.* ¹³*And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.* ¹⁴*And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.** 📖

The two groups portrayed in vv. 13-14 show some interest in God's word, but lack commitment to it. Additionally, the group in v. 14 are noted as having higher priorities.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Key Old Testament Covenants

See also:

- *The flood and Noah: Escalated sin and judgment; righteousness and salvation*, p. 295
- ... *With their appointment, God is said to have made a covenant with the priests*, p. 395
- a) *God's New Covenant*, p. 664

A covenant is a solemn agreement between two parties. As indicated earlier, God's covenants are a key aspect of his word – along with his commands, prophecies and promises.

God's covenants with people were all initiated by God. They generally confirmed his relationship with the persons concerned – who were or who became his people. The covenants included binding promises by God of blessings for his people, reflecting his purposes for them. In some cases God's covenants also outlined what God required of his people and how they were to relate to him.

God's covenants with Abraham, Israel and David are prime instances of the role of God's word. They expound pivotal promises and (in the covenant with Israel) laws of God. They also form the background of God's relationship with his people today. Learning about them enables us to better understand the significance of much of the NT's teachings.

a) God's Covenant with Abraham

See also:

- *So, God was faithful to his covenants and promises with Abraham and Israel*, p. 351

Subsections

- God called Abraham to go to the land of Canaan – and Abraham went
- Subsequently, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him: countless descendants; the land of Canaan; ...
- ... and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham
- Abraham believed God, and God credited this to him as righteousness
- God's covenant required Abraham to obey God, which he did

- God confirmed the covenant and promises with Abraham's descendants
- Note: God made circumcision the sign of the covenant with Abraham and his descendants

God called Abraham to go to the land of Canaan – and Abraham went

Gen 12:1, 4-6 Now the LORD said^a to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ☞ ... ⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak^b of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ☞

^a Or had said

^b Or terebinth

Note that Abraham's name was initially "Abram". God later changed it to "Abraham" (cf. [Gen 17:5](#) ↓).

Acts 7:2-4 And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.' ⁴Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him [Abraham] from there into this land in which you are now living. ☞

God "removed him" (v. 4) in the sense that God had him move.

Heb 11:8-9 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ☞

Josh 24:2-3 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. ³Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. ☞



Subsequently, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him: countless descendants; the land of Canaan; . . .

See also:

- Gen 12:2 ↴; Gen 18:18 ↴
- . . . *The people of Israel were Abraham's descendants*, p. 326
- *Conquering its inhabitants, God gave the promised land of Canaan to Israel – as an inheritance . . .*, p. 349

God made an everlasting covenant with the Israelite's ancestor Abraham, aspects of which were included in God's later covenant with Israel. In the covenant God promised Abraham that if he obeyed, God would: give him countless descendants; give his descendants the land of Canaan; and bless all nations through him (as per the following subsection). In conjunction with this, God would be Abraham's and his descendants' God.

Gen 15:1-7, 18-21 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."² But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue^c childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"³ And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir."⁴ And behold, *the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son^d shall be your heir."*⁵ *And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."*⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.⁷ *And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."* ¶ ...¹⁸ *On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give^e this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."* ¶

^c Or *I shall die*

^d Hebrew *what will come out of your own loins*

^e Or *have given*

Gen 17:1-8, 15-16, 19-21 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty;^f walk before me, and be blameless,² that *I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.*"³ *Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,*⁴ *"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.*⁵ *No longer shall your name be called*

*Abram,^g but your name shall be Abraham,^h for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.*⁶ *I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.*⁷ *And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*⁸ *And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."* ¶ ...¹⁵ *And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarahⁱ shall be her name.*¹⁶ *I will bless her, and moreover, I will give^j you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."* ¶ ...¹⁹ *God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac.^k I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.*²⁰ *As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation.*²¹ *But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year."* ¶

^f Hebrew *El Shaddai*

^g *Abram* means *exalted father*

^h *Abraham* means *father of a multitude*

ⁱ *Sarai* and *Sarah* mean *princess*

^j Hebrew *have given*

^k *Isaac* means *he laughs*

This was a confirmation (v. 2) of the covenant recorded in 15:4-7, 18-21 above, and indicated it was to be an "everlasting covenant" (vv. 7, 19). Its promises were fulfilled through Abraham's second son Isaac (v. 19, 21) borne by his wife Sara – rather than his first son Ishmael (cf. vv. 20) borne by Sara's maidservant Hagar. This was reiterated later in 21:12 – "...through Isaac shall your offspring be named." In turn the promises were fulfilled through Isaac's second son Jacob – who was later renamed "Israel" – and his descendants (cf. 28:10-15).

Gen 12:6-7 Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak^l of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.⁷ *Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."* So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ¶

^l Or *terebinth*

Gen 13:12, 15-17 *Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom.* ¶ ... [God:]¹⁵ *for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.*¹⁶ *I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count*



the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.
¹⁷Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land,
 for I will give it to you. 𐀀

Gen 22:17a *I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply
 your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on
 the seashore.* 𐀀

Acts 7:5 Yet he gave him no inheritance in it [Canaan], not
 even a foot's length, but *promised to give it to him as a
 possession and to his offspring after him*, though he had no
 child. 𐀀

... and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham

See also:

- *... and God's promise or blessing to Abraham is for all who
 have faith*, p. 626

Gen 12:2-3 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will
 bless you and make your name great, so that *you will be a
 blessing.* ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who
 dishonors you I will curse, and *in you all the families of the
 earth shall be blessed.*^m 𐀀

^mOr *by you all the families of the earth shall bless
 themselves*

Gen 18:17-18 The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham
 what I am about to do, ¹⁸seeing that Abraham shall surely
 become a great and mighty nation, and *all the nations of the
 earth shall be blessed in him?*" 𐀀

Gen 22:17b-18 And your offspring shall possess the gate of
 hisⁿ enemies, ¹⁸and *in your offspring shall all the nations of
 the earth be blessed*, because you have obeyed my voice. 𐀀

ⁿ Or *their*

Acts 3:25 You are the sons of the prophets and of *the
 covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to
 Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the
 earth be blessed.'* 𐀀

† The birth of Isaac to Abraham's wife Sarah in his old age:

Gen 21:1-5 *The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD
 did to Sarah as he had promised.* ²And Sarah conceived and
 bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God
 had spoken to him. ³Abraham called the name of his son who
 was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.^o ⁴And Abraham

circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God
 had commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old
 when his son Isaac was born to him. 𐀀

^o Isaac means *he laughs*

Abraham believed God, and God credited this to him as righteousness

See also:

- *By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the
 promise – and so will all who emulate him*, p. 644

Gen 15:5-6 And he brought him outside and said, "Look
 toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to
 number them." *Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring
 be."* ⁶And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as
 righteousness. 𐀀

Rom 4:3, 18-22 For what does the Scripture say? "*Abraham
 believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.*" 𐀀
 ... ¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become
 the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall
 your offspring be." ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he
 considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he
 was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the
 barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver
 concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith
 as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to
 do what he had promised. ²²That is why his faith was "counted
 to him as righteousness." 𐀀

Gal 3:6 ... just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted
 to him as righteousness"? 𐀀

† Abraham's exemplary life of faith:

Heb 11:8-12, 17-19 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was
 called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an
 inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was
 going.* ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a
 foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with
 him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the
 city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.
¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even
 when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful
 who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as
 good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of
 heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by
 the seashore. 𐀀 ... ¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested,
 offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in



the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ¹⁹He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. 

Note that v. 11 speaks of Sarah's faith.

God's covenant required Abraham to obey God, which he did

See also:

- [Heb 11:8](#) 
- [God called Abraham to go to the land of Canaan – and Abraham went](#), p. 321

Gen 17:1-2 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty;^p walk before me, and be blameless, ²that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." 

^p Hebrew *El Shaddai*

Gen 18:19 For I have chosen^q him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him. 

^q Hebrew *known*

God also required Abraham to direct his children and his household to obey God.

Gen 22:1-2, 9-12, 15-18 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ²He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."  ...⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ¹²He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."  ...¹⁵And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and

as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his^r enemies, ¹⁸and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." 

^r Or *their*

Gen 26:4-5 I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, ⁵because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. 

‡ Under the covenant God would be Abraham and his descendants' God:

Gen 17:7-8 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. 

Note that such a relationship requires obedience to God.

God confirmed the covenant and promises with Abraham's descendants

See also:

- [Gen 17:7](#) 

Gen 26:2-4 And the LORD appeared to him [Isaac] and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, ... 

Gen 28:10-15 Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹²And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder^s set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ¹³And behold, the LORD stood above it^t and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your



offspring. ¹⁴Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

^s Or a flight of steps

^t Or beside him

Ps 105:8-11 He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, ⁹the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, ¹⁰which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, ¹¹saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.”

This appears to be speaking of God making or confirming his covenant with: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and “the people of Israel” (NLT). The following references speak of God affirming with the Israelite people the promise of the Abrahamic covenant to give Abraham’s descendants the land of Canaan.

Ex 33:1 The LORD said to Moses, “Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give it.’”

Lev 20:24 But I have said to you, ‘You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.

‡ **God reaffirmed with Jacob his new name of “Israel” and the Abrahamic covenant:**

Gen 35:9-12 God appeared^u to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he called his name Israel. ¹¹And God said to him, “I am God Almighty;^v be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.^w ¹²The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.”

^u Or had appeared

^v Hebrew *El Shaddai*

^w Hebrew *from your loins*

The first mention of Jacob being renamed “Israel” occurs in 32:24-30, which contains the account of Jacob struggling with God, or at least an angel of God (cf. Hos 12:3-4). As a result of Jacob being renamed “Israel”, his descendants were

called the people of Israel or Israelites. Note that “Israel” is usually understood to mean: “he strives with God”. This was significant, for the people of Israel would frequently struggle with God.

Note: God made circumcision the sign of the covenant with Abraham and his descendants

Gen 17:9-14 And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

Acts 7:8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

Rom 4:11 He [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.

In association with being a sign of the covenant, the sign of circumcision was a “seal” of the righteousness that Abraham was accredited with by God for believing God’s covenant promise that Abraham would be the father of countless descendants (cf. Gen 15:5-6).

‡ **The sign of circumcision would be included in God’s covenant with Israel:**

Lev 12:1-3 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, ‘If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. ³And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.’”



Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God's Making of Israel as His People

See also:

- ... *If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God*, p. 333

Subsections

- God made the nation of Israel . . .
- . . . The people of Israel were Abraham's descendants
- God redeemed the Israelites out of Egypt to take them as his own . . .
- . . . The Passover and God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt
- God chose Israel out of all the nations to be his holy people . . .
- . . . Israel was God's chosen servant
- Foreigners were accepted into Israel and able to worship God
- Note: The tribes of Israel

God made the nation of Israel . . .

Deut 32:6 Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? *Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?*

Isa 43:1, 15, 20-21 But now thus says *the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel*: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ... ¹⁵I am *the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.*" ... ²⁰The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹*the people whom I formed for myself* that they might declare my praise.

Note that with the nation of Israel getting its name from its ancestor Jacob who was renamed "Israel", sometimes it is referred to as "Jacob" (v. 1; **Isa 44:2, 21** ↓; **Isa 41:8** ↓).

Isa 44:2, 21 Thus says *the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb* and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my

servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. ... ²¹Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; *I formed you*; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.

Isa 45:11 Thus says *the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him*: "Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning *my children and the work of my hands?*"^x

^x A slight emendation yields *will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the work of my hands?*

Here God refers to Israel as "my children... the work of my hands" (cf. **Isa 64:8** ↓), referring to the fact that he is "the one who formed" Israel.

Ps 95:6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before *the LORD, our Maker!*

Ps 100:3 Know that *the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his;*^y we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

^y Or *and not we ourselves*

Isa 64:8 But now, *O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.*

This and Malachi 2:10a below are probably speaking of Israel's creation as a nation, but note that it is possible that the physical creation of each individual one of them is primarily in view.

Mal 2:10a *Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?*

Ex 4:22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, '*Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, ...*'

The description of Israel as "my firstborn son" reflects the fact that God created Israel, while also alluding to Israel's prominent status amongst the nations.

. . . The people of Israel were Abraham's descendants

The people of Israel were Abraham's descendants through Isaac, his second son, and then Jacob, Isaac's second son. Making the nation of Israel from Abraham's descendants was a key part of God's fulfillment of his covenant promise to Abraham that he would give him countless descendants (cf. **Heb 11:11-12** ↓).



2Chr 20:7 Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before *your people Israel*, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?

Isa 41:8 But *you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ...*

Isa 51:1-2 Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: *look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.* ²*Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him.*

Here God calls on the faithful amongst the people of Israel to reflect upon their roots – their amazing creation from just one man, Abraham, and his wife Sarah.

Luke 1:54-55 *He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,* ⁵⁵*as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.*

Rom 11:1 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For *I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham,*^z a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

^z Or one of the offspring of Abraham

✦ **God fulfilled his promise to Abraham of giving him countless descendants:**

Heb 11:11-12 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful *who had promised.* ¹²*Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.*

God redeemed the Israelites out of Egypt to take them as his own . . .

In redeeming the Israelites from enslavement in Egypt, God in a sense bought them as his own, making them his people. (See the introductory comment on *c) Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin*, p. 596.)

Ex 6:6-7 Say therefore to the people of Israel, *'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.* ⁷*I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*

2Sam 7:23-24 And who is like *your [God's] people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people*, making himself a name and doing for them^a great and awesome things by driving out^b before *your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt*, a nation and its gods? ²⁴*And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever.* And you, O LORD, became their God.

^a With a few Targums, Vulgate, Syriac; Hebrew *you*

^b Septuagint (compare 1 Chronicles 17:21); Hebrew *for your land*

Neh 1:10 *They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed* by your great power and by your strong hand.

Ps 74:2a Remember *your congregation, which you have purchased of old, which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!*

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

Lev 25:38, 55 *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.* ... ⁵⁵*For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants.*^c *They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

^c Or slaves

Ps 114:1-2 *When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,* ²*Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion.*

On being redeemed by God and in association with becoming his people, Israel became God's dominion, where his sovereignty was acknowledged.

. . . The Passover and God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt

See also:

- *Celebration of God's deliverance: The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, p. 1355

Ex 12:1-3, 5-7, 11-13 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²*"This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.* ³*Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household.* ... ⁵*Your lamb shall be*



without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.⁴ ⁷"Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ... ¹¹In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

^d Hebrew *between the two evenings*

The young male lamb (vv. 3, 5-7) was to be sacrificed as a substitute for each family, in particular each firstborn male, with its shed blood symbolizing redemption.

Ex 12:28-33 Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. ²⁹At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. ³⁰And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. ³¹Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. ³²Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!" ³³The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead."

Ex 12:40-42 The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. ⁴¹At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. ⁴²It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations.

Ex 14:5-6, 9-10, 15-16, 21-22 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" ⁶So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, ...

⁹The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. ¹⁰When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. ... ¹⁵The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. ... ²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²²And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Ex 14:23-28 The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵clogging^e their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians." ²⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw^f the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.

^e Or *binding* (compare Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac); Hebrew *removing*

^f Hebrew *shook off*

† God had earlier performed a number of miraculous signs, culminating in the deaths of the Egyptian firstborn and Israel's deliverance:

Ps 105:26-38 He sent Moses, his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. ²⁷They performed his signs among them and miracles in the land of Ham. ²⁸He sent darkness, and made the land dark; they did not rebel^g against his words. ²⁹He turned their waters into blood and caused their fish to die. ³⁰Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings. ³¹He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country. ³²He gave them hail for rain, and fiery lightning bolts through their land. ³³He struck down their



vines and fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country. ³⁴He spoke, and the locusts came, young locusts without number, ³⁵which devoured all the vegetation in their land and ate up the fruit of their ground. ³⁶He struck down all the firstborn in their land, the firstfruits of all their strength. ³⁷Then he brought out Israel with silver and gold, and there was none among his tribes who stumbled. ³⁸Egypt was glad when they departed, for dread of them had fallen upon it. 

^g Septuagint, Syriac omit *not*

The miraculous signs – which involved plagues – are recorded in Exodus 7-11.

God chose Israel out of all the nations to be his holy people . . .

Note that other people were not totally excluded from coming to God – as indicated later in *Foreigners were accepted into Israel and able to worship God*, p. 330. But the Israelites were the ones that God chose to firstly be his people – “the firstfruits of his harvest” (Jer 2:3).

Lev 20:24b, 26 *I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.*  ... ²⁶*You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.* 

Deut 7:6-8 *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.* 

God describes Israel as his “treasured possession” on a number of occasions (cf. **Deut 26:18** ↓). Somewhat similarly, Psalms 148:14 describes Israel as “the people of Israel who are near to him”.

Deut 26:18-19 *And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, ¹⁹and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.* 

Note that v. 19a speaks of the honor God would bestow on Israel, his holy people.

Ps 135:4 *For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel as his own possession.* 

1Ki 8:53 *For you separated them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared through Moses your servant, when you brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.* 

Rom 9:4 *They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.* 

God effectively adopted the people of Israel as his children.

. . . Israel was God’s chosen servant

In saying that he chose Israel as his servant, God intended that the people of Israel serve him. Additionally, this points to the fact that God would fulfill his will for the world through Israel (cf. **Isa 26:18** ↓).

Isa 41:8-9 *But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ⁹you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off”; ...* 

Isa 44:1-2, 21 *But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! ²Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.*  ... ²¹*Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.* 

Isa 45:4 *For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me.* 

Lev 25:55 *For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants.^h They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.* 

^h Or slaves

Isa 49:3 *And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”ⁱ* 

ⁱ Or I will display my beauty

This is speaking in particular of the messianic servant, as the one in whom Israel’s role as God’s servant would be ultimately fulfilled.



Ex 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. 

Verse 6a speaks of Israel's role as God's servant, being for him a kingdom of priests. The description of them as "priests" (cf. **Isa 61:6** ↓) points to their dedication or consecration to God's service – which involved them being a "holy nation". In addition it is understood by some commentators as alluding to God mediating salvation and other blessings through Israel to the other nations.

Isa 61:6 ... but you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast. 

The reference is actually to the renewed Israel of the future, a fulfillment of their role as priests of God (cf. **Ex 19:6** ↑).

✦ **Israel's failure in being a vehicle for God's salvation to the other nations:**

Isa 26:18 ... we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. 

This speaks of God's intention to bring salvation to the world through Israel – possibly also in view in Jeremiah 4:2 – and the people's general failure in this regard. God would later accomplish such salvation through the Messiah of Israel. Bear in mind that the Hebrew in the last clause is not clear; it can be translated: "Nor were inhabitants of the world born" (NASB) – further pointing to Israel's failure to bring salvation to the world. Note that Israel's shortcomings as God's servant are also referred to in 42:19 – "Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the LORD?"

Foreigners were accepted into Israel and able to worship God

In making Israel his own people or nation, God did not exclude other people from living among them and worshipping him.

Num 9:14 And if a stranger sojourns among you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its rule, so shall he do. You shall have one statute, both for the sojourner and for the native. 

Num 15:14-16 And if a stranger is sojourning with you, or anyone is living permanently among you, and he wishes to

offer a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD, he shall do as you do. ¹⁵For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the LORD. ¹⁶One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you. 

Deut 16:10-14 Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. ¹¹And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. ¹²You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes. ¹³You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. ¹⁴You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. 

1Ki 8:41-43 Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake ⁴²(for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, ⁴³hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name. 

Isa 56:6-8 "And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— ⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." ⁸The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, "I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered." 

Note that the future renewed Israel may be in view here.



✦ The OT speaks of praise and worship of God amongst the Gentile nations:

Rom 15:9-11 ... and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. *As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."*¹⁰ *And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."*¹¹ *And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."* 

These quotations from the OT speak of praise and worship of God amongst the Gentile nations, implying that the Gentiles themselves would be participants in this.

Note: The tribes of Israel

The tribes of Israel were descended from Israel's (Jacob's) twelve sons. His son Joseph was especially blessed in that two tribes were descended from him, one from each of his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. The tribe of Judah became prominent, particularly in the time of David who was from the tribe of Judah and with the promise of the Messiah from David's line. When the kingdom of Israel was split in two, Judah was the prominent tribe of the southern kingdom of Judah, and Ephraim became the prominent tribe of the northern kingdom. The tribe of Levi was also particularly notable, with the Levites being set apart to God. They were placed in charge of God's tabernacle and the priests, the sons of Aaron, were from their tribe.

Gen 35:22b-26 *Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.*²³ *The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.*²⁴ *The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.*²⁵ *The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant: Dan and Naphtali.*²⁶ *The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant: Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.* 

Gen 49:8-11 *Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you.*⁹ *Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?*¹⁰ *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him;*^j *and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*¹¹ *Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.* 

^j By a slight revocalization; a slight emendation yields (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Targum) *until he comes to whom it belongs*; Hebrew *until Shiloh comes, or until he comes to Shiloh*

This is from Jacob's blessing of his twelve sons (cf. vv. 1-28), reflecting Judah's emerging prominence amongst the

brothers/tribes, even with Jacob's wonderful blessing on Joseph (cf. vv. 22-26). Verse 11 speaks of prosperity.

Num 2:1-4, 9 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ² *"The people of Israel shall camp each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' houses. They shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side.*³ *Those to camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah by their companies, the chief of the people of Judah being Nahshon the son of Amminadab,*⁴ *his company as listed being 74,600.*  ... ⁹ *All those listed of the camp of Judah, by their companies, were 186,400. They shall set out first on the march.* 

Judah's prominence is reflected in it being mentioned first and having the most prominent position of the twelve tribes in the Israelite camp (v. 3) and by it setting out first (v. 9).

Num 1:50 *But appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings, and over all that belongs to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall take care of it and shall camp around the tabernacle.* 

Num 8:15-18 *And after that the Levites shall go in to serve at the tent of meeting, when you have cleansed them and offered them as a wave offering.*¹⁶ *For they are wholly given to me from among the people of Israel. Instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the people of Israel, I have taken them for myself.*¹⁷ *For all the firstborn among the people of Israel are mine, both of man and of beast. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I consecrated them for myself,*¹⁸ *and I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel.* 

Josh 14:4a *For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim.* 

Ps 78:67-68 *He rejected the tent of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,*⁶⁸ *but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves.* 

Ephraim's prominence amongst the tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel is often seen in it being used as representative of the northern kingdom as a whole – particularly by the OT prophets (cf. **Isa 1:13** ↓; Jer 31:9, 20) – at times in contrast to Judah, as is the case here and in **Isaiah 1:13** below.

Isa 11:13 *The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.* 



Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God's Covenant with Israel and the Law

See also:

- 1. *Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role*, p. 640

God made his covenant with the people of Israel soon after delivering them from Egypt, early on in the desert journey to the promised land.

Subsections

- God made a covenant with Israel, based on his law . . .
- . . . If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God
- The core of the law: The Ten Commandments
- The whole law included: religious laws; . . .
- . . . judicial laws; and social laws
- By obeying all the law, the Israelites would be holy
- By obeying all the law, the Israelites would be righteous and live
- By obeying, the Israelites would have life and prosperity in the promised land
- If the Israelites disobeyed the law and broke the covenant, there would be dreadful consequences . . .
- . . . Their destruction would culminate in exile from the promised land

God made a covenant with Israel, based on his law . . .

See also:

- God gave his law through Moses*, p. 302

Ex 24:6-8 And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and *half of the blood he threw against the altar.* ⁷Then he took the *Book of the Covenant* and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." ⁸And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the

covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." 

The Book of the Covenant (v. 7a) is generally understood to have contained the laws stipulated in 20:22-23:33, which follow and to a large extent expand on the Ten Commandments (20:2-17). It possibly also included the Ten Commandments themselves. (See also the comment on Deuteronomy 29:21 below.) The sprinkling of blood (vv. 6, 8) – of sacrificed bulls – ceremonially confirmed the covenant. The half sprinkled on the altar (v. 6) appears to point to God's part in the covenant. The purification of the altar – as being that on which sacrifices were to be made for the forgiveness of sin – was quite possibly signified by this act. The half sprinkled on the people (v. 8) signifies their commitment to keeping the terms of the covenant, as in a blood oath. The "blood of the covenant" (v. 8) is an important theme in the new covenant that God would make through Jesus Christ (cf. *Jesus Christ's blood ratified the new covenant*, p. 667).

Ex 34:10-11a, 27-28 And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. ¹¹"Observe what I command you this day.  ... ²⁷And the LORD said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." ²⁸So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.^k



^k Hebrew *the ten words*

Although under the covenant Israel was to keep all God's laws, the Ten Commandments were the main focus, the essential basis of the covenant (v. 28; cf. **Deut 4:13** ↓; *The core of the law: The Ten Commandments*, p. 334).

Deut 4:13-14 And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments,¹ and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. ¹⁴And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess. 

¹ Hebrew words

Deut 5:1-3 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. ²The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. ³Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. 



Note that “fathers” refers to the people’s ancestors, rather than simply the previous generation.

Deut 29:1-2, 9, 29 ^m *These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb.* ²ⁿ *And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them:* “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, ³ ... ⁹Therefore *keep the words of this covenant and do them*, that you may prosper^o in all that you do. ⁴ ... ²⁹“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may *do all the words of this law.* ⁵

^m Ch 28:69 in Hebrew

ⁿ Ch 29:1 in Hebrew

^o Or *deal wisely*

This was the confirmation in Moab (cf. **Deut 5:1** [†]; **Deut 26:17-18** [‡]; **Deut 29:12-15** [‡]) of the covenant made at Sinai (Horeb, v. 1; **Ex 24:6-8** [†]; **Ex 34:10-11a, 27-28** [†]). Presumably this confirmation was related to the fact that the generation that had made the covenant with God at Sinai had virtually died out in the desert.

Deut 29:21 And the LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law. ⁶

The Book of the Law is thought by many to be the law – or sections of it – as given in Deuteronomy, much of which is a reiteration of the law given in Exodus 20-23. Quite possibly this is the book spoken of in 2 Kings 23:1-3 below.

2Ki 23:1-3 Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. ²And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And *he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant* that had been found in the house of the LORD. ³*And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.* ⁴

Here King Josiah and the people renewed the covenant that God had made many years earlier through Moses. In doing so, they pledged themselves to obey God’s law (v. 3).

... If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God

If Israel kept the covenant by obeying God’s commands, then under the covenant they would be God’s people and he would be their God.

Ex 19:5-6 *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. ⁷

Lev 26:3, 11-12 *If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ³ ... ¹¹I will make my dwelling^p among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹²And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.* ⁴

^p Hebrew *tabernacle*

In conjunction with him being their God and they being his people (v. 12), God would dwell amongst the Israelites (vv. 11-12a).

Deut 26:17-18 *You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice. ¹⁸And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, ...* ⁵

Deut 28:9-10 *The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.* ⁶

Deut 29:10a, 12-15 You are standing today all of you before the LORD your God ¹² ... ¹²so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today, ¹³that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ¹⁴*It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, ¹⁵but with whoever is standing here with us today before the LORD our God, and with whoever is not here with us today.* ⁷

Verses 14-15 indicate that the covenant extended to future generations – “whoever is not here with us today.”

Jer 7:23a *But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people.* ⁸



Jer 11:2-4 *Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ³You shall say to them, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant ⁴that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, ...* 

The core of the law: The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments form the fundamentals of the law that God gave through Moses (sometimes referred to as the Mosaic Law). Much of the other stipulations of the law are based on and expand on these commandments. The first four commandments ([Ex 20:1-11](#) ↓) concern one's relationship with God. The remaining six ([Ex 20:12-17](#) ↓) concern one's relationships with other people.

Ex 20:1-11 And God spoke all these words, saying, ²"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³*You shall have no other gods before^a me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands^r of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. ⁸Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.* *

^a Or *besides*

^r Or *to the thousandth generation*

The command to not take the LORD's name in vain (v. 7) is applicable to any misuse of it. This includes: deceptive use of it – which is likely primarily in view – such as in taking an oath in his name in order to deceive; intentionally blaspheming it; and disrespectful or irreverent use. Note that any such misuse of God's name blasphemes it.

Ex 20:12-17 *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ¹³You shall not murder.^s ¹⁴You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵You shall not steal. ¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."* 

^s The Hebrew word also covers causing human death through carelessness or negligence

Note that Moses later repeats the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

† God wrote the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets:

Deut 5:22 These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. *And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.* 

The whole law included: religious laws; . . .

See also:

- [Ex 20:3-11](#) ↑
- *II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin*, p. 384

The following are something of a cross section or sample of the religious laws contained in the Mosaic Law. Likewise the following subsection contains examples of the judicial and social law contained therein.

Ex 20:24a *An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen.* 

Ex 22:28 *You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.* 

Ex 23:14-17 *Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. ¹⁵You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. ¹⁷Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD.* 



Lev 4:27-31 *If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, ²⁸or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. ²⁹And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering. ³⁰And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. ³¹And all its fat he shall remove, as the fat is removed from the peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.* 

Lev 7:37-38 *This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering, ³⁸which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.* 

Lev 11:44 *For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground.* 

Lev 19:12, 30 *You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.  ... ³⁰You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.* 

Deut 6:5 *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* 

... judicial laws; and social laws

See also:

▪ [Ex 22:28](#) 

Ex 21:2 *When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.* 

Ex 21:14 *But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.* 

Ex 21:16-19 *Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death. ¹⁷“Whoever curses^t his father or his mother shall be put to death. ¹⁸“When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his*

fist and the man does not die but takes to his bed, ¹⁹then if the man rises again and walks outdoors with his staff, he who struck him shall be clear; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall have him thoroughly healed. 

^t Or dishonors; Septuagint reviles

Ex 22:2-5 ^u *If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, ³but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He [a thief] shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double. ⁵“If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard.* 

^u Ch 22:1 in Hebrew

Ex 22:21-22, 25 *You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. ²²You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.  ... ²⁵“If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him.* 

Lev 19:9-10 *When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.* 

Lev 19:11, 13 *You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another.  ... ¹³“You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning.* 

Lev 19:16-18 *You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life^v of your neighbor: I am the LORD. ¹⁷“You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.* 

^v Hebrew blood



By obeying all the law, the Israelites would be holy

Deut 28:9 *The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.* 📖

Ex 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. 📖

Being holy involves being set apart for God (cf. **Lev 20:24, 26** ↓). If the Israelites fully obeyed God and kept his covenant, then they would be set apart “from among and above all peoples” (AMP) for God, as his “treasured possession” (v. 5) – “a holy nation” (v. 6).

Lev 19:2-3 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, *You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.* ³Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. 📖

The command in v. 2 introduces a number of commands that the people were to keep, beginning at v. 3. This reflects that the people would be holy by obeying God's law.

Lev 20:7-8 Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. ⁸Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you. 📖

The people were to be holy (v. 7a), keeping God's commands (v. 8a). In conjunction, God would make them holy (v. 8b).

Lev 20:22-24, 26 You shall therefore keep all my statutes and all my rules and do them, that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. ²³And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them. ²⁴But I have said to you, ‘You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ *I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.* 📖 ... ²⁶You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. 📖

Deut 26:18-19 And the LORD has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, ¹⁹and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised. 📖

‡ Anyone who defiantly broke God's law was to be cut off from Israel:

Num 15:30-31 But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him. 📖

To act as such “with a high hand” (v. 30) is to do so “defiantly” (NASB, NIV).

By obeying all the law, the Israelites would be righteous and live

In this and the following subsection, “life” is largely referring to physical life, at times possibly along with a fullness of life.

Deut 6:25 And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us. 📖

Isa 48:18 Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; ... 📖

Ezek 18:9 ... [If a man] walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord GOD. 📖

Lev 18:5 You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD. 📖

Neh 9:29b Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. 📖

Ezek 20:11 I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live. 📖

Deut 4:1 And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules^w that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 📖

^w Or just decrees; also verses 5, 8, 14, 45

Deut 6:1-2 Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules^x that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going



over, to possess it, ²that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, *by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.* 

^x Or *just decrees*; also verse 20

Deut 32:45-47 And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, ⁴⁶he said to them, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may *be careful to do all the words of this law.* ⁴⁷*For it is no empty word for you, but your very life,* and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.” 

By obeying, the Israelites would have life and prosperity in the promised land

See also:

- [Deut 32:47](#) 

Lev 26:3-6, 9 *If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them,* ⁴*then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.* ⁵*Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.* ⁶*I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land.*  ... ⁹*I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.* 

Deut 4:40 Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time. 

Deut 5:29, 33 Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants^y forever!  ... ³³*You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.* 

^y Or sons

Deut 28:1-3, 6-8, 11-13 And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ²And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. ³Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.  ... ⁶Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. ⁷“The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. ⁸The LORD will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.  ... ¹¹And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. ¹²The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, ... 

The phrases “when you come in” and “when you go out” (v. 6) are equivalent to speaking of one’s “coming and going” (cf. NLT), a reference to the people’s “daily work” (CEV). In v. 13, “the head and not the tail” is speaking of Israel being the head or “leader” (CEV, GNT) among the nations rather than having a lowly position.

Deut 29:9 Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper^z in all that you do. 

^z Or *deal wisely*

Deut 30:8-10 And you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments that I command you today. ⁹The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, ¹⁰when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 

Deut 30:15-20 [Moses:] “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God^a that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his



commandments and his statutes and his rules,^b then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.” 

^a Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God*

^b Or his just decrees

1Ki 2:3 ... and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, ... 

If the Israelites disobeyed the law and broke the covenant, there would be dreadful consequences . . .

See also:

- [Deut 30:15-20](#) 
- [Lev 26:27-34](#) 

Note that the blessings and punishments of the first covenant are more tangible and physical – and more immediate – than their parallels in the NT under the new covenant. This reflects the greater spiritual nature of the second covenant; rather than material and physical prosperity or desolation, the outcomes are generally spiritual ones. In a sense, the eternal ramifications of the second covenant are a more obvious parallel of the first covenant outcomes.

Lev 26:14-26 *But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, ¹⁵if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, ¹⁶then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. ¹⁷I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down*

before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you. ¹⁸And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, ¹⁹and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. ²⁰And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit. ²¹“Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. ²²And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted. ²³“And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, ²⁴then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. ²⁵And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. ²⁶When I break your supply^c of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied. 

^c Hebrew *staff*

The expression “walk contrary to” (vv. 21, 23, 24; [vv. 27, 28](#) ) is akin to “act against”.

Deut 28:15-20 *But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. ¹⁶Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. ¹⁷Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ¹⁸Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ¹⁹Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. ²⁰“The LORD will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me.* 

Deut 28:25-29, 45 *The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ²⁶And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away. ²⁷The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed. ²⁸The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind, ²⁹and*



you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways.^d And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you. ...⁴⁵“All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you.

^d Or shall not succeed in finding your ways

Deut 28:58-59 *If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God,⁵⁹ then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting.*

... Their destruction would culminate in exile from the promised land

Lev 18:26-28 *But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you²⁷ (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean),²⁸ lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.*

Note that Numbers 35:34 mentions God's presence as an additional reason as to why the people were not to defile the land: "You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I the LORD dwell in the midst of the people of Israel."

Lev 26:27-34, 38 *But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me,²⁸ then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.²⁹ You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.³⁰ And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you.³¹ And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas.³² And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it.³³ And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.³⁴“Then the land shall enjoy^e its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. ...³⁸ And*

you shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.

^e Or pay for; twice in this verse; also verse 43

Presumably v. 29 has in view a time of being under siege (c.f. Deuteronomy 28:53-57).

Deut 4:23-27 *Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you.²⁴ For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.²⁵“When you father children and children's children, and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, so as to provoke him to anger,²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed.²⁷ And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you.*

Deut 28:58, 63-67 *If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, ...⁶³ And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.⁶⁴“And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.⁶⁵ And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul.⁶⁶ Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life.⁶⁷ In the morning you shall say, 'If only it were evening!' and at evening you shall say, 'If only it were morning!' because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see.*

Deut 29:25-28 *Then people will say, 'It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt,²⁶ and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them.²⁷ Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, bringing upon it all the curses written in this book,²⁸ and the LORD uprooted them from their*



land in anger and fury and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as they are this day.' 

✦ Any individual who did not uphold the law was cursed:

Deut 27:26 'Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) The Ark of the Covenant and God's Presence

Subsections

- The ark of the covenant – which contained the stone tablets of the covenant
- The ark signified God's presence amongst the people
- Signifying God's presence, the ark was where God would meet with Moses and the people
- The ark brought great power and dreadful effects
- The ark was kept in the Most Holy Place, shielded by a veil – in the tabernacle and later the temple . . .
- . . . Access into the Most Holy Place and the whole sanctuary was greatly restricted
- Containing the ark, the tabernacle and later the temple signified God's presence . . .
- . . . Thus the temple became the focus of worship and prayer to God
- Note: God's presence amongst the Israelites was dependant on their continued obedience

The ark of the covenant – which contained the stone tablets of the covenant

Ex 37:1-9 Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood. Two cubits^f and a half was its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. ²And he overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold around it. ³And he cast for it four rings of gold for its four feet, two rings on its one side and two rings on its other side. ⁴And he made poles of

acacia wood and overlaid them with gold ⁵and put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark. ⁶And he made a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half was its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. ⁷And he made two cherubim of gold. He made them of hammered work on the two ends of the mercy seat, ⁸one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat he made the cherubim on its two ends. ⁹The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim. 

^f A cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

The ark was made in this way in accordance with the instructions God had given to Moses (cf. Ex 25:10-20). The "mercy seat" (vv. 6-9) was the cover or lid. Note that cherubim (vv. 7-9) are understood to be one of the highest orders of angels.

Ex 40:20 He [Moses] took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. 

The "testimony" refers to the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them, which were essentially the terms of the covenant. As such the stone tablets bore "testimony" to God's covenant with Israel.

Deut 10:5 Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark that I had made. And there they are, as the LORD commanded me. 

1Ki 8:9, 21 There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.  ... ²¹And there I [Solomon] have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. 

Heb 9:4 ... having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 

In saying that the ark also contained the jar of manna and Aaron's staff, this verse contrasts with 1 Kings 8:9 above. These two items were earlier stated to have been placed "before the testimony" (Num 17:10; cf. Ex 16:34), which arguably could mean before the testimony/tablets inside the ark. Note that Aaron's staff had budded as a vindication of him being chosen by God, with the priesthood being of him and his line (cf. Num 16-17).



‡ The Book of the Law was placed beside the ark of the covenant:

Deut 31:24-26 When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, ²⁵Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, ²⁶*“Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you.”* 📖

The Book of the Law was placed beside the ark of the covenant as a witness or testimony against any future apostasy of the people (cf. v. 27), proof that they had known what God had wanted them to do (cf. CEV).

The ark signified God’s presence amongst the people

Lev 16:2 ... and the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For *I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.*” 📖

The latter part of the verse suggests that the glory of God’s presence appeared over the mercy seat.

Num 10:33-36 So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days’ journey. And *the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them* three days’ journey, to seek out a resting place for them. ³⁴And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp. ³⁵And *whenever the ark set out, Moses said, “Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.”* ³⁶And *when it rested, he said, “Return, O LORD, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel.”* 📖

Moses’ words (vv. 35-36) correlate the Ark with God’s presence – as do Joshua’s in Joshua 7:6-7 immediately below.

Josh 7:6-7 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. ⁷And Joshua said, “Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan!” 📖

1Sam 6:19-20 And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them,⁸ and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow. ²⁰Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand

before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?” 📖

‡ Hebrew of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men

Here looking at the ark results in death, which parallels the ark with God’s presence, as per Ex 33:20 – “man shall not see me and live”. “Who is able to stand before the LORD” (v. 20) further correlates “the ark of the LORD” (v. 19) with the presence of the LORD (v. 20; cf. NIV, NLT).

2Sam 6:2 And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there *the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim.* 📖

The reference is to God’s presence between the cherubim “that are on the ark” (NIV®; cf. CEV).

Signifying God’s presence, the ark was where God would meet with Moses and the people

Note that apart from Moses and Joshua, only the High Priest could meet with God before the ark itself. The larger structures within which the ark was held was where others could meet with God. These structures were the tabernacle – a tent structure – and later the temple.

Ex 25:22 *There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you* about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel. 📖

Ex 30:36 You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before *the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you.* It shall be most holy for you. 📖

Num 7:89 And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and it spoke to him. 📖

Ex 29:42-46 It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations *at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there.* ⁴³*There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory.* ⁴⁴I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵*I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God.* ⁴⁶And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God. 📖



Here "the tent of meeting" (v. 42) refers to the tabernacle, which would contain the ark. By containing the ark it signified the dwelling of God amongst the Israelites (vv. 45-46), where he would meet with the people (vv. 42-43).

Judg 20:26-28 Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ²⁷And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, ministered before it in those days), saying, "Shall we go out once more to battle against our brothers, the people of Benjamin, or shall we cease?" And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your hand." 

Here the Israelites met with God before the ark of the covenant, with the high priest Phinehas interceding for them.

✦ The earlier "tent of meeting":

Ex 33:7, 9-11 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.  ... ⁹When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD^h would speak with Moses. ¹⁰And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. ¹¹Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent. 

^h Hebrew *he*

This "tent of meeting" was a temporary structure used prior to the construction of the tabernacle. The term was then later often used in reference to the tabernacle (cf. [Ex 30:36](#) ↑; [Num 7:89](#) ↑; [Ex 29:42-46](#) ↑). The tabernacle is clearly correlated with the term in [39:32a](#) – "Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished ..."

The ark brought great power and dreadful effects

2Chr 6:41a "And now arise, O LORD God, and go to your resting place, *you and the ark of your might*." 

Here Solomon speaks of "the Ark... that shows your strength" (NCV™), "the symbol of your power" (GNT; cf. CEV, Nlrv).

Josh 4:7 ... then you shall tell them that *the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off*. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever. 

Lev 10:1-3 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorizedⁱ fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. ²And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said, 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace. 

ⁱ Or *strange*

The occurrences of the phrase "before the LORD" (vv. 1, 2) indicate that this incident occurred in front of the ark. It is not clear exactly why what Nadab and Abihu did was wrong. Either presumptuously or carelessly they violated God's regulations in some manner.

Lev 16:2 ... and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat." 

1Sam 5:1-12 When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ²Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. ³And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. ⁴But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. ⁵This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. ⁶The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory. ⁷And when the men of Ashdod saw how things were, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for his hand is hard against us and against Dagon our god." ⁸So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." So they brought the ark of the God of Israel there. ⁹But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city,



causing a very great panic, and he afflicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. ¹⁰So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. But as soon as the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, "They have brought around to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people." ¹¹They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people." For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there. ¹²The men who did not die were struck with tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven. 

1Sam 6:19 And he [God] struck some of the men of Bethshemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them,^j and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow. 

^j Hebrew of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men

2Sam 6:3-4, 6-10 And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio,^k the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart,^l with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark.  ... ⁶And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. ⁷And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God. ⁸And David was angry because the LORD had burst forth against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah,^m to this day. ⁹And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" ¹⁰So David was not willing to take the ark of the LORD into the city of David. But David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 

^k Or and his brother; also verse 4

^l Compare Septuagint; Hebrew *the new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill*

^m Perez-uzzah means *the bursting forth upon Uzzah*

The ark was kept in the Most Holy Place, shielded by a veil – in the tabernacle and later the temple . . .

See also:

- *Places where God dwells are also holy . . .*, p. 56

The tabernacle and later the temple had an inner sanctuary known as the Most Holy Place, in which the ark of the covenant was kept. The Most Holy Place was sectioned off from an outer section, the Holy Place, by a veil or curtain.

Note that the Holy Place contained the table with the bread of the Presence, the lampstand and the altar of incense (cf. Ex 40:4-5 ).

Ex 26:31-34 And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. ³²And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. ³³And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy. ³⁴You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the Most Holy Place. 

Ex 30:6 And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. 

Num 4:5 When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it. 

The veil was used to shield the ark when in transit, as well as when the tabernacle was set up.

1Ki 6:14, 16, 19-20 So Solomon built the house and finished it.  ... ¹⁶He built twenty cubits of the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the walls, and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the Most Holy Place.  ... ¹⁹The inner sanctuary he prepared in the innermost part of the house, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. ²⁰The inner sanctuaryⁿ was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid^o an altar of cedar. 

ⁿ Vulgate; Hebrew *and before the inner sanctuary*

^o Septuagint *made*

The "house" is the houses of the LORD, the temple.

1Ki 8:3-8 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. ⁴And they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. ⁵And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. ⁶Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the Most Holy Place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. ⁸And the poles were so long that the ends of



the poles were seen from the Holy Place before the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. 

2Chr 3:8, 14 And he [Solomon] made the Most Holy Place. Its length, corresponding to the breadth of the house, was twenty cubits, and its breadth was twenty cubits. He overlaid it with 600 talents^p of fine gold.  ... ¹⁴And he made the veil of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and he worked cherubim on it. 

^p A talent was about 75 pounds or 34 kilograms

Heb 9:2-4 For a tent^a was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence.^r It is called the Holy Place. ³Behind the second curtain was a second section^s called the Most Holy Place, ⁴having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 

^a Or tabernacle; also verses 11, 21

^r Greek the presentation of the loaves

^s Greek tent; also verses 6, 8

... Access into the Most Holy Place and the whole sanctuary was greatly restricted

Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. The other priests were allowed access into the Holy Place. Other Levites who assisted the priests could enter the tabernacle's courtyard and later the outer restricted sections of the temple. Any access they may have had into the Holy Place was very much restricted (cf. **Num 18:2-4, 6-7** ↓).

Lev 16:2 ... and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. 

Heb 9:6-8 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ... 

Note that the reference to "the first section" in v. 8 is often understood to allude to the covenant that God made with

Israel (cf. AMP, NCV, NLT), of which the whole structure described here was a key component.

Num 3:8, 10 They [the Levites] shall guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle.  ... ¹⁰And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall guard their priesthood. But if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death. 

Num 18:1-4, 6-7 So the LORD said to Aaron, "You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear iniquity connected with your priesthood. ²And with you bring your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may join you and minister to you while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony. ³They shall keep guard over you and over the whole tent, but shall not come near to the vessels of the sanctuary or to the altar lest they, and you, die. ⁴They shall join you and keep guard over the tent of meeting for all the service of the tent, and no outsider shall come near you.  ... ⁶And behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the people of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to the LORD, to do the service of the tent of meeting. ⁷And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift,^t and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death." 

^t Hebrew service of gift

Note that v. 1 speaks of Aaron and his sons bearing responsibility for the sanctuary and the priesthood.

Lev 21:21-23 No man of the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the LORD's food offerings; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. ²²He may eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy things, ²³but he shall not go through the veil or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries, for I am the LORD who sanctifies them. 

This restriction regarding defects emphasized the need for perfection in the regulations regarding approaching God.

2Chr 26:16-20 But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. ¹⁷But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor, ¹⁸and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you,



Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God.”¹⁹Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, *leprosy*^u broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense.²⁰And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the LORD had struck him. 

^u *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Even the king did not have the right to enter the Holy Place.

✦ The setting up of the tabernacle, with all its components:

Ex 40:1-9, 18-21 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“On the first day of the first month you shall erect the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ³And you shall put in it the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. ⁴And you shall bring in the table and arrange it, and you shall bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. ⁵And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. ⁶You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, ⁷and place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. ⁸And you shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen for the gate of the court. ⁹“Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it may become holy.  ...¹⁸Moses erected the tabernacle. He laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars. ¹⁹And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁰He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. ²¹And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses. 

Containing the ark, the tabernacle and later the temple signified God’s presence . . .

See also:

- *Note: God chose Jerusalem, David’s city, as his dwelling place . . .*, p. 356
- *. . . As such, God’s temple was built in Jerusalem – by Solomon, David’s son*, p. 357

Ex 25:8-10a, 21-22 And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. ⁹Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. ¹⁰“They shall make an ark of acacia wood.  ...²¹And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. ²²There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel. 

Chief amongst the tabernacle’s “furniture” (v. 9) was of course the ark (vv. 10-22). Containing the ark, the tabernacle was an observable sign of God’s presence to all the people.

Ex 40:33-38 And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work. ³⁴Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. ³⁷But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. 

Note that in vv. 34-35 the terms “the tent of meeting” and “the tabernacle” appear to be used interchangeably, although the former may refer to the inner section.

1Ki 8:6, 10-13 Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the Most Holy Place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.  ...¹⁰And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. ¹²Then Solomon said, “The LORD^v has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. ¹³I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.” 

^v Septuagint *The LORD has set the sun in the heavens, but*
As noted earlier, the “house” is the temple.

1Ki 8:20-21 Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ²¹And there I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the



covenant of the LORD that he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. 

The reference to "the name of the LORD" (v. 20; cf. [1Ki 9:3](#) ↓; [Deut 12:5](#) ↓) speaks of God's presence.

2Chr 6:41-42; 7:1 "And now arise, O LORD God, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let your saints rejoice in your goodness. ⁴²O LORD God, do not turn away the face of your anointed one! Remember your steadfast love for David your servant."  ^{7:1}As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. 

1Ki 9:3 And the LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. *I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.* 

... Thus the temple became the focus of worship and prayer to God

Deut 12:2, 4-7 You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.  ... ⁴You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. ⁵But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation^w there. There you shall go, ⁶and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. ⁷And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you. 

^w Or name as its habitation

Ultimately this place would be where the temple was built at Jerusalem (cf. [1Ki 8:29](#) ↓).

1Ki 8:28-30, 44-45 Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, ²⁹that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. ³⁰And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this

place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.  ... ⁴⁴"If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ⁴⁵then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause. 

The people would pray towards the temple, it signifying God's presence.

2Chr 20:27-28 Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. ²⁸They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. 

2Chr 30:1 Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. 

Ps 5:7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. *I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.* 

Ps 28:2 Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary.^x 

^x Hebrew your innermost sanctuary

Ps 100:4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! 

The gates and courts of God's temple are referred to here.

Ps 134:1-2 Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who stand by night in the house of the LORD! ²Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD! 

Ps 138:2 I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.^y 

^y Or you have exalted your word above all your name

John 4:20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship. 

Containing the site of the temple, Jerusalem was the designated centre of worship.

Heb 9:1 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. 



The author associates worship of God with his earthly sanctuary – the tabernacle and then the temple.

‡ The sanctuary was made so as to reflect the place of God's presence in heaven:

Heb 8:5 *They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."* 📖

The sanctuary (the tabernacle and then that of the temple) reflected the place of God's presence in heaven, in signifying God's presence amongst his people.

Note: God's presence amongst the Israelites was dependant on their continued obedience

Lev 26:3, 11-12 *If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ...¹¹I will make my dwelling^z among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹²And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.* 📖

^z Hebrew *tabernacle*

1Ki 6:12-13 *"Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. ¹³And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel."* 📖

1Ki 8:57-58, 61 *The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, ⁵⁸that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. ... ⁶¹Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.* 📖

Solomon said this at the dedication of the temple. As such he would have had primarily in view God's presence (amongst his people) in the temple.

‡ If the people turned away from God, the temple would be destroyed:

1Ki 9:6-9 *But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, ⁷then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a*

proverb and a byword among all peoples. ⁸*And this house will become a heap of ruins. ^a Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' ⁹ Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the LORD has brought all this disaster on them.'* 📖

^a Syriac, Old Latin; Hebrew *will become high*

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) God's Faithfulness to His Covenant with Israel

The following subsections show that God was faithful to his covenant with Israel, keeping the promises he made with it.

Subsections

- God faithfully led Israel through the desert and provided for them
- God promised that none of Israel's enemies would withstand it – which he fulfilled
- Conquering its inhabitants, God gave the promised land of Canaan to Israel – as an inheritance . . .
- . . . Description of the promised land: Its goodness and location
- God duly cared for Israel in the promised land
- So, God was faithful to his covenants and promises with Abraham and Israel

God faithfully led Israel through the desert and provided for them

Neh 9:12, 15, 19-21 *By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go. ... ¹⁵You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and you told them to go in to possess the land that you had sworn to give them. ... ¹⁹you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The*



pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. ²⁰You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. ²¹Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell. 

Ps 78:52-54 Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. ⁵³He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. ⁵⁴And he brought them to his holy land, to the mountain which his right hand had won. 

Ps 105:39-42 He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light by night. ⁴⁰They asked, and he brought quail, and gave them bread from heaven in abundance. ⁴¹He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. ⁴²For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. 

Deut 2:7 For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. *He knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing.* 

"He knows your going" refers to God having watched over the people's journey (cf. NIV, NLT).

Deut 29:5 [Moses:] I have led you *forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet.* 

Ps 77:20 *You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.* 

✦ God chose Joshua to lead the people after Moses:

Num 27:15-21 Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, ¹⁶"Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation ¹⁷who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd." ¹⁸So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. ²⁰You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. ²¹And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. *At his word they*

shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation." 

God promised that none of Israel's enemies would withstand it – which he fulfilled

Ex 23:27 *I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.* 

The last clause speaks of enemies turning around to flee.

Deut 9:1-3 Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves, cities great and fortified up to heaven, ²a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?' ³Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. *He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.* 

Deut 11:25 *No one shall be able to stand against you. The LORD your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land that you shall tread, as he promised you.* 

Deut 28:7 *The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.* 

Josh 1:5 *No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.* 

Here God is speaking to Joshua as leader of the Israelites.

Deut 2:36 From Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, and from the city that is in the valley, as far as Gilead, *there was not a city too high for us. The LORD our God gave all into our hands.* 

Deut 3:2-5 But the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have given him and all his people and his land into your hand. And you shall do to him as you did to Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.' ³So the LORD our God gave into our hand Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people, and we struck him down until he had no survivor left. ⁴And we took all his cities at that time—there was not a city that we did not take from them—sixty cities, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. ⁵All these were cities



fortified with high walls, gates, and bars, besides very many unwalled villages. 📖

This and 2:36 above speak of Israel defeating enemies prior to crossing the Jordan to enter the promised land of Canaan. Note that some of the Israelite tribes – the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh – settled in the land of the kingdoms mentioned here (cf. Num 32:33; Josh 13:8-13; 22:1-9).

Josh 6:2-5, 16, 20 *And the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor. ³You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. ⁴Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵And when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat,^b and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.”*

📖 ... ¹⁶And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “*Shout, for the LORD has given you the city.* 📖 ... ²⁰*So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.* 📖

^b Hebrew *under itself*; also verse 20

Josh 21:44b-45 *Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. ⁴⁵Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.* 📖

Josh 23:9 *For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day.* 📖

Conquering its inhabitants, God gave the promised land of Canaan to Israel – as an inheritance . . .

Josh 21:43 *Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there.* 📖

Neh 9:23-24 *You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and you brought them into the land that you had told their fathers to enter and possess. ²⁴So the descendants went in and possessed the land, and you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into*

their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they would. 📖

Ps 44:1-3 *O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old: ²you with your own hand drove out the nations, but them you planted; you afflicted the peoples, but them you set free; ³for not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them, but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them.* 📖

Ps 78:55 *He drove out nations before them; he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.* 📖

Ps 105:44-45 *And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples’ toil, ⁴⁵that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD!* 📖

Ps 136:17-22 *... to him who struck down great kings, for his steadfast love endures forever; ¹⁸and killed mighty kings, for his steadfast love endures forever; ¹⁹Sihon, king of the Amorites, for his steadfast love endures forever; ²⁰and Og, king of Bashan, for his steadfast love endures forever; ²¹and gave their land as a heritage, for his steadfast love endures forever; ²²a heritage to Israel his servant, for his steadfast love endures forever.* 📖

Amos 2:9-10 *Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. ¹⁰Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.* 📖

Josh 14:1-5 *These are the inheritances that the people of Israel received in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the heads of the fathers’ houses of the tribes of the people of Israel gave them to inherit. ²Their inheritance was by lot, just as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses for the nine and one-half tribes. ³For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan, but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. ⁴For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. And no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only cities to dwell in, with their pasturelands for their livestock and their substance. ⁵The people of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses; they allotted the land.* 📖



The allocation of particular sections of the land to each of the tribes of Israel is detailed in Joshua 13-21.

... Description of the promised land: Its goodness and location

Deut 8:7-10 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

Ex 3:8 ... and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Num 13:27 And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.

Deut 11:10-12 For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, ^clike a garden of vegetables. ¹¹But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, ¹²a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

^c Hebrew watered it with your feet

Neh 9:25a And they captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance.

Gen 15:18-21 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give^d this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ¹⁹the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

^d Or have given

Ex 23:31 And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.

Num 34:1-12 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Command the people of Israel, and say to them, When you enter the land of Canaan (this is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, the land of Canaan as defined by its borders), ³your south side shall be from the wilderness of Zin alongside Edom, and your southern border shall run from the end of the Salt Sea on the east. ⁴And your border shall turn south of the ascent of Akrabbim, and cross to Zin, and its limit shall be south of Kadesh-barnea. Then it shall go on to Hazar-addar, and pass along to Azmon. ⁵And the border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and its limit shall be at the sea. ⁶"For the western border, you shall have the Great Sea and its^e coast. This shall be your western border. ⁷"This shall be your northern border: from the Great Sea you shall draw a line to Mount Hor. ⁸From Mount Hor you shall draw a line to Lebo-hamath, and the limit of the border shall be at Zedad. ⁹Then the border shall extend to Ziphron, and its limit shall be at Hazar-enan. This shall be your northern border. ¹⁰"You shall draw a line for your eastern border from Hazar-enan to Shepham. ¹¹And the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain. And the border shall go down and reach to the shoulder of the Sea of Chinnereth on the east. ¹²And the border shall go down to the Jordan, and its limit shall be at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land as defined by its borders all around."

^e Syriac; Hebrew lacks its

God duly cared for Israel in the promised land

Neh 9:25b So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness.

Ruth 1:1, 6 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ... ⁶Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food.

Judg 2:16, 18 Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. ... ¹⁸Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all



the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. 

1Sam 12:7, 11 Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning *all the righteous deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your fathers.*  ...
¹¹And the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Barak^f and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety. 

^f Septuagint, Syriac; Hebrew *Bedan*

1Chr 22:18a “Is not the LORD your God with you? And *has he not given you peace on every side?* 

2Chr 32:21-22 And the LORD sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. ²²So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side. 

Neh 9:27-28 Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. *And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies.* ²⁸But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies. 

So, God was faithful to his covenants and promises with Abraham and Israel

See also:

- *Note: Because God remembers his covenant with Abraham, God cares for and is merciful to Israel, p. 476*

Gen 21:1-2 The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised. ²And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. 

Deut 7:8-9 ... but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ... 

Neh 9:8 You found his [Abraham’s] heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous. 

Ps 105:8-11, 42-45 He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, ⁹the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, ¹⁰which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, ¹¹saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.”  ... ⁴²For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. ⁴³So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. ⁴⁴And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples’ toil, ⁴⁵that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD! 

Josh 21:43-45 Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. ⁴⁴And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. ⁴⁵Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass. 

Josh 23:10, 14 One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you.  ... ¹⁴“And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things^g that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. 

^g Or words; also twice in verse 15

1Ki 8:56 Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. 



Josh 14:10 And now, behold, *the LORD has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness.* And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. 

Apart from Joshua and Caleb, all the Israelites had not trusted in God to enable them to conquer the promised land. So God had stated that that generation would die in the desert wanderings apart from Joshua and Caleb (cf. Num 14:26-30). Here Caleb attests to God's faithfulness to this promise to him.

Luke 1:54-55, 69-75 *He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,* ⁵⁵*as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.*"  ... ⁶⁹*and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,* ⁷⁰*as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,* ⁷¹*that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;* ⁷²*to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,* ⁷³*the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us* ⁷⁴*that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,* ⁷⁵*in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.* 

The "horn of salvation" (v. 69) refers to the promised Messiah – Jesus Christ, by whom God would fulfill the promises referred to regarding salvation.

Heb 6:13-15 For when *God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,* ¹⁴*saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you."* ¹⁵*And thus Abraham,*^h *having patiently waited, obtained the promise.* 

^h Greek *he*

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) God's Dealings and Covenant with David

Subsections

- David was chosen and anointed by God, as ruler over Israel
- David reigned over Israel, as a powerful and righteous king – undergirded by God . . .
- . . . However, David was not free of sin and trouble during his reign
- God's covenant with David, promising that David's royal dynasty would last forever
- The royal line of any king descended from David would continue if he obeyed God as David did
- Note: God chose Jerusalem, David's city, as his dwelling place . . .
- . . . As such, God's temple was built in Jerusalem – by Solomon, David's son

David was chosen and anointed by God, as ruler over Israel

See also:

- [2Sam 5:12](#) ↓

1Sam 16:1, 10-13a The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? *Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.*"  ... ¹⁰And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." ¹¹Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest,ⁱ but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." ¹²And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. *And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."* ¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. *And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.* 

ⁱ Or *smallest*

2Sam 6:21 And David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD—and I will make merry before the LORD." 



1Ki 8:16 ‘Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there. But *I chose David to be over my people Israel.*’

1Ki 11:34 Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of *David my servant whom I chose*, who kept my commandments and my statutes.

2Chr 6:6 ... but I have chosen Jerusalem that my name may be there, and *I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.*

Ps 78:70-71 *He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance.*

Ps 89:3, 20 You have said, “I have made a covenant with *my chosen one*; I have sworn to *David my servant*: ... ²⁰*I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, ...*”

2Sam 23:1 Now these are the last words of David: *The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel:*^j ...

^j Or *the favorite of the songs of Israel*

Ps 18:50 Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love *to his anointed, to David* and his offspring forever.

The term “his anointed” here primarily refers to David, the writer of this psalm.

✦ God spoke of David as being his servant:

1Ki 11:31-32, 36, 38 And he said to Jeroboam, “Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes ³²(but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of *my servant David* and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), ... ³⁶Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that *David my servant* may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. ... ³⁸And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as *David my servant* did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.’”

David is spoken of numerous times as God’s servant (cf. v. 34 ↑; Ps 78:70 ↑; Ps 89:3, 20 ↑), in a manner implying that he was so in a unique sense.

David reigned over Israel, as a powerful and righteous king – undergirded by God . . .

2Sam 5:1-4 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Behold, we are your bone and flesh. ²In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And *the LORD said to you, ‘You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.’*” ³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel. ⁴David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

2Sam 5:10, 12 And David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was with him. ... ¹²And David knew that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

1Chr 14:8, 16-17 When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went out against them. ... ¹⁶And David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer. ¹⁷And the fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.

2Sam 8:6, 11-14 Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went. ... ¹¹These [articles of tribute] also King David dedicated to the LORD, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, ¹²from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah. ¹³And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. ¹⁴Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David’s servants. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

2Sam 8:15 So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people.

Ps 78:72 With upright heart he [David] *shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.*



Acts 13:22 And when he had removed him, *he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'* 

... However, David was not free of sin and trouble during his reign

2Sam 11:2-4 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that *he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful.* ³*And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"* ⁴*So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her.* (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. 

2Sam 11:14-17, 26-27 In the morning *David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.* ¹⁵*In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die."* ¹⁶*And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men.* ¹⁷*And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died.*  ... ²⁶When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. ²⁷And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. *But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.* 

2Sam 12:9-10 [The prophet Nathan, to David:] *Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.* ¹⁰*Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.* 

2Sam 24:10, 15 But *David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly."*  ... ¹⁵*So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men.* 

David's sin in counting his fighting men was one of pride and self-reliance. It resulted in a devastating judgment on his

kingdom (v. 15), which would have significantly reduced the number of his fighting men.

Ps 3:1-2 *O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; ²many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah*^k 

^k The meaning of the Hebrew word *Selah*, used frequently in the Psalms, is uncertain. It may be a musical or liturgical direction

This is the beginning of a psalm that David wrote when he fled from his son Absalom. Absalom led a rebellion against David (cf. 2Sam 15-18). It was the major part of the fulfillment of the prophesied punishment against David for his sin in regard to Uriah (cf. 2Sam 12:10 ↑). Absalom was successful for a time, even making himself king, before his death and the re-establishment of David's rule over Israel. Note that there are a number of other psalms attributed to David which also speak of him undergoing great difficulties.

↑ David ruled from Jerusalem, known as the City Of David:

2Sam 5:5-7, 9 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and *at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.*¹ ⁶And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." ⁷Nevertheless, *David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David.*  ... ⁹*And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward.* 

¹ Dead Sea Scroll lacks verses 4-5

Apart from the first few years of his reign (v. 5a), David ruled from Jerusalem – after conquering its inhabitants, the Jebusites (vv. 6-7).

God's covenant with David, promising that David's royal dynasty would last forever

See also:

- *The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David*, p. 487

2Sam 7:1-7 Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, ²the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, *I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.*" ³And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you." ⁴*But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan,* ⁵*"Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus*



says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in?⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. ⁷In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"⁸

In his devotion to God, David desired to build a temple or house for God. This led to God subsequently making a wonderful and highly significant promise or covenant with David regarding David's own "house" and descendants (cf. vv. 11-16 ↓).

2Sam 7:8-16 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. ⁹And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.^m Your throne shall be established forever.'ⁿ

^mSeptuagint; Hebrew you

In vv. 11, 16 "house" refers to a royal dynasty that God would build for David, in response to his desire to build a "house" (v. 13) or temple for God. The "offspring" spoken of in vv. 12-15 initially refers to David's son Solomon, but is generally understood to ultimately speak of the Messiah. As such this covenant provided the people of Israel with the hope of a permanently secure kingdom (vv. 10-11a) under a godly and powerful king.

2Sam 23:5 For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?ⁿ

The first rhetorical question is either referring to David's house being chosen by God (cf. NLT) in God's "everlasting covenant" with him, or to it being righteous before God (cf. vv. 3-4; AMP, NRSV).

1Ki 2:45 But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever.ⁿ

2Chr 13:5 Ought you not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?ⁿ

Ps 89:3-4, 28-37 You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ⁴I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations." Selah ^{...} ²⁸My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firmⁿ for him. ²⁹I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens. ³⁰If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules,^o ³¹if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, ³²then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ³³but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. ³⁴I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. ³⁵Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. ³⁷Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies." Selah ⁿ

ⁿ Or will remain faithful

^o Or my just decrees

Jer 33:25-26 Thus says the LORD: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, ²⁶then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.ⁿ

↳ Extracts from David's response to God's covenant promises:

2Sam 7:18-19, 28-29 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? ¹⁹And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD. You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD!ⁿ ... ²⁸And now, O Lord



GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. ²⁹Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.” 

The meaning of the Hebrew for the last clause in v. 19 is uncertain. It may be speaking of God's gracious promise to David providing a lesson for all people, or of it being unusually gracious – “Is this the way you usually treat people?” (CEV; cf. NCV, NIV, NLT).

The royal line of any king descended from David would continue if he obeyed God as David did

See also:

- [Ps 89:30-32](#) 
- [Solomon's unfaithfulness and the consequent division of the kingdom under his son, Rehoboam . . .](#), p. 412

Ps 132:11-12 The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: “One of the sons of your body^P I will set on your throne. ¹²*If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne.*” 

^P Hebrew *of your fruit of the womb*

2Chr 7:17-18 And as for you, *if you will walk before me as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my rules,* ¹⁸*then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to rule Israel.’* 

Jer 22:1-5 Thus says the LORD: “Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak there this word, ²and say, ‘*Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates.*’ ³Thus says the LORD: *Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.* ⁴*For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people.* ⁵*But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.* 

Note that in v. 5, “this house” refers to the king's palace (cf. v. 1).

Jer 36:30-31 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: *He shall have none to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night.* ³¹*And I will punish him and his offspring and his servants for their iniquity.* I will bring upon them and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and upon the people of Judah all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, but they would not hear. 

✦ **Despite the wickedness of some descendants of David, God would not destroy David's house, because of his covenant with David:**

2Chr 21:5-7 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. ⁶And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. ⁷*Yet the LORD was not willing to destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.* 

Although God may have destroyed the family line of some of David's descendants who were wicked (cf. [Jer 36:30](#) ) , God would not destroy the whole house of David because of his covenant with David.

Note: God chose Jerusalem, David's city, as his dwelling place . . .

See also:

- [2Chr 6:6](#) ; [2Chr 33:7](#) 
- [Note: God primarily dwells in heaven . . .](#), p. 11
- [God will dwell in Jerusalem, living among his people forever](#), p. 1008

God chose the city of Jerusalem, from which David ruled, to be the place which signified his presence among his people – as consummately indicated by the building of God's temple there. As such it was the center of worship of God. Note that Jerusalem is often referred to as “Zion”. This was originally the name of one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built, but came to be used to signify all of Jerusalem.

As seen in the second half of chapter 20, there are numerous prophecies portraying Jerusalem as becoming: the place of God's renewed, consummate presence; the center of worldwide worship of God; and the focal point of God's kingdom.



Ps 132:13-14 For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: ¹⁴“This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. 📖

1Ki 11:13, 32, 36 However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of *Jerusalem that I have chosen.*” 📖 ... ³²(but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of *Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel*), 📖 ... ³⁶Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in *Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name.* 📖

In v. 36b (cf. **2Chr 3:7** ↴) God speaks of Jerusalem as being the city he chose to signify his presence, in effect where he “chose to be worshiped” (NCV™; cf. CEV, GNT).

1Chr 23:25 For David said, “The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to his people, and *he dwells in Jerusalem forever.*” 📖

Ps 46:4-5 There is a river whose streams make glad *the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.* ⁵*God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.* 📖

Note that in regard to the “river” (v. 4), Jerusalem had no actual river. It appears to be a metaphor for blessings.

Ps 48:1-2 *Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, ²beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King.* 📖

Ps 50:2 *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.* 📖

Ps 68:16, 18 Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain, at *the mount that God desired for his abode, yes, where the LORD will dwell forever?* 📖 ... ¹⁸You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, *that the LORD God may dwell there.* 📖

“You ascended on high” (v. 18) appears to speak of God ascending to the heights of Mount Zion, so as to “dwell there” (cf. NIV). With the reference to captives and to God receiving gifts, David may be referring to his own conquest of enemies and receiving tribute from them, much of which he devoted to God (cf. 2Sam 8:11).

Ps 87:1-2 *On the holy mount stands the city he founded; ²the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.* 📖

Ps 135:21 Blessed be *the LORD from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem!* Praise the LORD! 📖

... As such, God's temple was built in Jerusalem – by Solomon, David's son

2Chr 3:1 *Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD^a had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.* 📖

^a Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *the LORD*

1Ki 6:1-2, 7, 22, 38 In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, *in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD. ²The house that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits^r long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high.* 📖 ... ⁷*When the house was built, it was with stone prepared at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the house while it was being built.* 📖 ... ²²*And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.* 📖 ... ³⁸*And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications. He was seven years in building it.* 📖

^r A cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

2Chr 6:1-2, 4-10 Then Solomon said, “The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. ²*But I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever.*” 📖 ... ⁴And he said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying, ⁵‘Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there, and I chose no man as prince over my people Israel; ⁶*but I have chosen Jerusalem that my name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.*’ ⁷Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁸*But the LORD said to David my father, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. ⁹Nevertheless, it is not you who shall build the house, but your son who shall be*



*born to you shall build the house for my name.*¹⁰ Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 

Note the references to God fulfilling his promise to David regarding the building of the temple (vv. 4, 10). Later in v. 15 Solomon further attests to God's faithfulness to David: [You God] "who have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day."

2Chr 33:7 And the carved image of the idol that he had made he set in *the house of God, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever, ...* 

This and the following references speak further of the temple, God's house, being in Jerusalem.

2Chr 36:14 All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted *the house of the LORD that he had made holy in Jerusalem.* 

Ezra 1:3 Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and *let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.* 

This refers to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem after its destruction by the Babylonians and the exile.

Ps 68:29 Because of *your temple at Jerusalem* kings shall bear gifts to you. 

Isa 31:9 His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic," declares *the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.* 

The use of "fire" and "furnace" may refer to God's altar – and the offerings made on it – in the temple in Jerusalem.

✦ **The background to the choosing of the site of the temple:**

1Chr 21:13-19, 25-30; 22:1 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for his

mercy is very great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man." ¹⁴So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel, and 70,000 men of Israel fell. ¹⁵And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw, and he relented from the calamity. And *he said to the angel who was working destruction, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.* ¹⁶And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. ¹⁷And David said to God, "Was it not I who gave command to number the people? It is I who have sinned and done great evil. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand, O LORD my God, be against me and against my father's house. But do not let the plague be on your people." ¹⁸Now the angel of the LORD had commanded Gad to say to David that David should go up and raise an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ¹⁹So David went up at Gad's word, which he had spoken in the name of the LORD.  ... ²⁵So David paid Ornan 600 shekels^s of gold by weight for the site. ²⁶And David built there an altar to the LORD and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings and called on the LORD, and the LORD^t answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering. ²⁷Then the LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. ²⁸At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there. ²⁹For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in the high place at Gibeon, ³⁰but David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.  ^{22:1} Then David said, "Here shall be the house of the LORD God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel." 

^s A shekel was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

^t Hebrew *he*

Pray for persecuted Christians



CHAPTER 9

The Problem of Sin

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I. General

Knowing what sin is and what its consequences are is vital to understanding God's relationship with humankind and to appreciating the need for Jesus Christ's mission. It also helps us not to sin by: clarifying what sin is (which this chapter does in general terms); and providing great motivation to avoid sin.

a) What Sin Is

Subsections

- Sin is breaking God's law
- Even unintentionally breaking God's law is sin
- Doing evil and acting wickedly is sin
- All wrongdoing is sin
- Not doing what we should do is sin

Sin is breaking God's law

1Jn 3:4 *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.* 

Sin is lawlessness – acting apart from and contrary to God's law. As such, basically it is breaking God's law. Conversely, breaking God's law is sin,

Lev 26:43 But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes. 

The term "iniquity" means an offense/s against God's law. Thus "iniquity" (v. 12) is equivalent to "sin".

1Sam 15:24 Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice." 

In addition to breaking any command in God's law, disobeying any other command or instruction from God is also sin.

Neh 1:6-7 ... let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants,

confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. 

Neh 9:29 And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. 

Ps 89:30-32 *If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules,^a ³¹if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, ³²then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ...* 

^a Or my just decrees

The terms "transgression" and "sin" are synonyms. The former speaks of acting out of line in regard to rules or breaking them. The latter speaks of missing the mark or target.

Isa 42:24 Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the LORD, *against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey?* 

Note that in saying "we" have sinned, the prophet appears to identify himself with his people – "they" who had not obeyed God's law.

Dan 9:11 *All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice.* And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because *we have sinned* against him. 

James 2:8-9 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. ⁹But *if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.* 

To show partiality breaks the law to "love your neighbor as yourself" – and so is committing sin.

Even unintentionally breaking God's law is sin

Lev 4:2-3, 13-14 Speak to the people of Israel, saying, *If anyone sins unintentionally^b in any of the Lord's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them, ³if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing*



guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the Lord for a sin offering.  ... ¹³“If the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally^c and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done, and they realize their guilt,^d ¹⁴when the sin which they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull from the herd for a sin offering and bring it in front of the tent of meeting. 

^b Or by mistake; so throughout Leviticus

^c Or makes a mistake

^d Or suffer for their guilt, or are guilty; also verses 22, 27, and chapter 5

Lev 4:22-24, 27-28 When a leader sins, doing unintentionally any one of all the things that by the commandments of the LORD his God ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, ²³or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish, ²⁴and shall lay his hand on the head of the goat and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD; it is a sin offering.  ... ²⁷“If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, ²⁸or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. 

Lev 5:17-18 If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. ¹⁸He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. 

Ezek 45:20 You shall do the same on the seventh day of the month for anyone who has sinned through error or ignorance; so you shall make atonement for the temple. 

The reference to sin has in view breaking God’s law.

‡ However, sinning unintentionally is not as serious as sinning defiantly:

Num 15:27-28, 30-31 “If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. ²⁸And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.  ... ³⁰But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is

native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.” 

To act as such “with a high hand” (v. 30) is to do so “defiantly” (NASB, NIV). Forgiveness could be obtained for a person who sinned unintentionally (vv. 27-28) but no such provision is given for one who sinned defiantly (vv. 30-31).

Doing evil and acting wickedly is sin

Deut 9:18 Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke him to anger. 

1Ki 14:22 And Judah did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins that they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. 

Ps 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. 

Ecc 8:12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. 

Rom 7:20-21 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 

Dan 9:15 And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 

1Ki 8:47b ‘We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,’ ... 

Ps 106:6 Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness. 

Prov 5:22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. 

‡ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of Satan:

1Jn 3:8a Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. 



This illustrates that sin is evil, indicating that those who habitually continue to sin show that they are of – or belong to – the devil.

All wrongdoing is sin

At least in terms of the Bible's perspective, wrongdoing involves breaking God's law. Any morally wrong action can be shown to break one or more of God's commands. Thus wrongdoing is sin – as is any evil action.

1Jn 5:17 *All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.* 

Dan 9:5 *... we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.* 

Ex 9:27 Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, "This time *I have sinned*; the LORD is in the right, and *I and my people are in the wrong.* 

Num 5:6-7 Speak to the people of Israel, When a man or woman *commits any of the sins* that people commit by breaking faith with the LORD, and that person realizes his guilt, ⁷he shall confess *his sin that he has committed.*^e And he shall make full restitution for *his wrong*, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong. 

^e Hebrew *they shall confess their sin that they have committed*

Ezek 18:18 As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and *did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity.* 

Not doing what we should do is sin

James 4:17 *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.* 

Lev 5:1 *If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity; ...* 

Num 32:23 *But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.* 

2Chr 19:10 ... whenever a case comes to you from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or rules, then you shall warn

them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers. *Thus you shall do, and you will not incur guilt.* 

This indicates that the judges would sin if they did not warn the people as they had been instructed to do.

Luke 12:47 *And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.* 

Those who know God or Christ's will and do not do it will be punished – indicative of the fact that not doing what one should is sin.

‡ Acting contrary to one's beliefs is sin:

Rom 14:14, 23 I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.  ... ²³But *whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.*^f 

^f Some manuscripts insert here 16:25-27

In v. 14 Paul is referring particularly to food, as in v. 23. In v. 23 "faith" is being used in a subjective sense. It refers to our beliefs or convictions (cf. AMP) as to what is right – or at least what is right for ourselves – before God. As such, Paul is saying that acting in a way that is opposed to our beliefs and conscience is in effect sin.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Sin Is against God

See also:

- [a\) What Sin Is](#), p. 360

Subsections

- Sin is action against God
- Even acting wrongfully against other people is sinning against God
- Sin is rebellion against God
- For sin involves: turning away from God and his commands; ...
- ... and going our own way



- Sin is hated by God
- God can be grieved by sin

Sin is action against God

Sin is against God primarily because it is acting contrary to his commands and so against his will. As such the previous section also reflects the fact that sin is against God, by defining sin as breaking God's law (cf. [Neh 1:6-7 ↓](#); [ISA 42:24 ↓](#); [Dan 9:11 ↓](#); [Rom 8:7 ↓](#)).

[Lev 26:40](#) But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ... 

[Neh 1:6-7](#) ... let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing *the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.* ⁷*We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.* 

[Ps 41:4](#) As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me,^g for I have sinned against you!" 

^g Hebrew *my soul*

[Isa 3:8-9](#) For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, because *their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence.*^h ⁹For the look on their faces bears witness against them; *they proclaim their sin* like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves. 

^h Hebrew *the eyes of his glory*

The fact that the people's words and deeds are said to be "against the LORD" (v. 8) and are latter referred to as "sin" (v. 9), implies that sin involves words and deeds against the LORD. This is reinforced by v. 8 indicating that sinning defies God's glorious presence.

[Isa 42:24](#) Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not *the LORD, against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey?* 

[Jer 14:20](#) We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD, and the iniquity of our fathers, for *we have sinned against you.* 

[Dan 9:11](#) *All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice.* And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because *we have sinned against him.* 

[Gen 13:13](#) Now the men of Sodom were wicked, *great sinners against the LORD.* 

[Rom 8:7](#) For *the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.* 

Those who are "under the control of their sinful nature" (NLT) are actively hostile towards God.

[Num 15:30](#) But *the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD,* and that person shall be cut off from among his people. 

Sinning defiantly actually "reviles, and blasphemes the Lord" (AMP) as it is very dishonoring to him. This is largely because it: discredits his laws and him as the one who instituted the laws; and shows disdain towards him as the one to whom we are accountable for breaking the laws.

Even acting wrongfully against other people is sinning against God

[Gen 39:6-9](#) So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. ⁷*And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me."* ⁸But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. ⁹He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. *How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"* 

The proposed action (v. 7) would have been acting against his master, but ultimately it would have been sin against God (v. 9).

[Lev 6:2](#) If *anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor* in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor ... 

Being "a breach of faith" against God is equivalent to sinning against him (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT). Thus deceiving one's neighbor is sinning against God.



1Sam 12:23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me *that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you*, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.

Failure to fulfill one's responsibilities towards others – which is wronging them and so in effect acting against them – is sinning against God.

2Sam 12:10, 13a Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because *you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.*' ...
¹³David said to Nathan, *"I have sinned against the LORD."*

Note that in v. 10 Nathan is conveying God's words to David.

Ps 51:4 *Against you, you only, have I sinned* and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

Here David reiterates his words above in 2 Samuel 12:13a, acknowledging his committing of adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of Uriah (her husband) as sinning against God.

Luke 15:21 *And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*ⁱ

ⁱ Some manuscripts add *treat me as one of your hired servants*

The prodigal son is saying in effect: "I have sinned against God in heaven and against you." (CEV)

✦ **Sinning against other Christians is sinning against Christ:**

1Cor 8:12 Thus, *sinning against your brothersⁱ and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.*

ⁱ Or *brothers and sisters*

The sins referred to in the verses above are against God because they are acting against his commands. Here the sin is spoken of as being against Christ because Christians are members of Christ's body and so what one does to another Christian, one in effect does to Christ.

Sin is rebellion against God

See also:

▪ [Isa 59:12-13](#) ; [Dan 9:5](#)

Ps 5:10 Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of *the abundance of their transgressions* cast them out, for *they have rebelled against you.*

Ps 78:17 Yet *they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High* in the desert.

Jer 33:8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of *their sin and rebellion against me.*

Lam 3:42 *We have transgressed and rebelled*, and you have not forgiven.

Ezek 2:3 And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, *to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.*"

Dan 9:9-10 To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for *we have rebelled against him*¹⁰*and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his laws*, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

Hos 8:1 Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over the house of the LORD, because *they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law.*

For sin involves: turning away from God and his commands; . . .

See also:

▪ [Isa 53:6](#) ; [Jer 8:5](#)

Isa 59:12-13 For *our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities:*¹³*transgressing, and denying the LORD, and turning back from following our God*, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.

Job 34:26-27 He strikes them for *their wickedness* in a place for all to see,²⁷*because they turned aside from following him and had no regard for any of his ways, ...*

Sin or wickedness involves turning from following God and his ways (or commands).

Isa 1:4 Ah, *sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.*

In their persistence in sin, the people had forsaken God – and so "turned away from him" (NCV™; cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NIV,



NLT). Thus they had alienated themselves from God, becoming “utterly estranged”.

Dan 9:5, 11a ... *we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules.* ... ¹¹*All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice.*

Rom 3:12 *All have turned aside;* together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.

All have sinned and turned away from God (cf. GNT, NLT).

2Sam 22:22-23 *For I have kept the ways of the LORD and have not wickedly departed from my God.* ²³*For all his rules were before me, and from his statutes I did not turn aside.*

In contrast to the subjects of the above verses, David had not sinned by turning away from God and his laws.

... and going our own way

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; *we have turned—every one—to his own way;* and the LORD has laid on him *the iniquity of us all.*

In committing iniquity we in effect turn from God to our own way.

Jer 8:5-6 Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit; they refuse to return. ⁶I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly; no man relents of *his evil*, saying, ‘What have I done?’ *Everyone turns to his own course,* like a horse plunging headlong into battle.

Jer 16:12 ... and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, *every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to me.*

Jer 18:11-12 Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the LORD, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from *his evil way*, and amend your ways and your deeds.’ ¹²‘But they say, ‘That is in vain! *We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.*’

Ecc 7:29 See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but *they have sought out many schemes.*

God made people upright, but they have “turned to follow their own downward path” (NLT).

Sin is hated by God

Isa 61:8 For I the LORD love justice; *I hate robbery and wrong;*^k I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

^k Or *robbery with a burnt offering*

Deut 12:31 You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for *every abominable thing that the LORD hates* they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

Any such “abominable thing” is sin – as are the actions mentioned in the verses below.

Prov 6:16-19 *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

Zec 8:17 ... *do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD.*

Ps 5:4-6 For *you are not a God who delights in wickedness;* evil may not dwell with you. ⁵The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; *you hate all evildoers.* ⁶You destroy those who speak lies; *the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*

In conjunction with hating sin, God hates those who willfully persist in sin – as spoken of in the following three references. In conjunction, note the comment below on Psalms 11:5.

Ps 11:5 The LORD tests the righteous, but *his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.*

The Hebrew word translated as “hates” speaks of rejection and disassociation.

Prov 3:32 ... *for the devious person is an abomination to the LORD,* but the upright are in his confidence.

An “abomination” is something that is detestable.

Hos 9:15 *Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more;* all their princes are rebels.



✦ God cannot tolerate sin:

Hab 1:13a *You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong ...* 

Further to God hating sin, he cannot tolerate it.

God can be grieved by sin

Ps 78:40 *How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert!* 

Isa 63:10 *But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.* 

Ezek 6:9a ... then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I have been broken over their whoring heart that has departed from me and over their eyes that go whoring after their idols. 

To have been “broken” is to have been grieved (cf. NIV, NLT).

Gen 6:5-6 *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.* 

This is not saying that God was grieved by the sin, but it is apparent that sin was the root cause of the grief.

✦ Sin can burden and weary God:

Isa 43:24 *You have not bought me sweet cane with money, or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins; you have wearied me with your iniquities.* 

Sin – particularly that of his people – burdens God in the sense that it weighs heavily on his heart. In saying that it wearies God, Isaiah may be alluding to the fact that it tries his patience.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Sin Is Universal

Subsections

- All people have sinned
- No one is righteous before God
- People have a sinful nature . . .
- . . . People have hearts and minds inclined towards evil
- People are led into sin by their sinful nature . . .
- . . . People are led into sin by their corrupt hearts and minds
- Note: God is aware of all sins . . .
- . . . and God remembers sin

All people have sinned

See also:

- **Ecc 7:20** ↓

1Ki 8:46 *If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, ...* 

Ps 130:3 *If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?* 

Prov 20:9 *Who can say, “I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin”?* 

Isa 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* 

Rom 3:9, 23 *What then? Are we Jews¹ any better off?^m No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,  ... ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ...* 

¹ Greek *Are we*

^mOr *at any disadvantage?*

Rom 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—* 

Rom 11:32 *For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.* 



Note that this is not generally interpreted to mean that God made all people become disobedient – but rather that “God has imprisoned all people in their own disobedience” (NLT, cf. CEV).

Gal 3:22 But *the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin*, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 

The reference to “the Scripture” primarily has the law in view. Under the law the people were effectively imprisoned by sin, with one implication being that all people have sinned.

James 3:2 For *we all stumble in many ways*. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. 

1Jn 1:8, 10 *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*  ... ¹⁰*If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* 

✦ The original sin:

Gen 3:1-6 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘Youⁿ shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise,^o she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.* 

ⁿ In Hebrew *you* is plural in verses 1-5

^o Or *to give insight*

Presumably why Adam and Eve were commanded to not eat from the tree of “the knowledge of good and evil” (v. 2:17) was that having such knowledge would lead to reliance on their own imperfect knowledge and wisdom, which in turn would lead to independence from God. The end result of this is death.

No one is righteous before God

Ps 143:2 Enter not into judgment with your servant, for *no one living is righteous before you.* 

Rom 3:10-12 ... as it is written: “*None is righteous, no, not one;* ¹¹*no one understands; no one seeks for God.* ¹²*All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.*” 

The clause “no one does good” (v. 12) is quoted from Psalms 14:3. It may be hyperbole emphasizing the depravity of human nature, or a generalization of sinful man’s conduct. Possibly the writer may be taking the view that no matter what one does, as a whole one’s acts do not meet God’s standard of righteousness.

Job 15:14-16 *What is man, that he can be pure? Or he who is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?* ¹⁵*Behold, God^p puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight;* ¹⁶*how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks injustice like water!* 

^p Hebrew *he*

Job 25:4-6 *How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure?* ⁵*Behold, even the moon is not bright, and the stars are not pure in his eyes;* ⁶*how much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!* 

Ecc 7:20, 29 *Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.*  ... ²⁹*See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.* 

Isa 64:6a *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.* 

In saying “all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment” Isaiah may be: speaking of the people’s righteous acts being polluted or stained by their sin; implying that even their good acts do not meet God’s standard of righteousness, as per the comment on Romans 3:12 above; or using “righteous” in an ironic sense.

People have a sinful nature . . .

Gal 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified *the flesh with its passions and desires.* 

Here and in Colossians 2:13 immediately below, the term “flesh” refers to our sinful human nature.

Col 2:13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and *the uncircumcision of your flesh*, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ... 



In speaking of the “uncircumcision” of their sinful nature, Paul underlines the sinfulness of one’s nature by alluding to its non-renewed or pagan state.

Deut 31:20-21 For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, *they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant.* ²¹And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). *For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give.*

☰

By nature people are inclined to turning from God and breaking his law.

Job 14:4 *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one.* ☰

This is speaking of how human beings are essentially “born impure” (NLT; cf. [Ps 51:5](#) ↓; [Gen 8:21a](#) ↓); i.e. they have an “unclean” nature from the start.

Ps 51:5 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* ☰

Matt 7:11 *If you then, who are evil,* know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! ☰

In describing his listeners as “evil”, Jesus is probably alluding to their sinful nature. Having a sinful nature, all people are evil – particularly in comparison to God and his standards.

Rom 5:19 For as by the one man’s disobedience *the many were made sinners*, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. ☰

Adam became a sinner through his disobedience, by which his nature either became or proved to be sinful. People were made sinners through their relationship to Adam. Possible reasons as to why this is so include: it is due to Adam’s descendants naturally inheriting this characteristic and his susceptibility to sin; and it is due to their association with Adam as the head of the human race.

Rom 6:6 We know that our old self^a was crucified with him in order that *the body of sin* might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ☰

^a Greek *man*

The term “the body of sin” points to our sinful nature – our “sinful selves” (NCV™; cf. GNT).

... People have hearts and minds inclined towards evil

In the Bible “heart” is usually used figuratively, to denote one’s conscious self – somewhat akin to one’s mind. As such it can be used to refer more specifically to one’s intellect, one’s will or one’s emotions.

Gen 6:5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* ☰

Gen 8:21a And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse^r the ground because of man, for *the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.* ☰

^r Or *dishonor*

Ps 64:6 They search out injustice, saying, “We have accomplished a diligent search.” For *the inward mind and heart of a man are deep!* ☰

The Hebrew of the last statement is somewhat difficult to translate (cf. CEV text note). The context suggests that it has in view the corruptness of people’s “mind and heart”, implying that they are “cunning” (NIV®, NLT).

Ecc 8:11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, *the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.* ☰

This is probably not meaning that people’s hearts are always “fully set to do evil”. But it does point to their natural disposition towards such wrongdoing – particularly if they think it may go unpunished.

Ecc 9:3b Also, *the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.* ☰

Note that “madness” – or foolishness (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV) – is often associated with evil and sin.

Jer 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?* ☰

People are led into sin by their sinful nature . . .

See also:

- [Rom 8:5](#) ↓

Rom 7:5, 18-25 For *while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.* ☰ ... ¹⁸For I know that



nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but *the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.* ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but *sin that dwells within me.* ²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, *evil lies close at hand.* ²²For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³but *I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.* ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but *with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* 

Verse 5 indicates that our sinful natures are such that the effect of the law is actually to arouse sinful passions. The expression “sin that dwells within me” (v. 20) reflects the fact that sin is something that is within us, a part of us and so a part of our nature. In vv. 21-25, the use of “law” is similar to “rule”, referring to a ruling power and/or a prevailing principle (cf. NSB).

Rom 8:8 *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* 

When a person’s sinful nature controls them, they act contrary to God’s will; i.e. they sin.

Gal 5:17, 19-21a *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*  ... ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident: *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,* ²⁰*idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,* ²¹*envy,^s drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.* 

^s Some manuscripts add *murder*

In v. 17, “to keep you from doing the things you want to do” is probably speaking of the influence of the sinful nature in hindering one from doing the good one wants to do – in conflict with the Holy Spirit; in effect sinning. Alternatively, it possibly could be speaking of the Spirit helping us to not indulge the desires that we naturally want to fulfill.

Eph 2:3 ... among whom *we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body^t and the mind,* and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 

^t Greek *flesh*

2Pet 2:18 For, speaking loud boasts of folly, *they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.* 

Peter speaks of false teachers enticing people into sin by the sensual passions of their sinful natures.

Matt 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but *the flesh is weak.* 

Here “temptation” most likely is referring to the temptation to be unfaithful in the testing time about to begin, rather than simply to giving in to sleep (cf. v. 40). If this is the case, “the flesh is weak” would primarily be speaking of the spiritual weakness and sinfulness of the sinful nature, not just physical limitations such as need for sleep.

... People are led into sin by their corrupt hearts and minds

Most of the following references are speaking of notably wicked or corrupt people. But what they say regarding the hearts and minds of such people is true to some degree of all people and illustrates the sinful effects of the corrupt human heart and mind.

Ps 73:7 Their eyes swell out through fatness; *their hearts overflow with follies.* 

Isa 44:20 He feeds on ashes; *a deluded heart has led him astray,* and he cannot deliver himself or say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?” 

Jer 7:24 But they did not obey or incline their ear, but *walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts,* and went backward and not forward. 

Ezek 20:16 ... because *they rejected my rules and did not walk in my statutes, and profaned my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols.* 

Mark 7:21-23 *For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,* ²²*coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.* ²³*All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.* 

Rom 8:5-7 For *those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,* but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For *the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God,* for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. 



Those who carry on in sin – living according to the “flesh” – do so because their corrupt minds are focused on the desires of their sinful natures (v. 5). Such sinful minds are opposed to God and his laws (v. 7), ultimately producing death (v. 6).

Eph 4:17-19 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must *no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.* ¹⁸*They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.* ¹⁹*They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.*

Due to “their hardness of heart” (v. 18b), such people’s minds and thinking become so darkened that in fact they end up spiritually ignorant (v. 18a). As such their thinking is futile (v. 17b) and leads to a sinful lifestyle (vv. 17, 19).

Col 2:18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,^u *puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ...*

^u Or *about the things he has seen*

Corrupted unspiritual minds lead to “foolish pride” (NCV™) – which is associated with sin.

2Tim 3:8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so *these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.*

This suggests that the men’s depraved minds had led them to oppose the truth – effectively leading them into sin.

‡ **Those who become accustomed to doing evil cannot change and do good:**

Jer 13:23 *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil.*

Note: God is aware of all sins . . .

See also:

- *God sees all people, seeing and knowing all that they do . . .*, p. 40
- *. . . No one can hide themselves or what they do from God,* p. 41

Job 10:14 *If I sin, you watch me* and do not acquit me of my iniquity.

Ps 44:20-21 *If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god,* ²¹*would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart.*

Ps 69:5 *O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.*

Ps 90:8 *You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.*

Ps 94:6-11 They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; ⁷*and they say, “The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.”* ⁸*Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise?* ⁹*He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?* ¹⁰*He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—* ¹¹*the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.*^v

^v Septuagint *they are futile*

Jer 16:17 *For my eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes.*

Jer 29:23 *... because they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the LORD.*

Amos 5:12 *For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins— you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.*

. . . and God remembers sin

Hos 7:2 But they do not consider that *I remember all their evil. Now their deeds surround them; they are before my face.*

“Now their deeds surround them” probably means that in God’s eyes their sins covered them; he could not help but see their sins.

Hos 13:12 *The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store.*

This indicates that God keeps a record of sin (cf. GNT, NCV). The suggestion appears to be that sin is “kept in store” till the time of judgment (cf. NCV, NLT).



Hos 9:9 They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah: *he will remember their iniquity*; he will punish their sins.

Amos 8:7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: *“Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.*

Rev 18:5 ... for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and *God has remembered her iniquities.*

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Sin's Intrinsic III Effects

Subsections

- Shame and disgrace
- Spiritual defilement . . .
- . . . Spiritual uncleanness
- Separation from God . . .
- . . . and spiritual death
- Captivity to sin . . .
- . . . involving enslavement to sin
- Foolishness and spiritual darkness
- Further intrinsic harmful consequences
- Note: Sometimes God “gives people over” to sin

Shame and disgrace

Ezra 9:6 ... saying: “O my God, *I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads*, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.

Prov 6:32-33 *He who commits adultery* lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. ³³He will get wounds and dishonor, and *his disgrace will not be wiped away.*

Prov 13:5 The righteous hates falsehood, but *the wicked brings shame^w and disgrace.*

^w Or stench

Isa 1:29 For *they^x shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired; and you shall blush for the gardens that you have chosen.*

^x Some Hebrew manuscripts you
Idolatry is referred to here.

Jer 3:25 *Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us. For we have sinned against the LORD our God*, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

Jer 31:19 For *after I had turned away*, I relented, and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; *I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth.*

Ezek 16:52-54 *Bear your disgrace*, you also, for you have intervened on behalf of your sisters. *Because of your sins* in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. *So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.* ⁵³“I will restore their fortunes, both the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes in their midst, ⁵⁴that you may *bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done*, becoming a consolation to them.

Note that the last statement in v. 52 indicates that Jerusalem's sins were such that they made sinful “sister” cities appear relatively righteous.

Ezek 36:32b *Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.*

Dan 9:7-8 *To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame*, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. ⁸*To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.*

Rom 6:20-21 For when *you were slaves of sin*, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹But what fruit were you getting at that time from *the things of which you are now ashamed?* For the end of those things is death.

‡ **The secret acts of the ungodly are too shameful to talk about:**

Eph 5:12 For *it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.*



Spiritual defilement . . .

See also:

- *Note: The people polluted and defiled the land by their sin,* p. 415

Isa 59:3 For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness.

Ezek 14:11 ... that the house of Israel may no more go astray from me, nor defile themselves anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, declares the Lord GOD.

Ezek 20:43 And there you shall remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed.

Matt 15:18-20 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.

2Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body^y and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

^y Greek *flesh*

Here “every defilement” would appear to refer to all sinful influences that defile both our body and spirit – effectively our whole being.

Heb 12:15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ...

The “root of bitterness” denotes either sinfulness itself (cf. AMP), or a person (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) who exhibits such sinfulness. In light of the earlier reference to God’s grace, possibly unbelief in particular is in view (cf. NLT). Sin in the church can influence others to sin accordingly; thus by it many can “become defiled”.

Jude 1:7-8 ...just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,^z serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. ⁸Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

^z Greek *other flesh*

. . . Spiritual uncleanness

See also:

- *Note: Spiritual purity is paralleled with cleanness, and sin with uncleanness,* p. 408

Lev 18:24-25, 30 “Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, ²⁵and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ... ³⁰So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.”

The acts to which vv. 24, 30 refer, were unlawful sexual relations (vv. 6-23). The nations’ sin was such that in God’s eyes even the land was made unclean (v. 25), resulting in God wiping the land clean of them.

Ps 106:39 Thus they became unclean by their acts, and played the whore in their deeds.

Lam 1:8-9a Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns her face away. ⁹Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future;^a therefore her fall is terrible; she has no comforter.

^a Or *end*

“Her uncleanness was in her skirts” (v. 9a) refers to Jerusalem’s uncleanness clinging to her, due to her sin (v. 8a).

Isa 64:5b-6 Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?^b ⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

^b Or *in your ways is continuance, that we might be saved*

For comment on v. 6a, see **Isa 64:6a** – under *No one is righteous before God*, p. 367.

Prov 30:12 There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.

This speaks of uncleanness and filth caused by sin (cf. vv. 11-14).



Isa 1:18 Come now, let us reason^c together, says the LORD: though *your sins are like scarlet*, they shall be as white as snow; though *they are red like crimson*, they shall become like wool. 

^c Or *dispute*

The blood-guilt of murder had stained the people, like a red dye – thus making them unclean.

✦ **Sin is spoken of as making God's dwelling place among the Israelites unclean:**

Lev 20:2-3 Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. ³I myself will set my face against that man and *will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name.* 

The sin referred to here was a particularly serious one, but any sin – particularly if not appropriately addressed – would have in a sense defiled God's dwelling place among the Israelites. Note that similarly – in regard to the sin of murder defiling the land, where God dwelt – Numbers 35:34 says: "You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I the LORD dwell in the midst of the people of Israel."

Separation from God . . .

See also:

- *The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ – shut out from the holy city*, p. 751
- *God turns away from those who persist in sin . . .*, p. 1835
- *. . . God rejects them and thrusts them from his presence*, p. 1835

Because sin defiles us and makes us spiritually unclean, it necessarily separates us from God. For God is holy – set apart from sin and consequent spiritual "uncleanness".

Isa 59:2 *... but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.* 

Eph 2:3, 12 *... among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body^d and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*  *... ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of*

Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 

^d Greek *flesh*

Separation from God and Jesus Christ involves exclusion from God's people and the associated blessings (v. 12).

Eph 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding, *alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.* 

Such people are alienated or separated from God and the life only he can give, due to their willful ignorance and stubbornness towards God – which is itself sin and also points to other sinful behavior.

Col 1:21 *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ...* 

Rom 3:23 *... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ...* 

With the expression "fall short of the glory of God", Paul most likely is saying that all have failed to measure up to a standard compatible with God's glory – which is required by God – and so cannot share in his glory. As such, a further implication is that we cannot stand in God's presence, i.e. sin causes us to be separated from God.

Ezra 9:15 O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you *in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this.* 

This is not speaking of sin actually separating us from God, but it does illustrate that sin impairs our relationship with God.

. . . and spiritual death

See also:

- **Rom 7:24** 
- *Sin brings the prospect of eternal "death"*, p. 381

The state of spiritual death involves being cut off from God – "dead to God" – without his Holy Spirit, who brings spiritual life and spiritual awareness.

Rom 7:5, 9-11, 13 *For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.*  *... ⁹I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹For sin, seizing an opportunity*



through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.  ... ¹³Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was *sin, producing death in me* through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. 

In this passage, “death” appears to primarily refer to spiritual death, although not all commentators would agree. It possibly encompasses being under condemnation of death – both physical and eternal. In v. 5, “bear fruit for death” presumably is referring to “sinful deeds” (NLT) that produce death. In v. 9, “when the commandment came” may refer to the introduction of the law which brought sin into the picture, but more often it is interpreted to be referring to Paul’s full realization of what the law meant in his own life. This caused sin to come to life in him – i.e. sin was aroused and usurped control – bringing his death (vv. 9b-11). Verse 13 further speaks of sin producing death in us through the good law, showing sin for what it is – with the last clause possibly meaning that sin is shown to be evil and contrary to the law, beyond any argument or by any measure.

Eph 2:1-2 *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins* ²*in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—* 

Col 2:13 *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ...* 

1Tim 5:6 ... *but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.* 

Giving oneself up to luxury and self-indulgence is sinful. Accordingly, anyone who lives as such is “spiritually dead” (NLT).

Rom 8:6, 13 *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*  ... ¹³*For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* 

Here the references to “death” (v. 6) and to dying (v. 13) are probably referring to – or are at least inclusive of – spiritual death in both the present form and the future form of the afterlife.

Hos 13:1 *When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel, but he incurred guilt through Baal and died.* 

Spiritual death may well be in view here, along with physical destruction – “he died [spiritually, and then outward ruin came also, sealing Israel’s doom as a nation]” (AMP).

✦ **God’s law is spiritual but people are not:**

Rom 7:14 *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.* 

Captivity to sin . . .

Acts 8:23 *For I see that you are in the gall^e of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.* 

^e That is, a bitter fluid secreted by the liver; bile

Gal 3:22 *But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.* 

Under the law the people were effectively imprisoned by sin.

Rom 7:21-24 *So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.* ²²*For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,* ²³*but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.* ²⁴*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* 

The final question (v. 24), though not actually mentioning sin, reflects Paul’s captive state under the rule of sin. The power of sin held such sway over him (v. 21) that in his body or sinful nature, he was its prisoner (v. 23). Note that opinions differ on whether Paul is speaking in this passage (including vv. 14-17, 25 ↓) of a Christian or a pre-Christian experience.

Rom 3:9 *What then? Are we Jews^f any better off?^g No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ...* 

^f Greek *Are we*

^g *Or at any disadvantage?*

All people (both Jews and Gentiles) are sinners. The phrase “under sin” appears to primarily refer to being “under the power of sin” (GNT, NLT; cf. AMP). Being under the condemnation that results from sin may also be encompassed.

Rom 11:32 *For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.* 

As noted earlier in the chapter, this is not generally interpreted to mean that God made all people become disobedient – but rather that “God has imprisoned all people in their own disobedience” (NLT, cf. CEV). As such it alludes to people’s captivity to sin, produced by sin (i.e. disobedience to God).



Gen 4:7 If you do well, will you not be accepted?^h And if you do not do well, *sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is forⁱ you*, but you must rule over it. 

^h Hebrew *will there not be a lifting up* [of your face]?

ⁱ Or *against*

"Its desire is for you" speaks either of sin desiring to have one as a captive or desiring to have one so as to devour one.

Ecc 8:8 No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, *nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it.* 

The second statement appears to be teaching that wickedness enslaves the wicked – indicative of the fact that sin enslaves sinners; hence its inclusion here. However, in light of the first statement, it could instead mean that wickedness will not deliver one from death (cf. GNT, NLT).

Hos 5:4 *Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not the LORD.* 

Their sinful deeds prevented them from returning to God. As such their deeds effectively held them captive.

. . . involving enslavement to sin

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *everyone who commits sin is a slave^l to sin.* 

^l Greek *bondservant*; also verse 35

Rom 6:16-20 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^k *you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?* ¹⁷But thanks be to God, that *you who were once slaves of sin* have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as *you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness* leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. ²⁰For when *you were slaves of sin*, you were free in regard to righteousness. 

^k Greek *bondservants*. Twice in this verse and verse 19; also once in verses 17, 20

Rom 7:14-17, 25 For we know that the law is spiritual, but *I am of the flesh, sold under sin.* ¹⁵For I do not understand my own actions. *For I do not do what I want, but I do the very*

thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷So now *it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*  ... ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but *with my flesh I serve the law of sin.* 

In saying, "... it is no longer I who do it ..." (v. 17), Paul is not portraying himself as innocent, but pointing out his helplessness in the face of sin's control over what he does – "I can't help myself" (NLT). (As noted on vv. 21-24 in the previous subsection, bear in mind that here Paul may well be speaking of his pre-Christian experience.)

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, *slaves to various passions and pleasures*, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 

2Pet 2:19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are *slaves^l of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.* 

^l Greek *bondservants*

The latter part of the verse may be implying that we are all mastered by something, whether it be sin and the devil, or God.

Eph 4:19 They have become callous and *have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.* 

Giving oneself up to or over to sin is in a real sense giving or offering oneself to it as a slave (cf. [Rom 6:16](#) ↑).

2Tim 3:6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, *burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ...* 

Being "burdened with sins" points to being "slaves of sin" (CEV). In such a predicament, sinful desires hold sway over a person.

Gal 5:17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, *to keep you from doing the things you want to do.* 

The latter part of the verse may be in the same vein as Romans 7:15 above, reflecting one's captivity and enslavement to sin. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, it could instead be speaking of the Holy Spirit's influence in inhibiting us from simply doing as we please; as such it would not be so pertinent to this subsection.



Foolishness and spiritual darkness

See also:

- *Foolishness involves acting contrary to God*, p. 1658
- *Foolishness encompasses sin*, p. 1659
- *Foolishness encompasses wickedness and doing evil*, p. 1659
- *Spiritual ignorance is caused basically by sin and ungodliness*, p. 1668

Ps 107:17 *Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; ...*

Ps 36:3 *The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good.*

The fact that those who work “trouble and deceit” have “ceased to act wisely”, illustrates that sinful behaviour brings foolishness.

Ecc 7:7 *Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart.*

Here “madness” speaks of foolishness (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Rom 1:18-22 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all *ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth*. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹For although they knew God, *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened*. ²²*Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ...*

The “truth” (v. 18) is the truth about God revealed to all through the testimony of creation (vv. 19-21a). By ungodliness and unrighteousness, such people “suppress” the truth – in which they “push the truth away from themselves” (NLT). Verses 21-22 also demonstrate that ungodliness, with its disregard of God, leads to spiritual darkness and foolishness. The following references (Ezek 12:2; John 3:19-20) further indicate that sin leads to a lack of spiritual insight, or spiritual ignorance.

Ezek 12:2 *Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house.*

John 3:19-20 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and *people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil*. ²⁰*For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.*

Because of their evil deeds, such people spurn the light of Jesus Christ and his truth.

Further intrinsic harmful consequences

See also:

- *The wicked reap what they sow . . .*, p. 460

Jude 1:10 But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and *they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.*

The things that such people “understand instinctively” are their immoral practices – by which as a natural consequence “they are destroyed”.

Num 32:23 But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and *be sure your sin will find you out.*

The final clause appears to imply that sin brings its own harmful consequences – sin “catches up with you”. As such it is a similar concept to reaping what one sows (the theme of the above cross reference).

Prov 13:21-22 *Disaster^m pursues sinners*, but the righteous are rewarded with good. ²²A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, but *the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous.*

^mOr Evil

Isa 30:12-13 Therefore *thus says the Holy One of Israel, “Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, ¹³therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; ...*

This is possibly speaking of the natural harmful consequences of the people’s oppression and deceit; hence its inclusion here. Alternatively it may have in view God himself implementing such destruction in judgment.

✦ Sin produces nothing good:

Rom 6:20-21 For when *you were slaves of sin*, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹But *what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?* For the end of those things is death.



Note: Sometimes God “gives people over” to sin

Living according to God’s ways produces a fullness of life – a spiritual life, founded on a relationship with God. However for those who choose to live a life apart from God, the Bible at times speaks of God in a sense handing over such people to sin. This appears to mean that God leaves them captive to sin and facing the consequences that naturally result from living contrary to the way that produces a fullness of life.

Ps 81:11-12 But my people did not listen to my voice; *Israel would not submit to me.* ¹²*So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.* 

Acts 7:41-42 And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. ⁴²But God turned away and *gave them over to worship the host of heaven*, as it is written in the book of the prophets: “Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices, during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?” 

Rom 1:22-29a Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and *exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.* ²⁴*Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,* ²⁵*because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.* ²⁶*For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.* For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and *receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.* ²⁸*And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.* ²⁹*They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.* 

Note that the latter part of v. 27 clearly supports the concept of sin having intrinsic harmful consequences.

Job 8:4 *If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression.* 

Here Bildad hypothesizes about what was behind the fete of Job’s children.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Sin Brings God’s Judgment – Ultimately Death

See also:

- *... and spiritual death* [effects of sin], p. 373
- *Note: Sometimes God “gives people over” to sin*, p. 377
- *b) Reasons for God’s Judgment*, p. 422
- *c) The Wicked and God’s Pending Judgment*, p. 452
- *d) Repayments for the Wicked and the Righteous*, p. 460
- *e) Epilogue: God’s Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy*, p. 469
- *d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons*, p. 869
- *a) Consequences of Sin for God’s People*, p. 1830

Subsections

- When one sins, one becomes guilty
- God holds one responsible for one’s sin
- Sin makes one subject to God’s wrath
- God’s wrath against sinners is manifested in punishment
- Sin results in physical death – through Adam’s original sin
- Sin brings the prospect of eternal “death”
- Note: Sin can lead to consequences that affect others – notably children . . .
- . . . but it is the one who sins who will die for their sin

When one sins, one becomes guilty

Lev 6:1-7 ¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²*“If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor ³or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby— ⁴if he has sinned and has realized his guilt* and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found ⁵or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs *on the day he realizes his guilt.* ⁶And he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering. ⁷And the priest shall make atonement for him before the



LORD, and he shall be forgiven for *any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty.*" 

ⁿ Ch 5:20 in Hebrew

Num 5:5-6 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, *When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the LORD, and that person realizes his guilt, ...* 

2Chr 19:10 ... whenever a case comes to you from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or rules, then you shall *warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers. Thus you shall do, and you will not incur guilt.* 

This indicates that sin incurs guilt.

Ps 5:10 *Make them bear their guilt,* O God; let them fall by their own counsels; *because of the abundance of their transgressions* cast them out, for they have rebelled against you. 

Isa 24:5-6 The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for *they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes,* broken the everlasting covenant. *Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;* therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left. 

Jer 33:8 I will cleanse them from *all the guilt of their sin against me,* and I will forgive *all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.* 

Ezek 22:4a *You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed,* and defiled by the idols that you have made, and you have brought your days near, the appointed time of^o your years has come. 

^o Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, Targum; most Hebrew manuscripts *until*

Ezra 9:6-7, 13, 15 ... saying: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for *our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.*⁷From the days of our fathers to this day *we have been in great guilt. And for our iniquities* we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today.  ...¹³And after all that has come upon us *for our evil deeds and for our great guilt,* seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved

and have given us such a remnant as this,  ...¹⁵O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, *we are before you in our guilt,* for none can stand before you because of this." 

Ezek 21:24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because *you have made your guilt to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear*—because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand. 

Hos 13:1 When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel, but *he incurred guilt through Baal* and died. 

† People cannot themselves remove their guilt:

Jer 2:21-22 Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine? ²²*Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me,* declares the Lord GOD. 

God holds one responsible for one's sin

As reflected by verses in this subsection, being held responsible for one's sin involves such concepts as: bearing one's sins, facing its consequences (Lev 5:17; Num 9:13; Ezek 16:58; Hos 13:16); and being held accountable to God (Rom 3:19; James 2:10; Deut 18:19; Job 31:13-14).

Lev 5:1, 17 *If anyone sins* in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, *he shall bear his iniquity;*  ...¹⁷*If anyone sins,* doing any of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, *he shall bear his iniquity.* 

Num 9:13 But if anyone who is clean and is not on a journey fails to keep the Passover, that person shall be cut off from his people because he did not bring the LORD's offering at its appointed time; *that man shall bear his sin.* 

Ezek 16:58 *You bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations,* declares the LORD. 

Hos 13:16 ^p *Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God;* they shall fall by the sword; their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open. 



¶ Ch 14:1 in Hebrew

Rom 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and *the whole world may be held accountable to God.* 

Accountability for sin is clearly in view (cf. vv. 9-20).

James 2:10 For *whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.* 

The thought behind this appears to be that whenever a person sins and breaks one command of the law, the person is held accountable for breaking the law as a whole.

Deut 18:19 And *whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.* 

Not listening to God's words involves disobedience to them – i.e. sin. The final clause speaks of God holding people accountable for this (cf. NIV, NRSV).

Job 31:13-14 *If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me, ¹⁴what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?* 

Verse 14 suggests that God calls people to account for their sin (cf. NASB, NIV).

✦ Sinners face having to pay for their sins:

Lev 5:5-7, 15-16 ... when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed, ⁶*he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation^a for the sin that he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering.* And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin. ⁷*But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed two turtledoves or two pigeons,^r one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.*  ... ¹⁵*“If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued^s in silver shekels,^t according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. ¹⁶He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest.* And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven. 

^a Hebrew *his guilt penalty*; so throughout Leviticus

^r Septuagint *two young pigeons*; also verse 11

^s Or *flock, or its equivalent*

^t A *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

This speaks of guilt offerings, required in matters where restitution was quantifiable and so could be made for the wrongdoing. As indicated in the text note on v. 6, such “compensation” (vv. 6, 7, 15) was a “guilt penalty”. Note that the concept of payment for sin is also referred to later in Leviticus in 26:43 – “they shall make amends for their iniquity.”

Sin makes one subject to God's wrath

See also:

- *God's anger arises in response to sin and disobedience*, p. 70
- *God's wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness*, p. 709
- *The ungodly face God's wrath . . .*, p. 749

Being guilty of sin and held responsible by God for it, means that one becomes subject to God's wrath.

2Ki 17:11b And *they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, ...* 

2Ki 22:13 “Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For *great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.*” 

Rom 1:18 For *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.* 

Rom 2:5 But *because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.* 

Those who stubbornly do not repentant of sin and disobedience face the ultimate expression of God's wrath on the final judgment day.

Eph 2:3 ... among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body^u and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 

^u Greek *flesh*

The expression “children of wrath” speaks of facing God's wrath. Because of who and what we are, with our sinful nature, we stand to “inherit” God's wrath (cf. AMP).



Eph 5:5-6 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for *because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

1Thes 2:15-16 ... who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind ¹⁶by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so *as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!*^v

^v Or *completely, or forever*

Opinions vary as to which revelation of God's wrath is being referred to here. It could be a contemporary occurrence, or possibly a future one – with the present tense being used to indicate its certainty. Note that “fill up the measure of their sins” (v. 16) may be speaking of: excessive sin; reaching some limit of sin, possibly that which can trigger manifestation of God's wrath; or perhaps bringing the sin that they were destined to do to completion. The preceding phrase “so as always to” suggests that the third alternative is less likely.

God's wrath against sinners is manifested in punishment

See also:

- *To punish sin and unfaithfulness* [reasons for God's judgment], p. 422

Ps 90:7-9 For *we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed.* ⁸*You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.* ⁹*For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.*

Isa 57:17 *Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart.*

Dan 9:11, 16 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And *the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.* ... ¹⁶*“O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us.*

Ps 38:3-5 *There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.* ⁴*For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.* ⁵*My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, ...*

Ps 102:9-11 For *I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink,* ¹⁰*because of your indignation and anger; for you have taken me up and thrown me down.* ¹¹*My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass.*

Zeph 1:17-18 *I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.* ¹⁸*Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.*

Note that this and the following references appear to refer to a final fulfillment at the end of the age.

Zeph 3:7b-8 *But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.* ⁸*“Therefore wait for me,” declares the LORD, “for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.*

Isa 13:9, 11 *Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.* ... ¹¹*I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.*

Isa 26:20-21 *Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by.* ²¹*For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.*

The reference to God's “fury” (v. 20b) may be to his fury or wrath against Israel, which they are assured will pass. But it is more likely speaking of his wrath manifested in his punishment of the nations due to their sins (v. 21a), notably their killings of many innocent people (v. 21b) (cf. ZBC).



‡ Those who persist in sin will certainly receive their due punishment:

Prov 11:31 *If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!* 📖

Sin results in physical death – through Adam’s original sin

See also:

- **Rom 6:16, 21, 23** ↓
- *Humankind’s original sin and the judgment – including death and expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, p. 294

People may experience God’s wrath and judgment for sin in various forms during their lifetime, but common to all is the judgment of physical death.

Rom 5:12, 15-18, 21 Therefore, just as *sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned*— 📖 ... ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if *many died through one man’s trespass*, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For *the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation*, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷For if, *because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man*, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as *one trespass^w led to condemnation for all men*, so one act of righteousness^x leads to justification and life for all men. 📖 ... ²¹so that, as *sin reigned in death*, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. 📖

^w Or *the trespass of one*

^x Or *the act of righteousness of one*

Paul appears to be saying that all people are viewed as having sinned in Adam’s sin (at times referred to as “original sin”) and therefore are subject to death. Presumably this has to do with Adam being the head of the human race. The thought may be intended in a legal sense, with Adam being the representative of all people. Alternatively it may be intended in a natural or physical sense, with all people viewed as being seminally in Adam and thus “participating” in his sin. (cf. BKC)

Death reigned (v. 17) in the sense that it held sway over all people, with all people being subject to it, destined to die. In turn, v. 21 teaches that sin reigned or “exercised dominion” (NRSV) “by means of death” (CEV, GNT). However the

supremacy and finality of the reign of sin and death no longer extends over those who receive God’s grace and his gift of righteousness, through Jesus Christ (vv. 17-18, 21; cf. vv. 15-16).

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, although *the body is dead because of sin*, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 📖

The clause “the body is dead because of sin” most likely is referring to the fact that believers will die physically as a consequence of their sin (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

1Cor 15:21-22 For as *by a man came death*, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as *in Adam all die*, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 📖

As with the extracts above from Romans 5, Paul is speaking of all people being subject to death because of their relationship to Adam, with Adam’s sin being in view as the cause.

1Cor 15:56 *The sting of death is sin*, and the power of sin is the law. 📖

“The sting of death is sin” means that death gets its power to harm from sin (cf. CEV, GNT); without sin there would be no death. This is indicative of the fact that physical death is a consequence of sin.

Sin brings the prospect of eternal “death”

See also:

- *... and spiritual death* [effects of sin], p. 373
- *Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned*, p. 715
- e) *The Punishment for the Ungodly*, p. 749

Because of his justice God demands that unforgiven sin be punished with what is sometimes referred to as eternal “death” or destruction, involving eternal separation from God in hell. A complementary reason for this state is that sin necessitates separation from God, because of his holiness.

Rom 6:16, 21, 23 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^y you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of *sin, which leads to death*, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 📖 ... ²¹But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For *the end of those things is death*. 📖 ... ²³*For the wages of sin is death*, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. 📖

^y Greek *bondservants*. Twice in this verse and verse 19; also once in verses 17, 20



Here “death” appears to primarily refer to or at least encompass eternal “death”, particularly in view of the contrast with “eternal life” (v. 23). But quite possibly it also encompasses being dead spiritually in the present life as well – which may also be the case in James 1:15 below. Additionally, with physical death being prominent in the previous chapter of Romans (cf. [Rom 5:12, 15-18, 21](#) ↑), arguably Paul could be speaking of death generally. (A similar point could be made regarding the extracts from Romans 5 in the previous subsection.)

Rom 8:13 For *if you live according to the flesh you will die*, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 📖

Gal 6:8 For *the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption*, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 📖

The term “corruption” denotes “decay and ruin and destruction” (AMP), things which have an eternal application in keeping with the latter reference to “eternal life”.

James 1:15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and *sin when it is fully grown brings forth death*. 📖

James 5:20 ... let him know that *whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death* and will cover a multitude of sins. 📖

The reference to saving one’s “soul” from death suggests that eternal “death” is in view.

Rom 2:12 For *all who have sinned without the law will also perish* without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 📖

Only those who have the law will be judged by it; others will be judged according to whatever revelation they had. But the common principle is: all who are found wanting because of their sin will perish.

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, *their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death*. 📖

The “second death” is eternal “death”.

Ex 32:33 But the LORD said to Moses, *“Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.”* 📖

The reference appears to be to the “book of life” spoken of in the NT as containing the names of those who will live forever. One can infer from this that those who have sinned – and have not accepted God’s provision of forgiveness – will

not be listed among those who will live forever; i.e. they will die an eternal “death”.

Note: Sin can lead to consequences that affect others – notably children . . .

See also:

- *Note: Unchecked sin corrupts others*, p. 1495

Heb 12:15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; *that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ...* 📖

For comment, see the comment on [Heb 12:15](#) – under *Spiritual defilement . . .*, p. 372.

Josh 7:1, 25a But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for *Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel.* 📖 ... ²⁵*And Joshua said, “Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today.”* 📖

Josh 22:18b And *if you too rebel against the LORD today then tomorrow he will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel.* 📖

Joshua is here speaking to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Joshua says that any rebellion of theirs against God would lead to God’s anger against the Israelites as a whole (cf. [Josh 7:1, 25a](#) ↑).

Ex 20:4-6 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, *visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me*, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands^z of those who love me and keep my commandments. 📖

^z Or *to the thousandth generation*

Verse 5b (cf. [Ex 34:7](#) ↓) appears to speak of the ongoing effects of punishment still being felt by future generations. Some commentators think that it alludes to the sin itself filtering through to later generations, and so being accompanied by appropriate punishment – although this would not apply to repentant children. Note the contrasting blessings for those who love God, with God blessing them with his love to a thousand generations.



Ex 34:6-7 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands,^a forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, *visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.*”

☰

^a Or to the thousandth generation

Lev 20:4-5 And if the people of the land do at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death, ⁵then *I will set my face against that man and against his clan* and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech. ☰

Lev 26:39 And those of you who are left shall rot away in your enemies’ lands because of their iniquity, and *also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall rot away like them.* ☰

Note that this says that such people will “rot away” because of their own sin in addition to their fathers’ sins.

Num 14:33 And *your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness.* ☰

Jer 32:18 You show steadfast love to thousands, but *you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, ...* ☰

Lam 5:7 *Our fathers sinned, and are no more; and we bear their iniquities.* ☰

... but it is the one who sins who will die for their sin

Under the Mosaic Law, one who sinned intentionally was to be put to death for their sin. Whatever other repercussions a father’s sin might have for his children, the father alone was to be put to death for his sin; no one was to die for another’s sin. The stipulation has an eternal application: one will not suffer eternal “death” for another’s sin; those who will be condemned will be condemned for their own unforgiven sin.

Deut 24:16 *Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.* ☰

2Ki 14:6 But *he did not put to death the children of the murderers, according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, where the LORD commanded, “Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. But each one shall die for his own sin.”* ☰

Jer 31:29-30 *In those days they shall no longer say: “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” ³⁰But everyone shall die for his own sin. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.* ☰

The proverb quoted (v. 29; cf. **Ezek 18:3 ↓**) spoke of the fathers doing wrong and the children supposedly suffering the consequences, effectively sharing in the guilt of the father (v. 19a). God indicates that this is not the case, that only the one who sins will die for his or her sin (v. 30; cf. **Ezek 18:3-4, 19-20 ↓**).

Ezek 18:2-4, 19-20 *What do you^b mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? ³As I live, declares the Lord GOD, *this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.* ⁴*Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.* ☰ ... ¹⁹*“Yet you say, ‘Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?’ When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live.* ²⁰*The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.* ☰*

^b The Hebrew for *you* is plural

✚ We alone are responsible for our sin:

Job 19:4 *And even if it be true that I have erred, my error remains with myself.* ☰

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin

See also:

- *1. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role*, p. 640

In the law on which his covenant with Israel was based, God made provision for atonement to be made for anyone who sinned, and so for the sinner to be forgiven. This allowed the Israelites to remain in their covenant relationship with him, providing that they did not actually give up following God and his laws, as per the terms of the covenant. Sadly Israel would fail to hold to the covenant, willfully forsaking God's laws and persisting in sin.

The NT contains numerous references to the Mosaic Law's provision for Israel's sin. An understanding of what this provision involved enables us to more fully comprehend why Jesus Christ came and the significance of his work. For many of the concepts involved in Jesus Christ's work have their origin in the law's stipulations for making offerings for atonement for sin. These aspects of the law actually foreshadowed – and would be superseded by – what Jesus Christ would do and implement.

Note that most of the following passages involve instructions given by God to Moses for the Israelites, with either God or Moses speaking.

a) Offerings for Atonement for Sinners

See also:

- *The priests made offerings for people when they sinned, to make atonement for them*, p. 397
- *a) Jesus Christ's Death as an Offering for Sin*, p. 588
- *b) Jesus Christ's Death and Atonement for Sin*, p. 591

Subsections

- The law made provision for the offering of a life of an animal, to make atonement for one who had sinned
- The major offerings for making atonement: The burnt offering; . . .
- . . . the sin offering; . . .
- . . . and the guilt offering
- Atonement was also made annually for all of the people



The law made provision for the offering of a life of an animal, to make atonement for one who had sinned

Under the Mosaic Law, when a person sinned the person had to bring an animal for a priest to sacrifice as an offering of a life to make atonement for the person. Biblical atonement is where God accepts such an offering or sacrifice of a living being as a substitute for the life of a person who has sinned – the person's life otherwise being required as punishment for their sin. As such, God accepts the sacrifice as payment for the person's sin. The result is that sin is taken away – and so the sinner is forgiven, pronounced righteous and reconciled to God.

Lev 4:27-31 *If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt,²⁸ or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed.²⁹ And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering.³⁰ And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar.³¹ And all its fat he shall remove, as the fat is removed from the peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.*

Note that the altar of burnt offering was used in making atonement for individuals generally, and the altar of incense (which was in the Holy Place) was used in the cases of the high priest and Israel as a whole (cf. vv. 7, 18).

Lev 10:17 *Why have you not eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary, since it is a thing most holy and has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD?*

The expression "bear the iniquity" speaks of taking or resting the sin and consequent guilt from the people.

Lev 17:11 *For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.*

This underlines the importance of the shedding of blood in making atonement. The reason as to why "the blood... makes atonement by the life" appears to be given at the beginning of the verse – "the life of the flesh is in the blood". As such, by the shedding of its blood the creature's life was given in place of and so to make atonement for a person's life. (See

... for the life of a creature is in its blood – and as such blood is not to be eaten, p. 391.)

Lev 19:22 And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven for the sin that he has committed. 

Num 6:10-11a On the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two pigeons to the priest to the entrance of the tent of meeting, ¹¹and the priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned by reason of the dead body. 

Note that these regulations were for Nazirites, who made special vows of separation to God which meant that they could not be in close proximity to a dead body.

Num 15:27-28 If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. ²⁸And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. 

2Chr 29:24 ... and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel. 

✦ **The concept of paying of a ransom to make atonement for one's life:**

Ex 30:11-12, 15-16 The LORD said to Moses, ¹²“When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the LORD when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them.  ... ¹⁵The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you give the LORD's offering to make atonement for your lives. ¹⁶You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the LORD, so as to make atonement for your lives.” 

This is not expressly saying that the ransom was to make atonement because of sin, but arguably this is suggested by the word “atonement” itself, particularly with the reference to the annual day of atonement in the preceding verse (v. 10). Alternatively, it may have in view the people's redemption from Egypt by God, whereby in redeeming them God in a sense bought the people. Thus the instructions here may signify that the people were in turn to pay God for their lives,

redeeming or buying themselves from him – similar to the practice regarding firstborn sons in 13:13-16.

As with the concept of making atonement for sin, the concept of paying a ransom for people is paralleled in the NT by Jesus Christ's sacrifice of himself on behalf of people. His sacrifice is portrayed as a ransom for people, freeing them from sin and its consequences. See *c) Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin*, p. 596. See also *God redeemed the Israelites out of Egypt to take them as his own . . .*, p. 327.

The major offerings for making atonement: The burnt offering; . . .

See also:

- [Lev 5:7-10](#) ↓

Leviticus chapters 1-7 contain the main parts of the law's stipulations for making what are understood as the five main offerings (and it is from these chapters that the extracts in this and in the following two subsections are taken). The five main offerings are the burnt offering (1:1-17); the grain offering (2:1-16); the peace offering (3:1-17); the sin offering (4:1-5:13); and the guilt offering (5:14-6:7). Following these sections are instructions largely for the priests (6:8-7:38). They repeat some aspects of the aforementioned sections, but also have directions regarding the parts of the sacrifices that remained, such as portions being eaten by the priests. The offerings that concern making atonement for people who have sinned are the burnt offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering.

Making atonement for was one of the main uses of a burnt offering (the subject of the following extract). The burnt offering appears to have been used in regard to one's sin in general, rather than in response to having committed a particular sin. Other kinds of uses for a burnt offering were: as an expression of devotion to God; as an expression of thanksgiving to God; and to accompany/supplement an appeal to God. It was the only offering where the whole of the animal was burnt up on the altar; as such it expressed one's complete devotion to God.

Lev 1:3-9 If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. ⁴He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ⁵Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁶Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces, ⁷and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸And Aaron's



sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; ⁹but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering^a with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. 

^a Or an offering by fire; so throughout Leviticus

Note that the fat was considered to be the choicest part and was singled out to be burnt as “an aroma pleasing to the LORD” (v. 9). The subsequent verses contain similar instructions regarding making a burnt offering of a sheep or goat (vv. 10-13), or of a dove or young pigeon (vv. 14-17).

... the sin offering; ...

The following extracts speak of sin offerings being made by an individual. Instructions are also given in Leviticus 4 regarding sin offerings for: “the anointed priest” (4:3-12); “the whole Israelite community” (4:13-21); and “a leader” (4:22-26).

Lev 4:27-31 If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt,²⁸ or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, *he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed.* ²⁹*And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering.* ³⁰*And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar.* ³¹*And all its fat he shall remove, as the fat is removed from the peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.* 

With the animal being identified with the person, the animal’s blood signified the lifeblood of the person, poured out for the person’s sin (v. 30) – i.e. the person’s life being given in payment for his or her sin. As such the animal’s death would be accepted on the person’s behalf to make atonement for the person. The horns of the altar of burnt offering (v. 30) may have symbolized the authority embedded in the process of making of sin offerings for effecting atonement (cf. NSB), as was the case with the altar of incense. Note that “burn it” (v. 31) refers to the fat that had been removed.

Lev 5:5-6 ... when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed, ⁶*he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation^b for the sin that he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin.* 

^b Hebrew *his guilt penalty*; so throughout Leviticus

Lev 5:7-10 *But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed two turtledoves or two pigeons,^c one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.* ⁸*He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering. He shall wring its head from its neck but shall not sever it completely, ⁹and he shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it is a sin offering.* ¹⁰*Then he shall offer the second for a burnt offering according to the rule. And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.* 

^c Septuagint *two young pigeons*; also verse 11

Note that a burnt offering is made here along with a sin offering, the two offerings being required in place of a single sin offering of greater value (cf. v. 6 ↑; Lev 4:28 ↑). Provision is subsequently made for very poor people (cf. vv. 11-13 ↓).

Lev 5:11-13 *“But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for the sin that he has committed a tenth of an ephah^d of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it and shall put no frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering.* ¹²*And he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take a handful of it as its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, on the LORD’s food offerings; it is a sin offering.* ¹³*Thus the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed in any one of these things, and he shall be forgiven. And the remainder^e shall be for the priest, as in the grain offering.”* 

^d An ephah was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters

^e Septuagint; Hebrew *it*

... and the guilt offering

The guilt offering was quite similar to the sin offering, in both the process (cf. Lev 7:1-7; Lev 4:27-31 ↑) and purpose. The main difference appears to be that it was required in matters where restitution was quantifiable and so could be made for the wrongdoing. The guilt offering was made along with the restitution and a twenty percent surcharge. The sins concerned were in regard to such things as “holy things of the LORD” (Lev 5:15 ↓) and a neighbor’s property (cf. Lev 6:4 ↓).

Lev 5:15-16 If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, *he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued^f in silver shekels,^g according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering.* ¹⁶*He shall also*



make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven. ^f

^f Or flock, or its equivalent

^g A shekel was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

Note that "holy things" could refer to previously required offerings or other quantifiable things involved in worship.

Lev 5:17-19 "If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. ¹⁸He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. ¹⁹It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before^h the LORD." ^g

^h Or he has paid full compensation to

Lev 6:4-7 ... if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found ⁵or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt. ⁶And he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering. ⁷And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty. ^g

† God gave these regulations for the major offerings to Moses on Mount Sinai:

Lev 7:37-38 This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering, ³⁸which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai. ^g

The fact that God gave these offertory regulations to Moses on or at Mount Sinai shows that they were part of God's law. Note that the reference to the "ordination offering" (v. 37b) appears to anticipate the ordination of the priests and the commencement of their ministry in the subsequent two chapters.

Atonement was also made annually for all of the people

See also:

- *Note: Procedures for the Day of Atonement, involving the high priest entering the Most Holy Place*, p. 392
- *The high priest made atonement for Israel as a whole*, p. 398

The procedures spoken of in the previous subsections were required following the committing of sin at any time – either by individuals or the nation as a whole. The Day of Atonement was to be observed just once each year, for the high priest to cleanse the nation as a whole of all sin. It was the most important observance of the OT rituals, the only time the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place.

Ex 30:10 Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD. ^g

Lev 16:17, 24 No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel. ^g ... ²⁴And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people. ^g

Lev 16:29-34 "And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselvesⁱ and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. ³⁰For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins. ³¹It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever. ³²And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments. ³³He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ³⁴And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins." And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. ^g

ⁱ Or shall fast; also verse 31

As in the other extracts here, the priest referred to is the high priest.



Lev 23:26-28 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁷“Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD. ²⁸And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. 📖

Heb 9:6-7 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. 📖

In v. 7, “the second” refers to the second section of the sanctuary – the Most Holy Place.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Aspects of Making Offerings for Sin

While this section looks in particular at offerings that were made because of sin, note that some aspects of the presentation of these offerings were also applicable to other offerings – such as the aspects involved in the first two subsections.

Subsections

- All offerings were only to be made at the place God chose for his presence amongst his people
- Animals brought as offerings were to be without any blemish
- The sinner laid hands on the offering, identifying the animal with himself
- The blood of the offerings for sin featured in making atonement . . .
- . . . for the life of a creature is in its blood – and as such blood is not to be eaten
- The parts of an offering’s body were burnt or eaten
- Note: Procedures for the Day of Atonement, involving the high priest entering the Most Holy Place

All offerings were only to be made at the place God chose for his presence amongst his people

See also:

- *Containing the ark, the tabernacle and later the temple signified God’s presence . . .*, p. 345
- *. . . Thus the temple became the focus of worship and prayer to God*, p. 346

All kinds of offerings were only to be made at the one place, of God’s choosing. All offerings needed to be offered on the altar at the place of God’s presence amongst the people that was signified by the ark of the covenant. Initially this was at “the tent of meeting” (the tabernacle) and later at the temple. This was partly to ensure that the offerings were offered by the priests, God’s chosen mediators between the people and himself. Additionally, it safeguarded against inappropriate offerings and procedures – and against worship of other gods. (Note that in addition to offerings for sin, passages speaking of other offerings are included below.)

Ex 29:11 Then you shall kill the bull before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting, ... 📖

Lev 1:3 If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. *He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD.* 📖

Lev 6:25 Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. *In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD;* it is most holy. 📖

Lev 17:1-6, 8-9 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them, This is the thing that the LORD has commanded. ³*If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, ⁴and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people. ⁵This is to the end that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they sacrifice in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD, to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. ⁶And the priest shall throw the blood on the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting and burn the fat for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. 📖 ... ⁸“And you shall say to them, *Any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among**



them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice ⁹and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, that man shall be cut off from his people. 

Deut 12:5-6 But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitationⁱ there. There you shall go, ⁶and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. 

ⁱ Or name as its habitation

Deut 12:13-14, 17-18a Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, ¹⁴but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you.  ... ¹⁷You may not eat within your towns the tithe of your grain or of your wine or of your oil, or the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, or any of your vow offerings that you vow, or your freewill offerings or the contribution that you present, ¹⁸but you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place that the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your towns. 

Note that some kinds of offerings were eaten by the people together at the place of God's presence (v. 18) as an act of worship and at times as a celebration.

Deut 12:26-27 But the holy things that are due from you, and your vow offerings, you shall take, and you shall go to the place that the LORD will choose, ²⁷and offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God. The blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, but the flesh you may eat. 

Animals brought as offerings were to be without any blemish

See also:

- ... *Do not give what is inferior to God*, p. 1370

An offering had to be without defect to be deemed worthy to be offered to God and, in the case of an offering for sin, to be offered as a substitute for a person.

Ex 29:1, 14 Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. Take one bull of the herd and two rams without blemish,  ... ¹⁴But the flesh of the bull and its skin and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering. 

Lev 1:3a "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. 

Lev 4:3 ... if it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering. 

Lev 4:22-23 When a leader sins, doing unintentionally any one of all the things that by the commandments of the LORD his God ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, ²³or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish, ... 

Lev 4:27-28, 32 If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, ²⁸or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed.  ... ³²"If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish ... 

Num 6:14 ... and he shall bring his gift to the LORD, one male lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish as a sin offering, and one ram without blemish as a peace offering, ... 

Num 29:8 ... but you shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma: one bull from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs a year old: see that they are without blemish. 

Deut 15:21 But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. 

The sinner laid hands on the offering, identifying the animal with themselves

When making an offering for sin, a person would lay their hands on the head of the animal to be sacrificed. This was to signify its identification with the person. It could then be sacrificed as a substitute for the person, the offering of its life being accepted by God as a substitute for the life of the person, for their sin. Note that this practice may also have



signified the transfer of the person's sins to the animal (cf. Lev 16:21-22 ↓).

Ex 29:10, 14 Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting. *Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull.* ... ¹⁴But the flesh of the bull and its skin and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp; *it is a sin offering.*

Note that this was part of the ceremony for the consecration of the priests.

Lev 1:4 *He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.*

Lev 4:13-15 *If the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally^k and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and they realize their guilt,^l ¹⁴when the sin which they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull from the herd for a sin offering and bring it in front of the tent of meeting. ¹⁵And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be killed before the LORD.*

^k Or *makes a mistake*

^l Or *suffer for their guilt, or are guilty*; also verses 22, 27, and chapter 5

The elders of the community (v. 15) represented the whole Israelite community in this matter of a sin by the people as a whole.

Lev 4:29 *And he [who had sinned] shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering.*

Lev 16:21-22 *And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. ²²The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.*

On the annual Day of Atonement the high priest laid his hands on a goat, signifying the transfer of the people's sins onto the goat (v. 21).

2Chr 29:23-24 *Then the goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them, ²⁴and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on the altar, to make atonement*

for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.

The blood of the offerings for sin featured in making atonement . . .

See also:

- Lev 17:11 ↓
- *Note: Further points about the significance of the shedding of Jesus Christ's blood*, p. 595

The blood of animals sacrificed as offerings to make atonement for sinners, featured prominently in the instructions given for presenting the offerings. As commented earlier, the reason was the correlation of blood with life (as further discussed in the following subsection). As such, the blood signified the life of the animal, given as a substitute for the life of the sinner (as discussed in the previous subsection).

Ex 30:10 *Aaron shall make atonement on its [the altar of incense's] horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.*

Lev 1:4-5, 10-11, 14-15 *He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ⁵Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ... ¹⁰"If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a male without blemish, ¹¹and he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. ... ¹⁴"If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons. ¹⁵And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar. Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar.*

Lev 4:16-21 *Then the anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting, ¹⁷and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the veil. ¹⁸And he shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is in the tent of meeting before the LORD, and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ¹⁹And all its fat he shall take from it and burn on the altar. ²⁰Thus shall he do with the bull. As he did*



with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this. *And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.* ²¹And he shall carry the bull outside the camp and burn it up as he burned the first bull; it is the sin offering for the assembly. 

Lev 4:32-35 If he [a member of the community] brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish ³³and lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering. ³⁴*Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar.* ³⁵And all its fat he shall remove as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar, on top of the LORD's food offerings. *And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.* 

... for the life of a creature is in its blood – and as such blood is not to be eaten

See also:

- *Note: Blood signifies life – and a person's life is taken by the shedding of their blood*, p. 227

Blood is correlated with life largely because it sustains life. Because of the correlation, the people were not to eat blood – a command that NT believers continued to uphold (cf. **Acts 15:20, 29 ↓**; 21:25). The command was particularly pertinent in the context of making offerings. For in some kinds of animal offerings the meat was to be eaten, and so the people were required to first drain the blood from it.

Gen 9:4 *But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.* 

This correlates a creature's blood with its life. As such it points to the concept of the life of a creature being in its blood.

Lev 17:10-14 If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them *eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people.* ¹¹*For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.* ¹²*Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.* ¹³Any one also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn

among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall *pour out its blood and cover it with earth.* ¹⁴*For the life of every creature^m is its blood: its blood is its life.ⁿ Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.* 

^m Hebrew *all flesh*

ⁿ Hebrew *it is in its life*

Deut 12:21, 23-27 If the place that the LORD your God will choose to put his name there is too far from you, then you may kill any of your herd or your flock, which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your towns whenever you desire.  ... ²³*Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.* ²⁴*You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the earth like water.* ²⁵*You shall not eat it, that all may go well with you and with your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.* ²⁶But the holy things that are due from you, and your vow offerings, you shall take, and you shall go to the place that the LORD will choose, ²⁷and offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God. *The blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, but the flesh you may eat.* 

Acts 15:20, 29 ... but should write to them to *abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.*  ... ²⁹that you *abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.* Farewell. 

Note that the meat of strangled animals retained the blood.

The parts of an offering's body were burnt or eaten

See also:

- *Note: Priests and Levites were given parts of the people's offerings, God being their inheritance*, p. 399

Depending on the type of offering, and sometimes on the reasons necessitating it, the parts of the sacrificed animal's body were either burnt as an offering to God or eaten by the priests and male members of their families.

Lev 1:6-9 Then *he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces,* ⁷and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸And *Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the*



wood that is on the fire on the altar; ⁹but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering^o with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. 

^o Or an offering by fire; so throughout Leviticus

Lev 4:8-12 And all the fat of the bull of the sin offering he shall remove from it, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails ⁹and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys ¹⁰(just as these are taken from the ox of the sacrifice of the peace offerings); and the priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering. ¹¹But the skin of the bull and all its flesh, with its head, its legs, its entrails, and its dung— ¹²all the rest of the bull—he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place, to the ash heap, and shall burn it up on a fire of wood. On the ash heap it shall be burned up. 

These instructions concerned making a sin offering for the high priest and also applied to a sin offering for the whole Israelite community. In the case of a sin offering for a leader or that of a sin offering for a member of the community, only the fat was burnt (vv. 31, 35), with the body to be eaten by the priests and male family members (cf. **Lev 6:26** ↓). Note that vv. 11-12 tell of the leftover parts being burnt up so as to be destroyed rather than as part of the sacrifice to God.

Lev 6:25-26, 29-30 Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD; it is most holy. ²⁶The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting.  ... ²⁹Every male among the priests may eat of it; it is most holy. ³⁰But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place; it shall be burned up with fire. 

Verse 30 speaks of why the whole of a sin offering made for the high priest or for the whole Israelite community was burned. In their case the blood was taken into the Holy Place (cf. 4:5-7, 16-18). As such the implication may be that the remainder of the offering was particularly holy, to the extent that it was not to be eaten. Additionally, it would have been inappropriate for the priests to eat of these offerings as their own sin was involved.

Lev 7:1-6 This is the law of the guilt offering. It is most holy. ²In the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the guilt offering, and its blood shall be thrown against the sides of the altar. ³And all its fat shall be offered, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, ⁴the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. ⁵The priest shall burn them

on the altar as a food offering to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. ⁶Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy. 

Num 18:8-10 Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, “Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due. ⁹This shall be yours of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering of theirs and every sin offering of theirs and every guilt offering of theirs, which they render to me, shall be most holy to you and to your sons. ¹⁰In a most holy place shall you eat it. Every male may eat it; it is holy to you. 

Deut 12:27 ... and offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God. The blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, but *the flesh you may eat.* 

Note: Procedures for the Day of Atonement, involving the high priest entering the Most Holy Place

The proceedings for the Day of Atonement – featuring offerings – are described in Leviticus 16, extracts of which form this subsection.

Lev 16:2-5 ... and the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time *into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark*, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. ³But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on. ⁵And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. 

The term “the Holy Place” (vv. 2, 3) refers to what is often called “the Most Holy Place” (GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). The bull (v. 3) and one of the goats (v. Lev 16:5) were for sin offerings – the bull for the high priest and his household (cf. **v. 11** ↓) and the goat for the people (cf. **v. 15** ↓). The ram that the high priest brought (v. 3) and the ram from the Israelite community (v. 5) were sacrificed last as burnt offerings for the high priest and the people (cf. **v. 24** ↓) – along with the burning of the fat of the sin offering (cf. **v. 25** ↓).



Lev 16:8-10 *And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel.^p ⁹And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, ¹⁰but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.*



^p The meaning of *Azazel* is uncertain; possibly the name of a place or a demon, traditionally a scapegoat; also verses 10, 26

The aspects involving the two goats in particular prefigured Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice of himself for people's sin. One was sacrificed as a sin offering, signifying payment for the people's sin (v. 9; cf. vv. 15, 27). The other goat had the sins of the people symbolically placed on it and then sent away from the community (v. 10; cf. v. 21 ↓), signifying the removal of sin. Regarding the term "Azazel", see the text note on v. 8. As alluded to in the text note, the term is sometimes translated as "scapegoat" (NASB, NKJV, NLT).

Lev 16:11-14 *Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself. ¹²And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil ¹³and put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die. ¹⁴And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.*

Lev 16:15-17 *Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. ¹⁶Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. ¹⁷No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.*

Because the Holy Place and the tent of meeting – along with the altar (cf. vv. 18-19 ↓; v. 20 ↓) – were among the sinful and often unclean people, atonement needed to be made for them.

Lev 16:18-19 *Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. ¹⁹And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.*

Lev 16:20-22 *And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. ²¹And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. ²²The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.*

Lev 16:23-25, 27 *Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and shall take off the linen garments that he put on when he went into the Holy Place and shall leave them there. ²⁴And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵And the fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. ... ²⁷And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire.*

Verse 24b marks the final offerings in the process of making atonement, although the remains of the sin offerings still had to be removed and burnt up (v. 27).

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) The Role of the Priests

Subsections

- God designated Aaron and his descendants as priests . . .
- . . . With their appointment, God is said to have made a covenant with the priests
- The priests were responsible for God's sanctuary, the offerings and teaching the people . . .
- . . . The other Levites were given to the priests to assist them
- The priests made offerings for people when they sinned, to make atonement for them
- The high priest made atonement for Israel as a whole
- The offering of incense by the priests
- Note: Priests and Levites were given parts of the people's offerings, God being their inheritance

God designated Aaron and his descendants as priests . . .

When God made his covenant with Israel, he instituted the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood as an integral aspect of the covenant law, in particular in regard to the regulations concerning the people's relationship with himself. Note that the term "Levitical priesthood" is indicative of Aaron and his descendants being of the Israelite tribe of Levi.

Ex 28:1-5, 41 Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ²And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. ³You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. ⁴These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. ⁵They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. . . . ⁴¹And you shall put them on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. . . .

Note that God is addressing Moses here and in the following two references from Exodus.

Ex 29:8-9, 29-30 Then you shall bring his sons and put coats on them, ⁹and you shall gird Aaron and his sons with sashes

and bind caps on them. And the priesthood shall be theirs by a statute forever. Thus you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. . . . ²⁹"The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. ³⁰The son who succeeds him as priest, who comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place, shall wear them seven days. . . .

In v. 30 "priest" refers to the high priest, of which there was to be only one at any one time.

Ex 40:12-15 Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and shall wash them with water ¹³and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may serve me as priest. ¹⁴You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, ¹⁵and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations. . . .

Num 3:2-3, 10 These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ³These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to serve as priests. . . . ¹⁰And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall guard their priesthood. But if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death. . . .

The ministry of the priests largely involved sacred duties carried out in God's sanctuary amongst the people. These duties were theirs alone, as v. 10b emphatically indicates (cf. **Num 18:7** ↓).

Num 18:7 And you [Aaron] and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift,^a and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death. . . .

^a Hebrew service of gift

Deut 18:5 For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for all time. . . .

Neh 10:38a And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes. . . .

This illustrates that later priests were to descendants of Aaron.



... With their appointment, God is said to have made a covenant with the priests

Jer 33:18-22 ... and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever.”¹⁹The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ²⁰“Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, ²¹then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. ²²As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me.”

Mal 2:4-6, 8 So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. ⁵My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. ⁶True instruction^r was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. ... ⁸But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, ...

^r Or law; also verses 7, 8, 9

This may have in view in particular the covenant with the priest Phinehas (cf. **Num 25:10-13** ↓), with both it and the covenant referred to here being described as ones of “peace” (v. 5; cf. **Num 25:12** ↓).

Neh 13:29 Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

Num 18:19 All the holy contributions that the people of Israel present to the LORD I give to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. It is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD for you and for your offspring with you.

The reference to “a covenant” appears to have in view such provisions for the priests as mentioned here as being aspects of this covenant (cf. vv. 8-24), although it may also allude to wider aspects of the terms of God's appointment of the priests, with their designated responsibilities and privileges.

‡ God specifically made a covenant of a lasting priesthood with Phinehas, a grandson of Aaron:

Num 25:10-13 And the LORD said to Moses, ¹¹“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy. ¹²Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, ¹³and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.’”

Phinehas had taken quick and decisive action against an Israelite who had defiantly sinned greatly against God (cf. vv. 6-8). This covenant appears to indicate that God's covenant with the priests would continue through Phinehas's line of Aaron.

The priests were responsible for God's sanctuary, the offerings and teaching the people . . .

See also:

- **Jer 33:18** ↑; **Mal 2:4-6, 8** ↑

The term “sanctuary” referred initially to the tabernacle or Tent of Meeting, then later to the temple. At times their inner rooms are in view in particular.

Num 3:38 Those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tent of meeting toward the sunrise, were Moses and Aaron and his sons, guarding the sanctuary itself, to protect^s the people of Israel. And any outsider who came near was to be put to death.

^s Hebrew guard

Num 18:1, 5, 7-8 So the LORD said to Aaron, “You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear iniquity connected with your priesthood. ... ⁵And you shall keep guard over the sanctuary and over the altar, that there may never again be wrath on the people of Israel. ... ⁷And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift,^t and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death.” ⁸Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, “Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due.”

^t Hebrew service of gift



Verse 1 appears to be speaking of the priests bearing guilt for any offenses in connection with the sanctuary and/or the priesthood. Such offenses would have included improper actions in the performing of the priest's work involving the holy things of God, and possibly also offenses of the people in regard to these things. In v. 7, the phrase "guard your priesthood" and that which follows appear to speak of watching over the priesthood so as to carefully fulfill the duties of it.

2Chr 35:2 *He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD.* 

Ezek 44:15-16 *But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me. And they shall stand before me to offer me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶They shall enter my sanctuary, and they shall approach my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge.* 

Note that this is from a latter OT prophecy, from Ezekiel. In telling of priestly duties being exclusively granted to priests who were descendants of Zadok (himself a descendant of Aaron), it speaks of priests being responsible for God's sanctuary and the offerings.

Lev 21:6 *They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. For they offer the LORD's food offerings, the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy.* 

Deut 33:10 *They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar.* 

This blessing bestowed on the tribe of Levi (cf. v. 8) appears to largely have the priests in particular in view.

Lev 10:10-11 *You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.* 

As part of teaching the people God's decrees (v. 11), the priests were to teach them the distinctions spoken of in v. 10.

Mal 2:7 *For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people^u should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.* 

^u Hebrew *they*

Ezra 7:12a *"Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven. Peace."* 

^v Aramaic *Perfect* (probably a greeting)

As a scribe of the Law, Ezra the priest was effectively a teacher of the Law (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT).

... The other Levites were given to the priests to assist them

Note that the Levites were set apart for God's service in part at least due to their commitment to God following the making of the golden calf (cf. Ex 32:23-29). Regarding this, Exodus 32:29 says: 'And Moses said, "Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day."

Num 3:5-9 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁶"Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him. ⁷They shall keep guard over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. ⁸They shall guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle. ⁹And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the people of Israel.* 

Num 4:19b, 27a *Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint them each to his task and to his burden,  ... ²⁷All the service of the sons of the Gershonites shall be at the command of Aaron and his sons, in all that they are to carry and in all that they have to do.* 

Note that different tribal clans of the Levites are being spoken of here. Some of the duties of the Levites were assigned to specific clans.

Num 18:2-4, 6 [God, to Aaron:] *And with you bring your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may join you and minister to you while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony. ³They shall keep guard over you and over the whole tent, but shall not come near to the vessels of the sanctuary or to the altar lest they, and you, die. ⁴They shall join you and keep guard over the tent of meeting for all the service of the tent, and no outsider shall come near you.  ... ⁶And behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the people of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to the LORD, to do the service of the tent of meeting.* 

Deut 10:8 *At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD to stand before the LORD to minister to him and to bless in his name, to this day.* 



Deut 18:6-7 And if a Levite comes from any of your towns out of all Israel, where he lives—and he may come when he desires^w—to the place that the LORD will choose, ⁷and ministers in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow Levites who stand to minister there before the LORD, ...

^w Or lives—if he comes enthusiastically

Josh 18:7a The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of the LORD is their heritage.

This appears to use “the priesthood” in a broad sense, referring to “the priestly service” (NIV®) that was the responsibility of all Levites in assisting the priests.

1Chr 23:25-32 For David said, “The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to his people, and he dwells in Jerusalem forever. ²⁶And so the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the things for its service.” ²⁷For by the last words of David the sons of Levi were numbered from twenty years old and upward. ²⁸For their duty was to assist the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, having the care of the courts and the chambers, the cleansing of all that is holy, and any work for the service of the house of God. ²⁹Their duty was also to assist with the showbread, the flour for the grain offering, the wafers of unleavened bread, the baked offering, the offering mixed with oil, and all measures of quantity or size. ³⁰And they were to stand every morning, thanking and praising the LORD, and likewise at evening, ³¹and whenever burnt offerings were offered to the LORD on Sabbaths, new moons, and feast days, according to the number required of them, regularly before the LORD. ³²Thus they were to keep charge of the tent of meeting and the sanctuary, and to attend the sons of Aaron, their brothers, for the service of the house of the LORD.

When the tabernacle was to be replaced by the temple in Jerusalem, David reassigned the duties of the Levites accordingly.

2Chr 29:34 But the priests were too few and could not flay all the burnt offerings, so until other priests had consecrated themselves, their brothers the Levites helped them, until the work was finished—for the Levites were more upright in heart than the priests in consecrating themselves.

Ezra 6:18 And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

✦ The Levites were set apart as God's own, in place of the firstborn Israelite males:

Num 8:14-18 Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the people of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine. ¹⁵And after that the Levites shall go in to serve at the tent of meeting, when you have cleansed them and offered them as a wave offering. ¹⁶For they are wholly given to me from among the people of Israel. Instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the people of Israel, I have taken them for myself. ¹⁷For all the firstborn among the people of Israel are mine, both of man and of beast. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I consecrated them for myself, ¹⁸and I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel.

The priests made offerings for people when they sinned, to make atonement for them

The theme of this subsection is exemplified in many passages in the previous two sections of this chapter – a) Offerings for Atonement for Sinners, p. 384; and b) Aspects of Making Offerings for Sin, p. 388.

Lev 4:27-31 If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, ²⁸or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. ²⁹And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering. ³⁰And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. ³¹And all its fat he shall remove, as the fat is removed from the peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.

Lev 5:15-16 If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued^x in silver shekels,^y according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. ¹⁶He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven.

^x Or flock, or its equivalent

^y A shekel was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams



Lev 19:22 And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven for the sin that he has committed. 

Num 15:27-28 If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. ²⁸And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. 

1Chr 6:49 But Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense for all the work of the Most Holy Place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 

2Chr 29:20-24 Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the officials of the city and went up to the house of the LORD. ²¹And they brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. And he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the LORD. ²²So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests received the blood and threw it against the altar. And they slaughtered the rams, and their blood was thrown against the altar. And they slaughtered the lambs, and their blood was thrown against the altar. ²³Then the goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them, ²⁴and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel. 

✦ The priests also were to intercede in prayer on behalf of the people:

Joel 2:17 Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.^z Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" 

^z Or *reproach, that the nations should rule over them*

Apparently as a consequence of the people's sin (cf. vv. 12-13), an awesome plague of locusts had devastated the land. Thus here Joel relates God's call for the priests to pray for mercy on the people's behalf.

The high priest made atonement for Israel as a whole

Lev 4:13-21 If the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally^a and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and they realize their guilt,^b ¹⁴when the sin which they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull from the herd for a sin offering and bring it in front of the tent of meeting. ¹⁵And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be killed before the LORD. ¹⁶Then the anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting, ¹⁷and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the veil. ¹⁸And he shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is in the tent of meeting before the LORD, and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ¹⁹And all its fat he shall take from it and burn on the altar. ²⁰Thus shall he do with the bull. As he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven. ²¹And he shall carry the bull outside the camp and burn it up as he burned the first bull; it is the sin offering for the assembly. 

^a Or *makes a mistake*

^b Or *suffer for their guilt, or are guilty*; also verses 22, 27, and chapter 5

The "anointed priest" (v. 16) is the high priest, who is in view in the remainder of the passage.

Lev 9:7 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded." 

Lev 16:17, 24, 32-34 No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he [Aaron, the high priest] enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.  ... ²⁴And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people.  ... ³²And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments. ³³He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of



meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ³⁴And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins." And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. 

Note that v. 32 refers to future high priests.

Heb 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become *a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.* 

This may well have primarily in view the high priest's work in making "atonement and propitiation" (AMP) for the people as a whole. Note that "propitiation" means to turn away the wrath of God against sinners.

The offering of incense by the priests

Sweet smelling incense was regularly offered by priests to God, primarily in being burned before him (cf. **Ex 30:7-9** ↓), but also in being added to some other offerings (cf. **Lev 2:1-2, 15-16** ↓). This was to honor God with such a beautiful and pleasing aroma. The fact that the incense was costly was also honoring to God, in it being offered up to him. The practice was probably also in part to counteract the smell from some of the sacrifices.

Ex 30:7-9 And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, ⁸and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. ⁹You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. 

This refers to the altar of incense, one of the two altars in the tabernacle and later in the temple – the other being the altar of burnt offering. The altar of incense was located in the Holy Place, before the veil that concealed the Most Holy Place. On it the high priest regularly burnt the sweet smelling incense before God.

Deut 33:10 They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; *they shall put incense before you* and whole burnt offerings on your altar. 

1Chr 6:49 But Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense for all the work of the Most Holy Place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 

2Chr 13:10-11a But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him. We have priests ministering to the LORD who are sons of Aaron, and Levites for their service. ¹¹They offer to the LORD every morning and every evening burnt offerings and incense of sweet spices, set out the showbread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lampstand that its lamps may burn every evening. 

Lev 2:1-2, 15-16 When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it ²and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.  ... ¹⁵And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. ¹⁶And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the LORD. 

✦ **Lamps of olive oil were to be kept burning before God by the priests:**

Ex 27:20-21 You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn. ²¹In the tent of meeting, outside the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel. 

Note: Priests and Levites were given parts of the people's offerings, God being their inheritance

See also:

- *The parts of an offering's body were burnt or eaten*, p. 391

The priests and the other Levites were not given an inheritance of land when the Israelites conquered the promised land of Canaan, although they were given towns throughout the land (cf. **Num 35:1-8; Josh 21:1-42**). Instead God was to be their inheritance. One aspect of this inheritance was that much of what the Israelites gave to God in offerings – including parts of the sin and guilt offerings – was allocated to the priests and Levites, as provision for their households.

Num 18:8-15 Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, "Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due. ⁹This



shall be yours of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering of theirs and every sin offering of theirs and every guilt offering of theirs, which they render to me, shall be most holy to you and to your sons.

¹⁰In a most holy place shall you eat it. Every male may eat it; it is holy to you. ¹¹This also is yours: the contribution of their gift, all the wave offerings of the people of Israel. I have given them to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

¹²All the best of the oil and all the best of the wine and of the grain, the firstfruits of what they give to the LORD, I give to you.

¹³The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. ¹⁴Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.

¹⁵Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to the LORD, shall be yours. Nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. 

“Everything that opens the womb” (v. 15) refers to the firstborn of every womb.

Num 18:19-21, 24 All the holy contributions that the people of Israel present to the LORD I give to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. It is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD for you and for your offspring with you.” ²⁰And the LORD said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel. ²¹“To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting,  ... ²⁴For the tithe of the people of Israel, which they present as a contribution to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance. Therefore I have said of them that they shall have no inheritance among the people of Israel.” 

Similar to v. 21, later v. 32 says of the tithes given to the Levites, “... it is your reward in return for your service in the tent of meeting.”

Deut 18:1-4 The Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel. They shall eat the LORD’s food offerings^c as their^d inheritance. ²They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them. ³And this shall be the priests’ due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether an ox or a sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach. ⁴The firstfruits of your grain, of your wine and of your oil, and the first fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. 

^c Or the offerings by fire to the LORD

^d Hebrew *his*

Ezek 44:28-30 This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance: and you shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession. ²⁹They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering, and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. ³⁰And the first of all the firstfruits of all kinds, and every offering of all kinds from all your offerings, shall belong to the priests. You shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, that a blessing may rest on your house. 

Josh 13:33 But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel is their inheritance, just as he said to them. 

Josh 18:7a The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of the LORD is their heritage. 

In conjunction with the LORD being their inheritance, the priesthood of the LORD was likewise their heritage.

✦ From what was given to them, the Levites were to give a tithe as an offering:

Num 18:26 Moreover, you shall speak and say to the Levites, ‘When you take from the people of Israel the tithe that I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present a contribution from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe. 

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Ceremonial Cleanness

Alongside the regulations governing atonement for sin, the law had regulations for ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness – of which the latter, at least at times, like sin required atonement. These regulations regarding cleanness were based on the need for God’s people to be holy as he is holy. Holiness is essential if God’s people are to exist with him, for he does not abide with nor tolerate that which is not holy.

The stipulations as to what denoted ceremonial uncleanness were – largely at least – based on what was physically dirty or unhealthy. In contrast to such things God’s own holiness involves absolute purity and perfection – morally and



otherwise. Maintaining ceremonial cleanness in God's presence – particularly in deliberately approaching him, such as in worship – was in accordance with and an acknowledgement of God's holiness. As such the law demanded the Israelites be ceremonially clean.

Uncleanness also makes an apt parallel to and is correlated with that which is morally unholy. As such, maintaining ceremonial cleanness reinforced the need to maintain spiritual or moral cleanness – discerning and avoiding both sin and sources of it.

Subsections

- Because God is holy, his people must be holy – which included avoiding uncleanness
- Uncleanness largely came through contact with things that were unclean
- Creatures were designated as either clean or unclean for eating . . .
- . . . Other sources of uncleanness
- Uncleanness would defile God's dwelling place amidst his people – and so required isolation and cleansing
- While a person was unclean they could not participate in worship practices
- Cleansing typically involved washing and a purification period
- Uncleanness often required offerings for atonement
- Note: Spiritual purity is paralleled with cleanness, and sin with uncleanness

Because God is holy, his people must be holy – which included avoiding uncleanness

Lev 19:2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, *You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.* 

Lev 11:44-45 For I am the LORD your God. *Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground.* ⁴⁵For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. *You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.* 

Lev 20:24b-26 *I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.* ²⁵*You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set*

apart for you to hold unclean. ²⁶*You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.* 

Being holy involved being set apart (vv. 24b, 26) from not only unclean things and practices, but also from others who did not live as such (vv. 24b, 26b). This points to the need for believers today to be set apart from sinful practices and those who practice them.

Ex 22:31 *You shall be consecrated to me. Therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.* 

To eat anything found dead or torn by wild animals would result in one becoming unclean (cf. Lev 2:8).

Deut 23:9, 12-14 *When you are encamped against your enemies, then you shall keep yourself from every evil thing.*  *...¹²You shall have a place outside the camp, and you shall go out to it. ¹³And you shall have a trowel with your tools, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement. ¹⁴Because the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.* 

Given the context, "every evil thing" (v. 9) appears to have primarily in view anything ritually unclean.

Lev 10:10-11 *You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean,* ¹¹*and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.* 

The "common" (v. 10) or unholy (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NIV, NKJV) quite possibly has particularly in view things that could not be used or involved in worship – and in the ministry of the priests (cf. v. 9). Note that Ezekiel 44:23 is similar to these verses. It says regarding the priests, "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean."

Lev 15:31 *"Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst."* 

If any of the Israelites were unclean, it would defile God's holy tabernacle among them (cf. *Uncleanness would defile God's dwelling place amidst his people – and so required isolation and cleansing*, p. 405).



Isa 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there; *touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD.* 

The return from Babylonian exile appears to be primarily in view. God's people – in particular those who would carry the holy vessels which belonged to God's temple – were to avoid any "unclean thing".

Uncleanness largely came through contact with things that were unclean

See also:

▪ [Isa 52:11](#) 

Lev 5:2-3 ... or if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean wild animal or a carcass of unclean livestock or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it is hidden from him and he has become unclean, and he realizes his guilt; ³or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort the uncleanness may be with which one becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and realizes his guilt; ... 

Num 19:22 And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean, and anyone who touches it shall be unclean until evening. 

Lev 11:31-39 These are unclean to you among all that swarm. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. ³²And anything on which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is an article of wood or a garment or a skin or a sack, any article that is used for any purpose. It must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it shall be clean. ³³And if any of them falls into any earthenware vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it. ³⁴Any food in it that could be eaten, on which water comes, shall be unclean. And all drink that could be drunk from every such vessel shall be unclean. ³⁵And everything on which any part of their carcass falls shall be unclean. Whether oven or stove, it shall be broken in pieces. They are unclean and shall remain unclean for you. ³⁶Nevertheless, a spring or a cistern holding water shall be clean, but whoever touches a carcass in them shall be unclean. ³⁷And if any part of their carcass falls upon any seed grain that is to be sown, it is clean, ³⁸but if water is put on the seed and any part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you. ³⁹And if any animal which you may eat dies, whoever touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening, ... 

Note the exceptions given. A spring and a cistern were not deemed unclean (v. 36), perhaps because of the impracticalities involved and/or their large size minimizing any possibility of health issues. Dry seed did not become unclean (v. 37), in contrast to wet seed (v. 38), quite possibly because dry seeds had not begun to produce life and would not be affected.

Lev 15:2-7, 11 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, *When any man has a discharge from his body,^e his discharge is unclean.* ³And this is the law of his uncleanness for a discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is blocked up by his discharge, it is his uncleanness. ⁴Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. ⁵And anyone who touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. ⁶And whoever sits on anything on which the one with the discharge has sat shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. ⁷And whoever touches the body of the one with the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.  ... ¹¹Anyone whom the one with the discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 

^e Hebrew flesh; also verse 3

Lev 15:19, 24 When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening.  ... ²⁴And if any man lies with her and her menstrual impurity comes upon him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean. 

Lev 22:4b-6 Whoever touches anything that is unclean through contact with the dead or a man who has had an emission of semen, ⁵and whoever touches a swarming thing by which he may be made unclean or a person from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever his uncleanness may be— ⁶the person who touches such a thing shall be unclean until the evening and shall not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed his body in water. 

Num 19:11 Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days. 

Lev 7:19a "Flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned up with fire. 

"Flesh" appears here to denote meat (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).



Hag 2:12-13 "If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?" The priests answered and said, "No." ¹³Then Haggai said, "If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered and said, "It does become unclean." 

Creatures were designated as either clean or unclean for eating . . .

The groupings and the reasons given suggest that the distinctions between animals that were clean or unclean for eating were based on health reasons, although not all commentators would readily concur. Eating such unclean creatures would have left the Israelites vulnerable to disease. As such, making such distinctions was important for the people in keeping themselves holy. Note that contact with living animals that were unclean for eating did not make a person unclean, whereas contact with any dead animal did (apart from a clean animal that had been killed for food).

Lev 11:46-47 *This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, ⁴⁷to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.* 

Deut 14:3-8 You shall not eat any abomination. ⁴*These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex,^f the antelope, and the mountain sheep. ⁶Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. ⁷Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof, are unclean for you. ⁸And the pig, because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch.* 

^f Or *addax*

The precise meaning of "parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two" (v. 6) is debatable and thus the reason for the requirement is unclear. The requirement that edible animals chew the cud (v. 6) excludes meat-eating animals, which eat dead creatures and so are more likely to carry disease.

Deut 14:9-10 *Of all that are in the waters you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat. ¹⁰And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.* 

Water creatures that do not have fins and scales are apparently more susceptible to such things as parasites.

Deut 14:11-18 *You may eat all clean birds. ¹²But these are the ones that you shall not eat: the eagle,^g the bearded vulture, the black vulture, ¹³the kite, the falcon of any kind; ¹⁴every raven of any kind; ¹⁵the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind; ¹⁶the little owl and the short-eared owl, the barn owl ¹⁷and the tawny owl, the carrion vulture and the cormorant, ¹⁸the stork, the heron of any kind; the hoopoe and the bat.* 

^g The identity of many of these birds is uncertain

Such birds of prey of course have contact with dead animals.

Deut 14:19-21a *And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. ²⁰All clean winged things you may eat. ²¹"You shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.* 

Lev 11:20-22, 27a "All winged insects that go on all fours are detestable to you. ²¹Yet among the winged insects that go on all fours you may eat those that have jointed legs above their feet, with which to hop on the ground. ²²Of them you may eat: the locust of any kind, the bald locust of any kind, the cricket of any kind, and the grasshopper of any kind.  ... ²⁷And all that walk on their paws, among the animals that go on all fours, are unclean to you. 

Note that as insects have six legs, "go on all fours" (vv. 20, 21) may be a figure of speech.

Lev 11:42-44 *Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, any swarming thing that swarms on the ground, you shall not eat, for they are detestable. ⁴³You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and you shall not defile yourselves with them, and become unclean through them. ⁴⁴For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground.* 

Verse 42 appears to be describing "little creatures that crawl or walk close to the ground" (CEV), i.e. worms, snakes, rodents and insects. Note that creatures that "swarm" move in a large or dense group.



... Other sources of uncleanness

Lev 12:2, 4-5 Speak to the people of Israel, saying, *'If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean.* ²...⁴*Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying.* She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. ⁵*But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation.* And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days. ⁶

The reason for why giving birth rendered a woman ceremonially unclean appears to primarily concern her bleeding (v. 4; cf. v. 7). The expression "the blood of her purifying" speaks of the blood from childbirth from which she required purifying. Bodily discharges are prominent sources of ceremonial uncleanness (cf. [Lev 15:2-4 ↓](#); [Lev 15:16-19, 25 ↓](#)). The stipulations concerning them may well have been partly health related.

Lev 13:2-3 When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous^h disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests, ³and the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his body. And *if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a case of leprous disease. When the priest has examined him, he shall pronounce him unclean.* ⁴

^h Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases

Lev 13:51-52 Then he shall examine the disease on the seventh day. *If the disease has spread in the garment, in the warp or the woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, the disease is a persistent leprous disease; it is unclean.* ⁵²And he shall burn the garment, or the warp or the woof, the wool or the linen, or any article made of skin that is diseased, for it is a persistent leprous disease. It shall be burned in the fire. ⁵³

The "disease" in a garment appears to have been a type of mildew – as was that spoken of below in a house (cf. [Lev 14:43-46 ↓](#)). Such mildew was unclean as it was both contaminating and destructive.

Lev 14:43-46 If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, ⁴⁴then the priest shall go and look. And *if the disease has spread in the house, it is a persistent leprous disease in the house; it is unclean.* ⁴⁵And he shall break down the house, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the

house, and he shall carry them out of the city to an unclean place. ⁴⁶*Moreover, whoever enters the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening, ...* ⁴⁷

Lev 15:2-4 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, *When any man has a discharge from his body,ⁱ his discharge is unclean.* ³*And this is the law of his uncleanness for a discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is blocked up by his discharge, it is his uncleanness.* ⁴*Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean.* ⁵

ⁱ Hebrew *flesh*; also verse 3

It is not clear what the "discharge" is referring to. Possibilities include gonorrhoea and diarrhoea – or perhaps it is meant to be understood in a general sense.

Lev 15:16-19, 25 *If a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until the evening.* ¹⁷*And every garment and every skin on which the semen comes shall be washed with water and be unclean until the evening.* ¹⁸*If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe themselves in water and be unclean until the evening.* ¹⁹*When a woman has a discharge, and the discharge in her body is blood, she shall be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening.* ²⁰...²⁵*If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. As in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean.* ²⁶

Num 19:14-16 This is the law *when someone dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent and everyone who is in the tent shall be unclean seven days.* ¹⁵*And every open vessel that has no cover fastened on it is unclean.* ¹⁶*Whoever in the open field touches someone who was killed with a sword or who died naturally, or touches a human bone or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.* ¹⁷



Uncleanness would defile God's dwelling place amidst his people – and so required isolation and cleansing

See also:

- *Cleansing typically involved washing and a purification period*, p. 406

Lev 15:31 “Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.”

Num 5:1-3 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the people of Israel that they put out of the camp everyone who is leprous^j or has a discharge and everyone who is unclean through contact with the dead. ³You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell.”

^j Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Num 19:13, 20 *Whoever touches a dead person, the body of anyone who has died, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not thrown on him, he shall be unclean. His uncleanness is still on him. ...* ²⁰*If the man who is unclean does not cleanse himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, since he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. Because the water for impurity has not been thrown on him, he is unclean.*

This may be speaking of defiling the LORD'S sanctuary by: the unclean person's association with it, living in proximity to it; or the unclean person actually approaching it (cf. NCV), presumably in endeavoring to carry out an act of worship (as per the theme of the following subsection).

Lev 13:45-46 The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip^k and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ ⁴⁶*He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.*

^k Or *mustache*

A person with an infectious disease was to act as specified in v. 45 to warn others so that they would stay away, keeping the person separate from them.

Deut 23:10-11 *If any man among you becomes unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he shall go outside the camp. He shall not come inside the camp, ¹¹but when evening comes, he shall bathe himself in water, and as the sun sets, he may come inside the camp.*

Num 31:19, 24 *Encamp outside the camp seven days. Whoever of you has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. ...* ²⁴*You must wash your clothes on the seventh day, and you shall be clean. And afterward you may come into the camp.*

While a person was unclean they could not participate in worship practices

See also:

- **Num 19:13, 20** ↑

Ex 30:18-21 “You shall also make a basin of bronze, with its stand of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it, ¹⁹with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. ²⁰When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering¹ to the LORD, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. ²¹They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations.”

¹ Or *an offering by fire*

The priests were to wash themselves prior to entering God's sanctuary, presumably to both ensure and signify that they were ceremonially clean.

Lev 7:20-21 ... but the person who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings while an uncleanness is on him, that person shall be cut off from his people. ²¹And if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether human uncleanness or an unclean beast or any unclean detestable creature, and then eats some flesh from the sacrifice of the LORD's peace offerings, that person shall be cut off from his people.

Eating of the peace offering signified peace and communion with God. As such it was in essence an act of worship, for which one needed to be ceremonially clean. The same applied to the priests eating of the offerings (cf. **Lev 22:3-6** ↓).



Lev 12:4 Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. *She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed.* 

Lev 22:3-6 Say to them, ‘If any one of all your offspring throughout your generations approaches the holy things that the people of Israel dedicate to the LORD, while he has an uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD. ⁴None of the offspring of Aaron who has a leprous disease or a discharge may eat of the holy things until he is clean. Whoever touches anything that is unclean through contact with the dead or a man who has had an emission of semen, ⁵and whoever touches a swarming thing by which he may be made unclean or a person from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever his uncleanness may be— ⁶the person who touches such a thing shall be unclean until the evening and shall not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed his body in water.’ 

Num 9:6 And there were certain men who were unclean through touching a dead body, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day, and they came before Moses and Aaron on that day. 

1Sam 20:24-26 So David hid himself in the field. And when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food. ²⁵The king sat on his seat, as at other times, on the seat by the wall. Jonathan sat opposite,^m and Abner sat by Saul’s side, but David’s place was empty. ²⁶Yet Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, “Something has happened to him. He is not clean; surely he is not clean.” 

^m Compare Septuagint; Hebrew *stood up*

The New Moon festival was an aspect of Israel’s worship of God. Saul presumed that David did not participate in it because of uncleanness.

2Chr 23:19 He stationed the gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the LORD so that no one should enter who was in any way unclean. 

2Chr 30:17 For there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves. Therefore the Levites had to slaughter the Passover lamb for everyone who was not clean, to consecrate it to the LORD. 

Many of the people had not consecrated themselves, which here points to them not being ceremonially clean. Thus the Levites – who had consecrated themselves (cf. v. 15) – had to perform the act of worship for them.

✦ Objects such as the altar had to be purified and consecrated prior to being used in worship:

Ex 29:36-37 ... and every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement. Also you shall purify the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it to consecrate it. ³⁷Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar shall become holy. 

Cleansing typically involved washing and a purification period

See also:

- [Lev 12:4](#) ↑
- [Lev 12:6](#) ↓; [Lev 15:13](#) ↓; [Lev 15:28](#) ↓

Note that the other subsections in this chapter section contain a good number of other examples illustrating the truth of this subheading’s teaching.

Lev 12:5 But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days. 

Lev 14:2-3, 8-9 This shall be the law of the leprous person for the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest, ³and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look. Then, if the case of leprous disease is healed in the leprous person,  ... ⁸And he who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent seven days. ⁹And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair from his head, his beard, and his eyebrows. He shall shave off all his hair, and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean. 

Verse 8 speaks of a period of semi-isolation, not living in close proximity with others.

Lev 15:7, 13 And whoever touches the body of the one with the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.  ... ¹³“And when the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes. And he shall bathe his body in fresh water and shall be clean.” 



Lev 17:15 And every person *who eats what dies of itself or what is torn by beasts, whether he is a native or a sojourner, shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening; then he shall be clean.* 

Num 19:16-19 Whoever in the open field touches someone who was killed with a sword or who died naturally, or touches a human bone or a grave, *shall be unclean seven days.* ¹⁷*For the unclean they shall take some ashes of the burnt sin offering, and freshⁿ water shall be added in a vessel.* ¹⁸*Then a clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water and sprinkle it on the tent and on all the furnishings and on the persons who were there and on whoever touched the bone, or the slain or the dead or the grave.* ¹⁹*And the clean person shall sprinkle it on the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day. Thus on the seventh day he shall cleanse him, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and at evening he shall be clean.* 

ⁿ Hebrew *living*

The hyssop (v. 18) is a shrub of the mint family which has medicinal properties, possibly the reason for its use.

✦ Objects that had become unclean were cleansed or broken:

Lev 11:31-33 These are unclean to you among all that swarm. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. ³²*And anything on which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is an article of wood or a garment or a skin or a sack, any article that is used for any purpose. It must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it shall be clean.* ³³*And if any of them falls into any earthenware vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it.* 

Uncleanness often required offerings for atonement

Uncleanness was contrary to God's holiness and, in accordance, also to his law. As such atonement for uncleanness was required.

Lev 5:1-6 If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity; ²*or if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean wild animal or a carcass of unclean livestock or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it is hidden from him and he has become unclean, and he realizes his guilt;* ³*or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort the uncleanness may be with which one becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and*

realizes his guilt; ⁴*or if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that people swear, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and he realizes his guilt in any of these;* ⁵*when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed,* ⁶*he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation^o for the sin that he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin.* 

^o Hebrew *his guilt penalty*; so throughout Leviticus

This portrays uncleanness as sin, or at least akin to sin. For examples of uncleanness (vv. 2-3) are listed with other sins (vv. 1, 4), they are referred to as sin (vv. 5-6), and they required a sin offering for atonement (v. 6). Each of the following passages from Leviticus also speak of types of uncleanness requiring a sin offering in order to make atonement.

Lev 12:6-8 *“And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, ⁷and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. ⁸And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons,^p one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”* 

^p Septuagint *two young pigeons*

Note that in accordance with v. 8, Luke 2:22-24 records Mary bringing such a sacrifice after Jesus' birth.

Lev 14:10-11, 19-20 *And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish, and a grain offering of three tenths of an ephah^q of fine flour mixed with oil, and one log^r of oil.* ¹¹*And the priest who cleanses him shall set the man who is to be cleansed and these things before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting.*  ... ¹⁹*The priest shall offer the sin offering, to make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. And afterward he shall kill the burnt offering.* ²⁰*And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.* 

^q An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters

^r A *log* was about 1/3 quart or 0.3 liter

These are part of the regulations for the cleansing of a diseased person (cf. vv. 2-3, 8-9 ↑).



Lev 15:13-15 And when the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes. And he shall bathe his body in fresh water and shall be clean. ¹⁴And on the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. ¹⁵And the priest shall use them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD for his discharge. 

Lev 15:28-30 But if she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. ²⁹And on the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. ³⁰And the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge. 

‡ A leper Jesus healed was to offer the sacrifices for cleansing:

Mark 1:41-44 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” ⁴²And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” 

^s Greek he; also verse 45

Jesus’ ministry took place under the old covenant. Thus he required that the man observe the regulations regarding sacrifices for cleansing.

Note: Spiritual purity is paralleled with cleanness, and sin with uncleanness

See also:

- [Lev 5:1-6](#) 
- [Spiritual defilement . . .](#), p. 372
- [. . . Spiritual uncleanness](#), p. 372

Job 33:9 You say, ‘I am pure, without transgression; I am clean, and there is no iniquity in me.’ 

Ps 24:3-4 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. 

Prov 20:9 Who can say, “I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin”? 

Ps 51:3, 7 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  ... ⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 

Here as in some of the following passages, cleansing from sin is paralleled with cleansing from ceremonial uncleanness.

Isa 1:15-16 When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; *your hands are full of blood.* ¹⁶Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ... 

Ezek 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 

Isa 35:8 And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.^t 

^t Or if they are fools, they shall not wander in it

This contrasts holiness with uncleanness. As such it associates holiness or spiritual purity with cleanness, and sin with uncleanness.

Isa 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there; *touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD.* 

The phrase “no unclean thing” here quite possibly refers figuratively to – or is at least inclusive of – sinful things rather than simply or only ceremonially unclean things.

Lev 16:16 Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. 

Here uncleanness and sin are at least being associated. The implication may well be that the rebellion and sin of the Israelites contributed to their unclean state.

Isa 64:5b-6a Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?^u ⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. 

^u Or in your ways is continuance, that we might be saved



For comment on v. 6a, see [Isa 64:6a](#) – under *No one is righteous before God*, p. 367.

Lam 1:8 *Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns her face away.*



Ezek 36:17 Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. *Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity.*

Matt 23:25-28 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! *For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.* ²⁶*You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.* ²⁷*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.* ²⁸*So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

In vv. 25-26 Jesus uses a metaphor based on the cleaning of cups and plates or dishes, to teach that if the Jewish leaders would cleanse their inner selves, then their outward behavior would also be clean in God's sight.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Epilogue: Israel's Persistence in Sin

Despite the Mosaic Law's provision for Israel's sin, the Israelites as a whole persisted in sin – rebelling against God and breaking his covenant with them. This showed that ultimately the law was not sufficient to deal with sin.

Subsections

- [Israel's sin and rebellion in the wilderness](#)
- [Israel's sin and unfaithfulness during the time of the judges](#)
- [Israel's sinful demand for a king – and the choice of Saul](#)
- [Solomon's unfaithfulness and the consequent division of the kingdom under his son, Rehoboam . . .](#)

- . . . Jeroboam's subsequent archetypical apostasy in the northern kingdom
- Some kings in Judah did lead the people in godly ways . . .
- . . . but ultimately both kingdoms of Israel failed to keep God's laws and broke his covenant
- Note: The people polluted and defiled the land by their sin

Israel's sin and rebellion in the wilderness

God gave Israel his law early on in its journey from Egypt to the promised land. Despite this, Israel regularly sinned and rebelled against God throughout its wilderness journey.

Deut 9:7, 16, 22 Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. *From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.* . . . ¹⁶*And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God. You had made yourselves a golden^v calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had commanded you.* . . . ²²*At Taberah also, and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath.*

^v Hebrew *cast-metal*

Ps 78:17-19, 40-41, 56 *Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert.* ¹⁸*They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved.* ¹⁹*They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?"* . . . ⁴⁰*How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert!* ⁴¹*They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel.* . . . ⁵⁶*Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep his testimonies, . . .*

Ps 95:7b-10 Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸*do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,* ⁹*when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.* ¹⁰*For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways."*

Ezek 20:13a *But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned.*

Neh 9:16-19a *"But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments.* ¹⁷*They refused to obey and were not mindful*



of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. ¹⁸Even when they had made for themselves a golden^w calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, ¹⁹you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. 

^w Hebrew metal

✦ **The people's refusal to go in and take the land – and the consequences:**

Num 13:31; 14:2-3, 26-33 Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are."  ... ^{14:2}And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"  ... ²⁶And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²⁷"How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumblings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. ²⁸Say to them, 'As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ³⁰not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. ³²But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. ³³And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness." 

Israel's sin and unfaithfulness during the time of the judges

See also:

- **1Sam 8:7-8** 

The "judges" – from which the book of Judges takes its name – were the occasional leaders of Israel during the time following Joshua (and the settling of the promised land) until

the death of Samuel, Israel's last judge. The Israelites were often unfaithful to God during this time, whereupon God would use their enemies to punish them – leading them to repent. Then God would raise up a judge to unite the scattered tribes of Israel to repel the common enemy and bring the Israelites back to worshipping him.

Judg 2:10-15 And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. ¹¹And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. ¹²And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. ¹⁴So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. ¹⁵Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress. 

Judg 2:16-22 Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. ¹⁷Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so. ¹⁸Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. ¹⁹But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. ²⁰So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he said, "Because this people has transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, ²¹I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, ²²in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not." 

Judg 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. 



The second part of the verse indicates that the people were doing what they wanted, rather than what was right in God's eyes. The verse is repeated verbatim in the last verse of Judges (21:25), reflecting generally on the period of the Judges.

✦ Samuel's godly leadership of Israel:

1Sam 7:3-6, 15-16 And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."⁴ So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the LORD only.⁵ Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you."⁶ So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah. ¶ ...¹⁵ Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.¹⁶ And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. ¶

Israel's sinful demand for a king – and the choice of Saul

Israel's demand for a king was sinful as it was in effect a rejection of God as her king. But nevertheless the kingship was part of God's overall plan for Israel (cf. Deut 17:14-15) and God allowed its institution.

1Sam 8:4-9 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah⁵ and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations."⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."⁸ According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.⁹ Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." ¶

1Sam 10:17-21a, 24 Now Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah.¹⁸ And he said to the people of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were

oppressing you.'¹⁹ But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, 'Set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your thousands."²⁰ Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot.²¹ He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot;^x and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot. ¶ ...²⁴ And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!" ¶

^x Septuagint adds *finally he brought the family of the Matrites near, man by man*

1Sam 12:12-20 And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God was your king.¹³ And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you.¹⁴ If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well.¹⁵ But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king.^y¹⁶ Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes.¹⁷ Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for yourselves a king."¹⁸ So Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.¹⁹ And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king."²⁰ And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. ¶

^y Septuagint; Hebrew *fathers*

✦ Saul's failure as king:

1Sam 15:10-11a, 19, 23, 27-28 The word of the LORD came to Samuel:¹¹ "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." ¶ ... [Samuel, to Saul:]¹⁹ Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" ¶ ...²³ For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as



iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.”  ... ²⁷As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. ²⁸And Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. 

Saul was instructed to totally destroy the Amalekites and everything that belonged to them for what they had done to Israel (cf. v. 3), but he failed to do so (v. 19; cf. v. 9). In v. 28 Samuel makes reference to David, who would follow Saul as king and be faithful to God (cf. [f\) God's Dealings and Covenant with David](#), p. 352). David would in turn be followed by his son Solomon.

Solomon's unfaithfulness and the consequent division of the kingdom under his son, Rehoboam . . .

1Ki 11:1-6 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. ³He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. ⁴For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. 

1Ki 11:9-13 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice ¹⁰and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. ¹¹Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. ¹²Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.” 

1Ki 11:31-33, 39 And he [the prophet Ahijah] said to Jeroboam, “Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes’ ³²(but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), ³³because they have^z forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules, as David his father did.  ... ³⁹And I will afflict the offspring of David because of this, but not forever.” 

^z Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate *he has*; twice in this verse

Note that Solomon may well be primarily in view in v. 33a (cf. text note, CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

1Ki 12:1-5, 12-16 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. ²And as soon as Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from^a Egypt. ³And they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, ⁴“Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you.” ⁵He said to them, “Go away for three days, then come again to me.” So the people went away.  ... ¹²So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king said, “Come to me again the third day.” ¹³And the king answered the people harshly, and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him, ¹⁴he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” ¹⁵So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. ¹⁶And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David.” So Israel went to their tents. 

^a Septuagint, Vulgate (compare 2 Chronicles 10:2); Hebrew *lived in*

1Ki 12:19-24 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. ²⁰And when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. There was none that followed



the house of David but the tribe of Judah only. ²¹When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. ²²But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: ²³"Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, ²⁴*Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up or fight against your relatives the people of Israel. Every man return to his home, for this thing is from me.*" So they listened to the word of the LORD and went home again, according to the word of the LORD. 

Note that although the tribe of Benjamin is not mentioned initially as remaining loyal to Rehoboam (v. 20), it would appear that it soon did so, or that at least a notable portion of it did (v. 21). As such, Benjamin is often mentioned along with Judah in the remainder of OT history, even in the return from the Babylonian exile (cf. Ezra 1:5; 4:1; 10:9; Neh 1:4-9, 36).

. . . Jeroboam's subsequent archetypical apostasy in the northern kingdom

Following the division of Israel, Jeroboam was the first king of the breakaway northern kingdom, which was simply called "Israel". Jeroboam was concerned that if his people went to worship at the temple in Jerusalem – in the southern kingdom of Judah – he would risk losing his kingdom. He thus decided to institute false gods and an alternative system of worship. The false worship that Jeroboam instituted persisted throughout the existence of the northern kingdom of Israel, until the kingdom's demise.

1Ki 12:26-32 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. ²⁷If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." ²⁸*So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."* ²⁹*And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.* ³⁰*Then this thing became a sin, for the people went as far as Dan to be before one.*^b ³¹*He also made temples on high places and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not of the Levites.* ³²*And Jeroboam appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel,*

sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. 

^b Septuagint went to the one at Bethel and to the other as far as Dan

1Ki 13:33-34 After this thing Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but made priests for the high places again from among all the people. Any who would, he ordained to be priests of the high places. ³⁴*And this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth.* 

1Ki 16:1-3, 18-19, 25-26, 30-31 And the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha [king of Israel], saying, ²"Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and *you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins,* ³behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.  ... ¹⁸And when Zimri [king of Israel] saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire and died, ¹⁹because of *his sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and for his sin which he committed, making Israel to sin.*  ... ²⁵Omri [king of Israel] did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did more evil than all who were before him. ²⁶*For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols.*  ... ³⁰And Ahab [king of Israel] the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. ³¹*And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat,* he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. 

Here in one chapter four kings of Israel – Baasha, Zimri, Omri and the infamous Ahab – are each said to have followed the unfaithful ways of Jeroboam.

2Ki 17:21-23 When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. ²²*The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them,* ²³until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day. 



‡ The southern kingdom of Judah also was unfaithful to God:

2Chr 12:1-2 When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he was strong, *he abandoned the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.* ²*In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem ...* 

Here "Israel" refers in particular to the people of Judah (cf. CEV, NCV).

Some kings in Judah did lead the people in godly ways . . .

2Chr 14:2-5 ^c *And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God.* ³*He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim* ⁴*and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment.* ⁵*He also took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars. And the kingdom had rest under him.* 

^c Ch 14:1 in Hebrew

Verses 3, 5 speak of Asa removing things involved in worship of false gods.

2Chr 15:9-17 *And he [King Asa] gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.* ¹⁰*They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.* ¹¹*They sacrificed to the LORD on that day from the spoil that they had brought 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep.* ¹²*And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul,* ¹³*but that whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman.* ¹⁴*They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns.* ¹⁵*And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.* ¹⁶*Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron.* ¹⁷*But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days.* 

2Chr 19:4, 8-10a *Jehoshaphat lived at Jerusalem. And he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the*

God of their fathers.  ... ⁸*Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem.* ⁹*And he charged them: "Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: ¹⁰whenever a case comes to you from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or rules, then you shall warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers.* 

2Ki 18:3-7a *And he [King Hezekiah] did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.* ⁴*He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).* ⁴ ⁵*He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him.* ⁶*For he held fast to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses.* ⁷*And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered.* 

^d *Nehushtan* sounds like the Hebrew for both *bronze* and *serpent*

2Ki 23:1-3, 21-25 *Then the king [Josiah] sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him.* ²*And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD.* ³*And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.*  ... ²¹*And the king commanded all the people, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant."* ²²*For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah.* ²³*But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.* ²⁴*Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.* ²⁵*Before him there was no king*



like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him. 

... but ultimately both kingdoms of Israel failed to keep God's laws and broke his covenant

2Ki 17:15-16 *They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them. ¹⁶And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.* 

2Ki 18:11-12 The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, ¹²because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened nor obeyed. 

Ps 78:9-10, 37 *The Ephraimites, armed with^e the bow, turned back on the day of battle. ¹⁰They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law.  ... ³⁷Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant.* 

^e Hebrew *armed and shooting*

Jer 11:10 *They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers.* 

Jer 31:31-32 Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 

Ezek 16:59 For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, ... 

Hos 6:7 But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me. 

Hos 8:1 Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law. 

With the reference to a "vulture" Hosea portrays Israel's enemy as being poised to attack her.

✦ So, Israel failed to fulfill the law and gain righteousness:

Rom 9:31 ... but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness^f did not succeed in reaching that law. 

^f Greek a law of righteousness

Note: The people polluted and defiled the land by their sin

Ps 106:38 ... they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood. 

Jer 3:2b, 9 *You have polluted the land with your vile whoredom.  ... ⁹Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree.* 

The final clause refers to Israel's unfaithfulness to God in worshipping idols – made of stone and wood.

Jer 16:18 But first I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations. 

Jer 2:7 And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination. 

Ezek 36:17-18 Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity. ¹⁸So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. 

✦ The people had been warned not to pollute the land:

Num 35:33 You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. 



Pray for persecuted Christians



God's Judgment

I. Basics

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I. Basics

The fact that God does and will judge us is one of the Bible's key teachings, without which the significance of other key Bible teachings is lost – notably that of salvation. An understanding of it is also vital to understanding God himself. Additionally, bear in mind that God's judgment – being just and righteous – actually gives his people much reason to be encouraged.

a) God Is the Judge of the World

Subsections

- God is judge . . .
- . . . God is the judge of the whole earth
- God makes judgments in the world
- God judges nations
- God judges individuals – including rulers
- God judges his own people
- God judges evil spiritual powers

God is judge . . .

Ps 50:6 The heavens declare his righteousness, for *God himself is judge!* Selah 

Ps 75:7 ... but *it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.* 

Deut 1:17a You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for *the judgment is God's.* 

Ultimately judgment belongs to God. As such, when making judgments, judges are in a real sense “judging in the place of God” (NLT).

Judg 11:27 I therefore have not sinned against you, and you do me wrong by making war on me. *The LORD, the Judge,* decide this day between the people of Israel and the people of Ammon. 

The LORD is “the Judge” – the one to whom judgment ultimately belongs.

John 8:50 Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and *he is the judge.* 

Heb 12:23b ... to *God, the judge of all,* and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ... 

James 4:12 *There is only one lawgiver and judge,* he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? 

God is being spoken of here (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Dan 7:9-10 As I looked, thrones were placed, and *the Ancient of Days took his seat;* his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; *the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.* 

This depicts God taking his seat (v. 9) as the supreme judge in the heavenly court, to judge the figures or kingdoms in question (cf. vv. 3-8), whose deeds have been recorded in the books that were opened (v. 10).

Ps 82:1 *God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: ...* 

The phrases “the divine council” and “in the midst of the gods” appear to portray angelic beings surrounding God's throne as he begins to make judgment, as the supreme judge.

. . . God is the judge of the whole earth

See also:

- [Gen 6:7, 13, 17](#) ↓

Gen 18:25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not *the Judge of all the earth* do what is just? 

This is part of Abraham's appeal to God to spare the righteous amidst the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah from looming judgment.

Ps 94:2 Rise up, *O judge of the earth;* repay to the proud what they deserve! 

1Sam 2:10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. *The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;* he will give strength to his king and exalt the power^a of his anointed. 



^a Hebrew *horn*

Ps 58:11 Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth." 📖

Ps 98:9 ... before the LORD, for *he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.* 📖

Jer 25:29b You shall not go unpunished, for *I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the LORD of hosts.* 📖

The reference is to God's judgment of other nations of Jeremiah's time.

God makes judgments in the world

1Chr 16:12, 14 Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and *the judgments he uttered,* 📖 ... ¹⁴He is the LORD our God; *his judgments are in all the earth.* 📖

Although we may still long for God's judgment on certain matters, the Bible asserts that God does make judgments in the world in the present time – the extent of which we will not know in this life.

Ps 7:11 *God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.* 📖

With the preceding description of God as a "righteous judge", the latter part of this verse may have in view God expressing his wrath in judgment every day (cf. CEV, NIV).

Ps 48:10-11 As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness. ¹¹Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice *because of your judgments!* 📖

Ps 75:8 For *in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.* 📖

God's judgment is pictured as a cup of wine (cf. **Jer 25:15-16** ↓) – "foaming" and "well mixed", i.e. very potent.

Ps 76:8-9 *From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, ⁹when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. Selah* 📖

Isa 26:9b For *when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.* 📖

Gen 6:7, 13, 17 So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and

creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." 📖 ... ¹³And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh,^b for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 📖 ... ¹⁷For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. 📖

^b Hebrew *The end of all flesh has come before me*

God judges nations

Ps 7:8a *The LORD judges the peoples ...* 📖

Ps 110:6 *He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs^c over the wide earth.* 📖

^c Or *the head*

Isa 2:4 *He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.* 📖

The end of the age is in view here.

Isa 34:5 For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, *it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.* 📖

Note that the first clause may be referring to either: God's "sword" or means of judgment being prepared in heaven (cf. AMP, GNT); the appearance of this "sword" in the skies (cf. CEV text note), ready to descend; or the fate of the skies in the end times.

Isa 63:6 *I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.* 📖

Jer 25:15-16, 31-32 Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. ¹⁶They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them." 📖 ... ³¹The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh, and the wicked he will put to the sword, declares the LORD.' ³²"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, disaster is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth! 📖



Jer 51:9, 56 We would have healed Babylon, but she was not healed. Forsake her, and let us go each to his own country, for *her judgment has reached up to heaven and has been lifted up even to the skies.* ... ⁵⁶*for a destroyer has come upon her, upon Babylon; her warriors are taken; their bows are broken in pieces, for the LORD is a God of recompense; he will surely repay.*

Joel 3:2, 12-13 *I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, ...* ¹²*Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.* ¹³*Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.*

Here and in the following two passages, God's final judgment appears to be ultimately in view.

Obad 1:15-16 *For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.* ¹⁶*For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually; they shall drink and swallow, and shall be as though they had never been.*

Zeph 3:8 "Therefore wait for me," declares the LORD, "for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed."

God judges individuals – including rulers

See also:

- [Ps 110:6](#) ↑
- [God will judge every person, for all they have done . . .](#), p. 707

Ezek 33:20b O house of Israel, *I will judge each of you according to his ways.*

Ps 7:8 The LORD judges the peoples; *judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me.*

Here David asks God to vindicate him by his judgment (cf. NASB).

Ps 75:7 ... *but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.*

Isa 66:16 *For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many.*

This has in view judgment of the wicked in the end times – either at the beginning of a millennium (see the introductory comments on [f\) Jesus Christ's Universal Rule](#), p. 717, and its first subsection, *Prelude: The thousand years*) or in God's final judgment.

Heb 12:23b ... *to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ...*

Gen 4:9-12 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" ¹⁰And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."

Gen 31:53 *The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.* So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac, ...

Acts 13:10-11 ... and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.

Job 21:22 Will any teach God knowledge, seeing that *he judges those who are on high?*

The phrase "those who are on high" refers to authorities (cf. CEV), or at least individuals with great influence or importance. Possibly "the angels in heaven" (NirV®) are in view.

Isa 24:21 *On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth.*

Dan 4:31-33 While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell *a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, ³²and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall*



be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.”³³Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like birds’ claws. 

Dan 5:24-28, 30 “Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. ²⁶This is the interpretation of the matter: *MENE, God has numbered^d the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end;* ²⁷*TEKEL, you have been weighed^e in the balances and found wanting;* ²⁸*PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”^f  ... ³⁰That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. *

^d MENE sounds like the Aramaic for numbered

^e TEKEL sounds like the Aramaic for weighed

^f PERES (the singular of Parsin) sounds like the Aramaic for divided and for Persia

Rev 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave^g and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” 

^g Or servant; Greek bondservant

God judges his own people

See also:

- [To punish sin and unfaithfulness](#) [reasons for God’s judgment], p. 422
- [To discipline and cleanse God’s people](#), p. 423

Deut 33:21 He chose the best of the land for himself, for there a commander’s portion was reserved; and he came with the heads of the people, with Israel he executed the justice of the LORD, and *his judgments for Israel.* 

Ps 50:4-5 He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, *that he may judge his people:* ⁵“Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!” 

God judged his people according to his covenant with them, reflected in this psalm by his implied criticism and

exhortations to the people in general (cf. vv. 7-15); and his stinging attack and threat of destruction to the wicked amongst them (cf. vv. 16-23).

Isa 3:14 *The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people:* “It is you who have devoured^h the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. 

^h Or grazed over; compare Exodus 22:5

Isa 33:22 *For the LORD is our judge;* the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us. 

The OT concept of “judge” encompassed other governing roles besides just judicial functions, as is arguably alluded to by this verse.

Ezek 20:35-36 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and *there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.* ³⁶*As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord GOD.* 

Ezek 34:20-22 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: *Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.* ²¹Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, ²²I will rescueⁱ my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And *I will judge between sheep and sheep.* 

ⁱ Or save

Heb 10:30 For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “*The Lord will judge his people.*” 

A reference in v. 27 to the fearful judgment awaiting apostates, implies that the final judgment is primarily in view here (as is the case with the following reference).

James 2:12-13 So speak and so act as *those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.* ¹³For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. 

Here “the law” may well be referring to ‘the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,”’ (v. 8), or the law or teachings of the second covenant – including Jesus’ teaching and the OT as interpreted by the NT. Although it is a law that sets us free rather than being a burden to obey, by the same token judgment by such a law will be more demanding.



God judges evil spiritual powers

Gen 3:14-15 *The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^j and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

^j Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis

This serpent that tempted Eve (cf. vv. 1-7) is generally considered to be representative of or even a manifestation of Satan. As such, the judgment of it and the implications for its "offspring" appears to have an application to Satan and evil powers.

1Tim 3:6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into *the condemnation of the devil*.

The reference to the condemnation of the devil most likely is speaking of facing the same judgment as the devil does. Another interpretation is that it is referring to falling from a high position just as the devil is understood to have done.

Rev 20:10 ... and *the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever*.

Isa 24:21 *On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth*.

Evil spiritual powers are in view in the first part of this verse.

2Pet 2:4 For if *God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell^k and committed them to chains^l of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ...*

^k Greek *Tartarus*

^l Some manuscripts *pits*

Evil angels are spoken of here and in Jude 1:6 below.

Jude 1:6 *And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—*

✦ **God's judgment on the Egyptian gods:**

Num 33:4 ... while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them. *On their gods also the LORD executed judgments*.

The "judgments" on the Egyptian gods may in part at least have in view God striking down the firstborn of all the Egyptians. For the writer may have meant that in striking such a telling blow on the Egyptians, the LORD proved the uselessness of their gods. Alternatively he may have simply meant that such a punishment was a judgment on the Egyptians and in a sense on the supposed gods that they trusted in.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Reasons for God's Judgment

Subsections

- To punish sin and unfaithfulness
- To discipline and cleanse God's people
- To punish the ungodly . . .
- . . . and to exact just vengeance
- To save God's people
- To vindicate God's people
- To reward God's people
- Note: God's judgments serve as examples and warnings to others

To punish sin and unfaithfulness

See also:

- *e) Sin Brings God's Judgment – Ultimately Death*, p. 377

Dan 9:11 *All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him*.

Isa 13:11 *I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless*.

Heb 10:26-27 *For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries*.



Rev 18:5, 8 ... for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ... ⁸For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.

Jer 1:16 And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.

Ezek 17:20 I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treachery he has committed against me.

2Chr 24:24 Though the army of the Syrians had come with few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army, because Judah^m had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.

^m Hebrew they

Joash was king of Judah and was responsible for it forsaking God.

Hos 6:5, 7 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. ... ⁷But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.

To discipline and cleanse God's people

See also:

- *d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons*, p. 869

1Cor 11:28-32 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body *eats and drinks judgment on himself*. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.ⁿ ³¹But if we judged^o ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined^p so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

ⁿ Greek *have fallen asleep* (as in 15:6, 20)

^o Or *discerned*

^p Or *when we are judged we are being disciplined by the Lord*

1Pet 4:16-17 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

The judgment of the family of God (v. 17) apparently refers to the persecution that believers were experiencing (v. 16), a form of disciplinary or purifying judgment.

Isa 4:3-4 And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, ⁴when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.^q

^q Or *purging*

The term "spirit of judgment" (v. 4) alludes to actual judgment (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIRV), cleansing Jerusalem of wickedness. This judgment would lead to the cleansing of God's people as a whole (cf. [Ezek 20:36, 38](#) ↓).

Ezek 20:36, 38 As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord God. ... ³⁸I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Such purging of the rebellious from amongst God's people (v. 38) – by his judgment (v. 36) – was a cleansing of the people.

Mal 3:1-5 Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For *he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap*. ³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.^r ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. ⁵"Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.



^r Or *and they will belong to the LORD, bringers of an offering in righteousness*

This seems to be speaking of God judging his people (v. 5a), through Jesus Christ on his return (vv. 2-4). By this judgment God will purify his people (vv. 2b-3), dealing with all living among them who do evil (v. 5). Note that in referring to "the Lord", 1 Corinthians 11:28-32 above is probably also speaking of judgment by Jesus Christ.

✦ God's judgments teach people to live rightly:

Isa 26:9b For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

To punish the ungodly . . .

See also:

- c) *The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment*, p. 452
- d) *Repayments for the Wicked and the Righteous*, p. 460
- *God's wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness*, p. 709
- e) *The Punishment for the Ungodly*, p. 749

Jer 25:31 The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against the nations; *he is entering into judgment with all flesh, and the wicked he will put to the sword*, declares the LORD.

Ezek 7:3 Now the end is upon you, and I will send my anger upon you; *I will judge you according to your ways, and I will punish you for all your abominations*.

2Pet 2:9 ... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^s and *to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment*, ...

^s Or *temptations*

This can be interpreted as either: meaning that God persistently punishes such unrighteous people even prior to judgment day; or as speaking of them being kept for their ultimate punishment – spiritual death – to be pronounced on judgment day.

2Pet 3:7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until *the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly*.

Isa 3:14 *The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured^t the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses*.

^t Or *grazed over*; compare Exodus 22:5

Ps 94:2 *Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!*

. . . and to exact just vengeance

See also:

- **Isa 34:8**
- *God will take vengeance on those who persecute Israel*, p. 992
- *Note: God will take vengeance on those who persecute his people*, p. 2004

Rev 19:2 ... for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."^u

^u Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

The reference is to the symbolic Babylon (cf. *The guilt and consequent judgment of "Babylon the Great"*, p. 695).

Deut 32:35, 41 *Vengeance is mine, and recompense,^v for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.*' ... ⁴¹*if I sharpen my flashing sword^w and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and will repay those who hate me*.

^v Septuagint *and I will repay*

^w Hebrew *the lightning of my sword*

1Sam 24:12 *May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you*.

2Ki 9:7 *And you shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD*.

Jer 11:20 *But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause*.

Jer 51:11, 24, 36-37 *Sharpen the arrows! Take up the shields! The LORD has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because his purpose concerning Babylon is to destroy it, for that is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance for his temple*. ... ²⁴*I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the LORD*. ... ³⁶*Therefore thus says the LORD:*



“Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you. I will dry up her sea and make her fountain dry,³⁷ and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing, without inhabitant.”

Joel 3:2, 19 I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, ... ¹⁹“Egypt shall become a desolation and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.”

Rom 12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it^x to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

^x Greek *give place*

To save God’s people

Ex 6:6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.’

1Sam 24:15 *May the LORD therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand.*

Ps 76:8-9 *From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, ⁹when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth.* Selah

The “humble of the earth” appears to refer to the “oppressed of the earth” (GNT, NKJV, NRSV), although the “humble” (NASB) or the afflicted amongst God’s people (cf. NIV) may primarily be in view.

Isa 34:8 *For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.*

The final clause encompasses God’s salvation or defense of his people (cf. CEV, GNT; [Jer 51:36](#)).

Ezek 34:20-22 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, ²²I will rescue^y my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep.

^y Or *save*

God would make judgments concerning the powerful and weak among his people (his “flock”). He would thus save his flock from the powerful among them who mistreated the others.

Dan 7:21-22 As I looked, *this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,²² until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.*

Ps 36:6 Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD.

Note that God’s people are not exclusively in view in this verse and Isaiah 51:5 below.

Isa 51:5 My righteousness draws near, *my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples;* the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.

To vindicate God’s people

1Ki 8:32 ... then hear in heaven and act and *judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.*

Jer 51:9-10 We would have healed Babylon, but she was not healed. Forsake her, and let us go each to his own country, *for her judgment has reached up to heaven and has been lifted up even to the skies. ¹⁰The LORD has brought about our vindication;* come, let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

Deut 32:36 *For the LORD will vindicate^z his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone and there is none remaining, bond or free.*

^z Septuagint *judge*

God’s judgment, in favor of his people, may be in view here in association with his vindication of his people, as suggested by the alternative rendering in the text note (cf. NIV, NKJV, NLT). Note that the latter part of the verse may well have the exile in view.

Ps 9:4 *For you have maintained my just cause; you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.*

The upholding of one’s “just cause” is indicative of vindication.



Ps 58:10-11 *The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. ¹¹Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth."*

Verse 1 speaks of the vindication before others of God's righteous people, established by God's judgment (v. 10).

Mic 7:8-9 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. ⁹I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until *he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.*

Zion recognizes her suffering from her enemy is for her sin. But she expresses confidence that God will execute judgment for her and against her enemy – freeing and vindicating her.

Mal 3:16-18 Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of *those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.* ¹⁷"*They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.* ¹⁸*Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.*

By God in his judgment (v. 17) making such a "distinction between the righteous and the wicked" (v. 18), the righteous will be vindicated with their ways proven right. Note that God's final judgment appears to be in view.

To reward God's people

See also:

- *Eternal life will be the reward for godliness*, p. 709
- *II. The Afterlife*, p. 726

As well as punishment for wrongdoing, God's judgment includes reward for godliness.

Rom 2:5-10 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶*He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸but for those who are self-seeking^a and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but *glory and honor**

and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

^a Or *contentious*

2Thes 1:5 This is evidence of *the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—*

Rev 11:18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and *the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants,^b the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.*

^b Greek *bondservants*

Jer 17:10 *"I the LORD search the heart and test the mind,^c to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."*

^c Hebrew *kidneys*

✦ **Jesus Christ will judge and reward God's people at the last judgment:**

2Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me *the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

Note: God's judgments serve as examples and warnings to others

2Pet 2:6 ... *if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;^d ...*

^d Some manuscripts *an example to those who were to be ungodly*

1Cor 10:6-11 *Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put Christ^e to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

^e Some manuscripts *the Lord*



Ezek 14:7-8 For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to a prophet to consult me through him, I the LORD will answer him myself. ⁸And I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 

Any such person who forsook God would be made “a sign” in the sense that the judgment inflicted on him would be an example and warning to others.

Num 16:35-40 And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men offering the incense. ³⁶f Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁷“Tell Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest to take up the censers out of the blaze. Then scatter the fire far and wide, for they have become holy. ³⁸As for the censers of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, for they offered them before the LORD, and they became holy. Thus they shall be a sign to the people of Israel.” ³⁹So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned had offered, and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar, ⁴⁰to be a reminder to the people of Israel, so that no outsider, who is not of the descendants of Aaron, should draw near to burn incense before the LORD, lest he become like Korah and his company—as the LORD said to him through Moses. 

^f Ch 17:1 in Hebrew

Some of the people had challenged the authority of Moses and Aaron – including some Levites who counter to God’s law were trying to assume the priesthood in addition to their established duties (cf. vv. 8-10). As such they had treated the LORD with contempt (cf. v. 30). Consequently they were punished (v. 35; cf. vv. 28-33; [Num 26:9-10](#) ↓). The guilty Levites had been using censers to burn incense (a role of the priests) at the time of the punishment (v. 35). These were to be refashioned and used as a sign (v. 38) and reminder (v. 40) of their sin and judgment.

Num 26:9-10 The sons of Eliab: Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These are the Dathan and Abiram, chosen from the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the LORD ¹⁰and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men, and they became a warning. 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God’s Judgment Is Just

Subsections

- God judges with justice
- God judges righteously
- God does not show favoritism in his judgment
- God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds
- God takes into account thoughts and motives
- God’s judgments are correct
- God judges and repays people according to what they have done
- God repays people’s deeds with fitting recompense
- God gives fair warning of punishment for not obeying him . . .
- . . . Thus God allows for repentance and for punishment to be averted
- Note: In effect, it is people’s own actions that brings God’s punishment on themselves

God judges with justice

See also:

- [Ps 9:4, 7-8](#) ↑; [Ps 98:9](#) ↑
- . . . *Jesus Christ judges in righteousness and with justice*, p. 103

Rev 16:5, 7 And I heard the angel in charge of the waters^g say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.  ... ⁷And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!” 

^g Greek angel of the waters

Rev 19:2 ... for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”^h 



^h Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

Isa 28:17 *And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter.*

The "line" and "plumb line" are instruments of measurement.

Gen 18:25 *Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?*

Abraham correctly asserted that God would not, in his judgment, wrongly treat the righteous and the wicked alike.

Isa 11:4 *... but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*

In implementing his judgments God will deal with the plight of the poor and needy with righteousness and equity/justice – which often involves punishment of the wicked.

God judges righteously

See also:

- [Isa 28:17](#) ; [Isa 11:4](#)
- [b\) Righteousness and Justice](#) [God's], p. 59

God judges righteously in both the evaluations he makes and in the resulting punishment – or rewards – that he imposes.

Ps 7:11 *God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.*

Ps 9:4, 7-8 *For you have maintained my just cause; you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.* ... ⁷But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, ⁸and *he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.*

Ps 96:13b *He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.*

Ps 98:9 *... before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.*

Acts 17:31 *... because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*

Rom 2:5 *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

Rom 3:5-6 *But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶By no means! For then how could God judge the world?*

In v. 5, possibly anticipating an interjection to his previous argument (cf. v. 4), Paul puts forward the question that if people's unrighteousness allows God's righteousness to be seen more clearly, is God unjust in executing his judgment on them? Paul emphatically denies that this is case (v. 6).

2Thes 1:5 *This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—*

Rev 15:4 *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.*

God's judgments appear to be primarily in view.

Ps 50:6 *The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!* Selah

This poetically speaks of the heavens proclaiming God's righteousness such as he demonstrates in his judgments.

Isa 10:22 *For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness.*

God's judgments, no matter how devastating, are always righteous (cf. [Dan 9:7, 14](#)).

Dan 9:7, 14 *To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you.* ... ¹⁴*Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.*



God does not show favoritism in his judgment

1Pet 1:17 And if you call on *him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds*, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ...

Col 3:25 For the *wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.*

Rom 2:9-11 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹*For God shows no partiality.*

2Chr 19:7 Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for *there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.*

In giving instructions to judges he had appointed, Jehoshaphat implies that with God's judgment "there is no injustice ... or partiality or taking bribes".

Job 34:19 ... *who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?*

God's judgment is in view.

Ps 67:4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for *you judge the peoples with equity* and guide the nations upon earth. Selah

As "equi" means "equally", the latter part of the verse indicates that God judges all people equally or "fairly" (NCV™, NLT).

Ps 75:2 At the set time that I appoint *I will judge with equity.*

God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds

See also:

- **Prov 24:12** ↓

A key factor as to why God's judgment is just is that he judges people with knowledge of all their deeds – as well as of all their thoughts and motives (as per the following subsection). As such he can make judgments with knowledge of all the relevant information.

1Sam 2:3 Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for *the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.*

God "knows everything" (NCV™, NIV; cf. CEV). In view of this, the last clause probably implies that God can therefore judge all deeds. And so the verse reflects the fact that judges people with knowledge of all their deeds.

Ps 11:4, 6-7 The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; *his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.* ... ⁶*Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.* ⁷*For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.*

God observes and "tests" or assesses all people and all that they do (v. 4) – and judges accordingly (vv. 6-7a).

Jer 16:17-18 For *my eyes are on all their ways. They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity concealed from my eyes.* ¹⁸*But first I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations.*

Knowing all that people do, God judges and repays accordingly (cf. **Jer 32:19** ↓).

Jer 32:19 ... great in counsel and mighty in deed, *whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.*

Heb 4:13 And *no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

God takes into account thoughts and motives

See also:

- *God knows all people's "hearts" and minds*, p. 41

1Sam 16:6-7 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him." ⁷*But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."*

Prov 16:2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but *the LORD weighs the spirit.*

People's ability to evaluate their own ways is limited and superficial (cf. **Prov 21:2a** ↓) – in contrast to God's ability to evaluate or judge people.



Prov 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart. 

Prov 24:11-12 Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. ¹²*If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?* 

There is no point in deceitfully claiming to not know about a matter that we should have done something about, as God knows our thoughts and will judge us accordingly.

Jer 11:20 But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause. 

In judging righteously God analyses the heart and mind.

Jer 17:10 "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind,ⁱ to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds." 

ⁱ Hebrew kidneys

Luke 16:15 And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God." 

This suggests that there is no point trying to justify oneself in God's sight, as he already knows our hearts.

1Thes 2:4 ... but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 

✦ God's Messiah will not judge merely by what he sees and hears:

Isa 11:3-4 And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴*but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;* and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 

God's judgments are correct

In saying that God's judgment is right or true – or based on truth – the following verses make clear that, along with being righteous, God's judgment is correct. God does not just attempt to judge rightly; he succeeds.

John 8:16 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Fatherⁱ who sent me. 

ⁱ Some manuscripts *he*

Jesus Christ states that his decisions are right because God is with him. The implication is that God's judgments are always right and correct.

Rev 16:7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!" 

Rev 19:2 ... for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."^k 

^k Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

Ps 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. 

In reflecting on God's judgment on him, David in effect says to God, "You are justified in Your sentence and faultless in Your judgment." (AMP)

Rom 2:2 We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. 

God judges and repays people according to what they have done

See also:

- *On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done . . .*, p. 712
- *. . . God's people will be judged and rewarded according to what they have done*, p. 713

Rom 2:5-8 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶*He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸but for those who are self-seeking¹ and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.* 

¹ Or *contentious*

Job 34:11 For according to the work of a man he will repay him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him. 



Ps 62:12b *For you will render to a man according to his work.* 

Isa 59:18 *According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment.* 

Jer 25:14 For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and *I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.* 

Jer 32:19 ... great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, *rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds.* 

Col 3:25 *For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.* 

1Pet 1:17 And if you call on *him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds*, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ... 

Ezek 7:3-4, 27 Now the end is upon you, and I will send my anger upon you; *I will judge you according to your ways, and I will punish you for all your abominations.* ⁴And my eye will not spare you, nor will I have pity, but *I will punish you for your ways*, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the LORD.  ... ²⁷The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair, and the hands of the people of the land are paralyzed by terror. *According to their way I will do to them, and according to their judgments I will judge them*, and they shall know that I am the LORD. 

The term "their judgments" (v. 27) would appear to refer to judgments expressed in their treatment of others (cf. CEV).

Ezek 18:20, 30 The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. *The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*  ... ³⁰"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin."^m 

^mOr *lest iniquity be your stumbling block*

Ezek 35:11 ... therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, *I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them. And I will make myself known among them, when I judge you.* 

Isa 65:6-7 Behold, it is written before me: "I will not keep silent, but *I will repay; I will indeed repay into their bosom both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities together*, says the LORD; because they made offerings on the mountains and insulted me on the hills, *I will measure into their bosom payment for their former deeds.*"ⁿ 

ⁿ Or *I will first measure their payment into their bosom*

Zec 1:6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, *As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.* 

Rev 18:6 *Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.* 

Ruth 2:11-12 But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. ¹²*The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!*" 

As well as repaying wickedness, God repays good deeds.

✦ God will surely repay people for their deeds:

Jer 51:56 ... for a destroyer has come upon her, upon Babylon; her warriors are taken; their bows are broken in pieces, for *the LORD is a God of recompense; he will surely repay.* 

God repays people's deeds with fitting recompense

See also:

- **Rev 18:6** 

The following passages speak of God's judicial punishment paralleling the crime committed – suggesting that God repays people's deeds with fitting recompense.

2Thes 1:6 ... since indeed *God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ...* 

Jer 14:16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them—they, their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For *I will pour out their evil upon them.* 



Joel 3:6-8 *You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their own border. ⁷Behold, I will stir them up from the place to which you have sold them, and I will return your payment on your own head. ⁸I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a nation far away, for the LORD has spoken.* 

Hab 2:8 *Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.* 

Hab 2:15-16 *Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness! ¹⁶You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in the LORD's right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!* 

2Pet 2:12-13a But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, ¹³suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. 

The terms “wrong” and “wrongdoing” are very general but their similarity arguably reflects that God repays people's deeds with fitting recompense.

Rev 16:4-6 The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and *they became blood.* ⁵And I heard the angel in charge of the waters^o say, “*Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. ⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!*” 

^o Greek *angel of the waters*

✦ **A person's end will correspond to their deeds:**

2Cor 11:15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. *Their end will correspond to their deeds.* 

God gives fair warning of punishment for not obeying him . . .

2Ki 17:22-23 The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, ²³until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day. 

2Chr 36:15-16 *The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.* 

God had persistently warned his people through his messengers (v. 15) to turn from sin or face devastating consequences – which eventuated (v. 16).

Neh 9:29-30 *And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. ³⁰Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.* 

Jer 6:7-8, 17 As a well keeps its water fresh, so she keeps fresh her evil; violence and destruction are heard within her; sickness and wounds are ever before me. ⁸*Be warned, O Jerusalem, lest I turn from you in disgust, lest I make you a desolation, an uninhabited land.*  ... ¹⁷*I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not pay attention.'* 

The “sound of the trumpet” (v. 17) alludes to warning of war and approaching judgment (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Jer 11:7-8 *For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey my voice. ⁸Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.* 



Heb 12:25 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. 

Possibly “him who warned them on earth” refers to Moses (cf. NLT), but a number of commentators are not convinced. What is clear is that the judgment inflicted on those who had ignored this earlier warning/s underlines the need to heed God’s warnings of judicial punishment in the current era, with people now having a greater revelation in the light of the new covenant and so a greater responsibility.

... Thus God allows for repentance and for punishment to be averted

See also:

- *Being merciful and compassionate, God saves us from the consequences of our sin*, p. 1849

Jer 18:7-8 *If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.* 

Note that what is said here regarding nations is also applicable to individuals.

Jer 26:2-6, 13 “Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. ³It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may relent of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds. ⁴You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, ⁵and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, ⁶then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.’”  ... ¹³Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. 

Jer 26:18-19 “Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’ ¹⁹Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and

entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD relent of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves.” 

Jer 36:3 *It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.* 

Ezek 18:32 *For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.* 

Note that the first half of the verse indicates that God takes no joy in inflicting such judgment. He would much rather that people heeded his warnings to repent and so live.

Jonah 3:1-10 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city,^p three days’ journey in breadth.^q ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. *And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”* ⁵*And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.* ⁶*The word reached^r the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* ⁷*And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.* ⁹*Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”* ¹⁰*When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.* 

^p Hebrew a great city to God

^q Or a visit was a three days’ journey

^r Or had reached

Note that the fasting and the use of sackcloth (vv. 5-8) were expressions of sorrow and repentance.

Zeph 2:1-3 *Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation, ²before the decree takes effect^s—before the day passes away like chaff—before there comes upon you the burning anger of the LORD, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the LORD.* ³*Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands;^t seek righteousness; seek humility;*



perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.



^s Hebrew gives birth

^t Or who carry out his judgment

‡ It is due to his kindness that God gives people opportunity to repent and avoid judgment:

Rom 2:3-4 *Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

Making judgments on other people only makes people more liable to God's judgment (v. 3). For people to do so suggests that they wrongly think that they will escape God's judgment (v. 3b) and/or that they are showing contempt for God's "kindness, tolerance and patience" (v. 4a). People should instead recognize that they themselves are under God's judgment (particularly if they judge others) and that God in his kindness is – for now – giving them opportunity to repent and avoid judgment.

Note: In effect, it is people's own actions that brings God's punishment on themselves

See also:

- *The wicked reap what they sow . . .*, p. 460

Isa 3:9 For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For *they have brought evil on themselves.*

Jer 2:17 *Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD your God, when he led you in the way?*

Jer 4:18 *Your ways and your deeds have brought this upon you. This is your doom, and it is bitter; it has reached your very heart.*

Jer 6:19 Hear, O earth; behold, *I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.*

Rom 2:5 *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

Hos 12:14 *Ephraim has given bitter provocation; so his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him and will repay him for his disgraceful deeds.*

Ephraim's own wicked deeds provoked God's anger and judgment.

‡ God gives people what they deserve:

Rev 16:4-6 The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵And I heard the angel in charge of the waters^u say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. ⁶*For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!*"

^u Greek angel of the waters

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God's Judgment Reveals God

See also:

- *God judges righteously*, p. 428
- *God judges with justice*, p. 427
- *God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds*, p. 429
- *e) God Is Revealed in Saving His People*, p. 921

Note that in addition to the attributes of God revealed by his judgment that are discussed in this section, earlier subsections show that God's judgment reveals his righteousness, justice and complete knowledge.

Subsections

- God makes himself known by his judgment
- God's judgment shows his might and his sovereignty . . .
- . . . God's judgment makes known that he is the LORD
- God's judgment evidences his glory – and also brings him glory
- God's judgment reveals his holiness
- God's judgment displays his anger
- Note: God's restraint of his judgment shows his compassion and love



God makes himself known by his judgment

Ezek 35:10-11 Because you said, ‘These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them’—although the LORD was there—¹¹therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them. And *I will make myself known among them, when I judge you.*

By his judgment of Edom, God would make himself known – i.e. make known that he exists and that he is God.

Ps 9:16 *The LORD has made himself known; he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. Higgaion.*^v Selah

^v Probably a musical or liturgical term

Ezek 38:22-23 *With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur.* ²³*So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.*

Ezek 39:6-7 *I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD.* ⁷*“And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.*

✦ **God’s judgment causes people to fear him and recognize what he has done:**

Ps 64:7-9 But God shoots his arrow at them [the wicked]; they are wounded suddenly. ⁸They are brought to ruin, with their own tongues turned against them; all who see them will wag their heads. ⁹*Then all mankind fears; they tell what God has brought about and ponder what he has done.*

God’s judgment shows his might and his sovereignty . . .

See also:

- **Ezek 38:22-23a**
- **Awesome power . . .** [characteristics of God’s judicial retribution], p. 445
- **God’s saving of his people reveals God’s great power**, p. 923

Jer 16:18, 21 But first *I will doubly repay their iniquity and their sin*, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable idols, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations.” ... ²¹*“Therefore, behold, I will make them know, this once I will make them know my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the LORD.”*

Ex 6:6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and *I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.*

God’s might would be evident in his “great acts of judgment” against Egypt.

Isa 33:12-13 *And the peoples will be as if burned to lime, like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire.*¹³*Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge my might.*

Rom 9:22 What if God, *desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power*, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ...

This speaks of God willingness (cf. NASB) to show his wrath – presumably by executing his judgment – and so “make known his power”. Note that Paul makes the point that rather than quickly executing judgment, God bears with great patience the persons who are objects of his wrath, until the proper time for his judgment.

Rev 18:8 For this reason *her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.*

Ps 59:13 *... consume them in wrath; consume them till they are no more, that they may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth.* Selah

It is debatable as to whether David is asking God to judge enemy nations (cf. v. 8) or Saul and his men who were trying to kill him (cf. the superscription/title of the psalm). Either way, God’s judgment would reveal to all nations that he was sovereign – in particular, as noted here, sovereign over Israel. The following verses likewise indicate or reflect that God’s judgment shows his sovereignty.

Ps 83:17-18 *Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace,* ¹⁸*that they may know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.*



Psa 96:10 *Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."* 

This points to the fact that God's reign will be seen in his judgment of the peoples.

Ezek 20:33, 36 *As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out I will be king over you.*  ... ³⁶*As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord GOD.* 

God would assert his sovereignty over his people – "I will be king over you" (v. 33) – in his judgment.

... God's judgment makes known that he is the LORD

See also:

- [Jer 16:18, 21](#) 
- [Isa 59:18-19](#) 
- [God's saving of his people makes known that he is the LORD – the only God](#), p. 922

God's judgment makes known that he is the LORD – the only true God, the supreme being who has power over all people and all creation.

Ex 7:5 *The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.* 

God's plagues against Egypt (cf. [Ex 10:2](#) ) were in a real sense judgments (cf. 6:6). They would vividly illustrate the fact that he is the LORD, both to the Egyptians (as indicated here) and to the Israelites (cf. [Ex 10:1-2](#) ) .

Ex 10:1-2 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, ²and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson *how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.*" 

Ezek 6:10, 13-14 *And they shall know that I am the LORD. I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them.*  ... ¹³*And you shall know that I am the LORD, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing aroma to all their idols.* ¹⁴*And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, in all their dwelling places, from*

the wilderness to Riblah." ^w*Then they will know that I am the LORD.* 

^w Some Hebrew manuscripts; most Hebrew manuscripts *Diblah*

Ezek 7:4 *And my eye will not spare you, nor will I have pity, but I will punish you for your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the LORD.* 

Ezek 11:10-12 *You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel, and you shall know that I am the LORD.* ¹¹*This city shall not be your cauldron, nor shall you be the meat in the midst of it. I will judge you at the border of Israel,* ¹²*and you shall know that I am the LORD.* For you have not walked in my statutes, nor obeyed my rules, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around you. 

The people would know that he is the LORD when they would suffer judgment for not obeying his laws.

Ezek 12:15 *And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them among the countries.* 

Ezek 28:22-23 ... and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, O Sidon, and I will manifest my glory in your midst. And *they shall know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments in her and manifest my holiness in her;* ²³*for I will send pestilence into her, and blood into her streets; and the slain shall fall in her midst, by the sword that is against her on every side. Then they will know that I am the LORD.* 

Ezek 39:6-7 *I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD.* ⁷*And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.* 

God's judgment evidences his glory – and also brings him glory

See also:

- [Lev 10:1-3](#) ; [Isa 5:15-16](#) 
- [God's glory is reflected in his powerful deeds](#), p. 18
- [God is exalted and glorified in his powerful deeds](#), p. 39
- [God's saving of his people reveals God's glory](#), p. 924

Note that in the subheading, "glory" is used in two different senses. God's awesome judgment reflects his own awesome



glory that is such an integral aspect of his being (cf. *b) God's Glory*, p. 13). God's judgment also brings him glory in the sense that he is glorified through people exalting him because of his judgment.

Ezek 28:21-22 Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, and prophesy against her ²²and say, *Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, O Sidon, and I will manifest my glory in your midst. And they shall know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments in her and manifest my holiness in her; ...* 

Ezek 39:4, 13, 21 You [Gog] shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.  ... ¹³All the people of the land will bury them, and it will bring them renown on the day that I show my glory, declares the Lord GOD.  ... ²¹"And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. 

Isa 59:18-19 According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment. ¹⁹So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream,^x which the wind of the LORD drives. 

^x Hebrew *a narrow river*

Hab 2:12-14 Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity! ¹³Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing? ¹⁴For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 

God determined that all that the nations – primarily the Babylonians – had labored to build would go up in flames (vv. 12-13). His devastating accomplishment of this would result in his glory being known throughout the earth (v. 14). Some commentators assert that this is speaking primarily of the glory of God's presence being manifested (and so known) throughout the earth. This will be emphatically the case once and for all when he crushes his enemies at the end of the age.

Rev 19:1-2 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."^y 

^y Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

God's judgment results in people attributing glory – here along with salvation and power – as belonging to God. As such God's judgment both displays his own glory and brings him glory. The latter – that God's judgment brings him glory – is reflected in the following verses.

Rev 14:7 And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water." 

Isa 33:10, 12 "Now I will arise," says the LORD, "now I will lift myself up; now I will be exalted.  ... ¹²And the peoples will be as if burned to lime, like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire." 

God's punishment of the wicked (v. 12), asserting his supreme authority and power, exalts God (v. 10) and so brings him glory.

God's judgment reveals his holiness

See also:

- *God shows himself to be holy by what he does*, p. 55
- *God's saving of his people shows God's holiness and righteousness . . .*, p. 925

God's judgment reveals his holiness, showing that he ultimately will not tolerate wickedness – including disrespect for himself and his commands (cf. [Lev 10:1-3](#) ↓; [1Sam 6:19-20](#) ↓).

Isa 5:15-16 Man is humbled, and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the haughty^z are brought low. ¹⁶But the LORD of hosts is exalted^a in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness. 

^z Hebrew *high*

^a Hebrew *high*

God would show himself to be holy by his righteous judgment on evildoers (v. 15).

Ezek 28:22b And they shall know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments in her and manifest my holiness in her; ... 

Ezek 38:16, 22-23 You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.  ... ²²With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into



judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. ²³So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Ezek 39:6-7 I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD. ⁷“And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

God would show himself to be the Holy One in Israel by destroying those who attack his people Israel (cf. [Ezek 38:16, 22-23](#)

Lev 10:1-3 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized^b fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. ²And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said, ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’” And Aaron held his peace.

^b Or *strange*

The clause “I will be sanctified” (v. 3) either means “I will show myself holy” (NIV®, NLT, NRSV) or “I must be respected as holy” (NCV™; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NKJV). A similar point can be made to “I will be glorified” (v. 3). The actions of Nadab and Abihu were apparently contrary to previous instructions from God, as in the case of the men of Beth Shemesh, in 1 Samuel 6:19-20 immediately below. God’s holiness demands obedience and honor – emphatically enforced here and in 1 Samuel 6:19-20 below by his judgment.

1Sam 6:19-20 And he struck some of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they looked upon the ark of the LORD. He struck seventy men of them,^c and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great blow. ²⁰Then the men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall he go up away from us?”

^c Hebrew *of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men*

The ark signified the very presence of God (cf. [Lev 10:1-3](#)

. Such is God’s holiness that sinful, unworthy people cannot look upon him and live (cf. comment on [Ex 3:11, 20](#) in . . . *In some sense, God is said to have been “seen”*, p. 7). The men’s action was also irreverent and dishonoring to God. As such, God in his holiness would not tolerate them and their act,

bringing the severe consequence (v. 19), evidencing his holiness (v. 20).

God’s judgment displays his anger

See also:

- [Sin makes one subject to God’s wrath](#), p. 379
- [God’s wrath against sinners is manifested in punishment](#), p. 380
- [God’s wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness](#), p. 709

The following verses do not specifically state that God’s judgment displays his anger, but they all illustrate – as do numerous others – that God’s anger is manifested in his judgment of the wicked.

Isa 13:9, 13 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. ... ¹³Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.

Note that in v. 13 God appears to speak of himself in both the first and third persons.

Isa 63:3 I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood^d spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.

^d Or *their juice*; also verse 6

Mic 5:15 And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.

Zeph 3:7b-8 But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt. ⁸“Therefore wait for me,” declares the LORD, “for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.

The use of “decision” (v. 8) alludes to judgment, in which God’s incredible anger will manifest itself on the whole world.

Rom 2:5, 8 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. ... ⁸but for those who are self-seeking^e and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

^e Or *contentious*



Rev 14:19-20 So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.^f 

^f About 184 miles; a stadion was about 607 feet or 185 meters

Note: God's restraint of his judgment shows his compassion and love

See also:

- . . . *Due to his mercy and compassion, God limits his people's punishment*, p. 877

2Ki 13:23 But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now. 

Because of his graciousness and compassion God was long-suffering toward the Israelites, unwilling to promptly execute the punishments entailed in his covenant with them, allowing them time to turn back to him. (cf. NSB)

Ps 78:38 Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath. 

Lam 3:31-32 For the Lord will not cast off forever, ³²but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; ... 

Hos 11:8-9 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.^g 

^g Or into the city

Admah and Zeboiim were cities that were totally destroyed in the judgment executed on Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Deut 29:23). Because of his compassion God would not carry out judgment to such an extent on his people.

Neh 9:26-31 Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies.

²⁷Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies. ²⁸But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies. ²⁹And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. ³⁰Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. ³¹Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God. 

Allied with God's compassion are his graciousness (cf. [2Ki 13:23](#) ↑; [Jonah 4:2](#) ↓) and his mercy (cf. [Jonah 4:2](#) ↓). As such these are likewise spoken of as evident in God's restraint of his judgment (v. 31).

Jonah 3:10; 4:1-2 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.  ^{4:1}But it displeased Jonah exceedingly,^h and he was angry. ²And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." 

^h Hebrew it was exceedingly evil to Jonah

‡ In his kindness, God gives people opportunity to repent (and escape judgment):

Rom 2:3-4 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 

For comment, see [Rom 2:3-4](#) – under . . . Thus God allows for repentance and for punishment to be averted, p. 433.



Pray for persecuted Christians



II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment

See also:

- *I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment*, p. 692

The topic of God's judgment – particularly its manifestation – is often avoided, as it contains much that is anything but "nice". However it contains some of the most awe-inspiring teaching, and even reason for hope for God's people.

a) Means of God's Judicial Retribution

Subsections

- Angels
- Nature
- Rulers . . .
- . . . and nations
- God's own people

Angels

See also:

- *a) Prologue: Judgments Preceding Jesus Christ's Return*, p. 692

1Chr 21:15a And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw, and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, "It is enough; now stay your hand." 

Ps 78:49 He let loose on them his burning anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels. 

This is referring to the last of the ten Egyptians plagues – the death of every firstborn male – carried out by angels.

Zec 6:1-8 Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze. ²The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, ³the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses—all of them strong.^a ⁴Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me,

"What are these, my lord?" ⁵And the angel answered and said to me, "These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the LORD of all the earth. ⁶The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go toward the south country." ⁷When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and patrol the earth. And he said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth. ⁸Then he cried to me, "Behold, those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country." 

^a Or and the fourth chariot strong dappled horses

The "chariots" are angelic spirits (v. 5) sent throughout the earth by the angel speaking in the vision (v. 7), to carry out God's judgment. Note that v. 8 suggests that the works of judgment in the north appeased God's wrath (cf. GNT, NASB, NLT).

Matt 13:40-42 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 

1Cor 10:10 ... nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 

The "Destroyer" is likely an angel who carried out God's judgment during the exodus.

Acts 12:23 Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. 

Rev 8:5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings,^b flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. 

^b Or voices, or sounds

Note that judgments spoken of in Revelation (cf. [Rev 14:19-20](#) ↓; [Rev 15:5-16:4](#) ↓) are generally from apocalyptic visions, much of which is symbolic.

Rev 14:19-20 So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.^c 

^c About 184 miles; a stadion was about 607 feet or 185 meters



For comment, see [Rev 14:18-20](#) – under [Horrific consequences](#) . . . , p. 450.

Rev 15:5-8; 16:1-4 After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent^d of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. ⁷And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, ⁸and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.  ^{16:1}Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.” ²So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. ³The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea. ⁴The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. 

^d Or tabernacle

The judgments enacted by the other four of the seven angels are contained in vv. 8-21. Further examples of angels carrying out God's judgments are contained elsewhere in Revelation.

Nature

See also:

- . . . and God can control nature so as to bring depravation, p. 278

Gen 3:17-18 And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 

Gen 7:4, 11-12, 20-21 For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing^e that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.”  . . . ¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. ¹²And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.  . . . ²⁰The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits^f deep. ²¹And all

flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. 

^e Hebrew all existence; also verse 23

^f A cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

Ps 105:28-35 He sent darkness, and made the land [of Egypt] dark; they did not rebel^g against his words. ²⁹He turned their waters into blood and caused their fish to die. ³⁰Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings. ³¹He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country. ³²He gave them hail for rain, and fiery lightning bolts through their land. ³³He struck down their vines and fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country. ³⁴He spoke, and the locusts came, young locusts without number, ³⁵which devoured all the vegetation in their land and ate up the fruit of their ground. 

^g Septuagint, Syriac omit not

Num 16:30-33 But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD.” ³¹And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. ³²And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. ³³So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. 

Deut 28:22-24 The LORD will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought^h and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish. ²³And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. ²⁴The LORD will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed. 

^h Or sword

Jer 8:17 For behold, I am sending among you serpents, adders that cannot be charmed, and they shall bite you,” declares the LORD. 

Ezek 38:22 With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. 



Joel 1:4 *What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.*

Luke 21:11 *There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.*

Note that judgment is not necessarily the primary aim of all these events.

✦ The judgment inflicted on Sodom and Gomorrah:

Gen 19:24-25 *Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. ²⁵And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.*

Rulers . . .

See also:

- [Jer 25:9](#)

Rom 13:3-4 *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.*

1Chr 5:26 *So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, the spirit of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and he took them into exile, namely, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river Gozan, to this day.*

Isa 7:20 *In that day the Lord will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also.*

The shaving imagery may be metaphorical, alluding to the humiliation of such shaving of the body, while actually referring to the removing or destroying of such things as their crops, livestock and the people themselves (cf. NLT).

Ezek 29:18, 20 *Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was rubbed bare, yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre to pay for the labor that he*

had performed against her. ... ²⁰*I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he labored, because they worked for me, declares the Lord GOD.*

Jer 51:11 *Sharpen the arrows! Take up the shields! The LORD has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, because his purpose concerning Babylon is to destroy it, for that is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance for his temple.*

. . . and nations

Hab 1:6, 12b [God:] *For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.* ... ¹² ... [Habakkuk:] *O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.*

2Ki 24:2 *And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets.*

2Chr 24:24 *Though the army of the Syrians had come with few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army, because Judah¹ had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.*

¹ Hebrew they

Isa 9:11-12 *But the LORD raises the adversaries of Rezin against him, and stirs up his enemies. ¹²The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.*

Note that Rezin (v. 11) was king of Aram, at this point allied with the northern kingdom of Israel.

Jer 5:15-17 *Behold, I am bringing against you a nation from afar, O house of Israel, declares the LORD. It is an enduring nation; it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. ¹⁶Their quiver is like an open tomb; they are all mighty warriors. ¹⁷They shall eat up your harvest and your food; they shall eat up your sons and your daughters; they shall eat up your flocks and your herds; they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; your fortified cities in which you trust they shall beat down with the sword.*



Jer 25:9 ... behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. 

Jer 50:9 For behold, I am stirring up and bringing against Babylon a gathering of great nations, from the north country. And they shall array themselves against her. From there she shall be taken. Their arrows are like a skilled warrior who does not return empty-handed. 

Jer 51:27-29 Set up a standard on the earth; blow the trumpet among the nations; prepare the nations for war against her; summon against her the kingdoms, Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz; appoint a marshal against her; bring up horses like bristling locusts. ²⁸Prepare the nations for war against her, the kings of the Medes, with their governors and deputies, and every land under their dominion. ²⁹The land trembles and writhes in pain, for the LORD's purposes against Babylon stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabitant. 

God's own people

Josh 7:25 And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. 

Josh 11:16-20 So Joshua took all that land, the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland ¹⁷from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baalgad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings and struck them and put them to death. ¹⁸Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. ¹⁹There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took them all in battle. ²⁰For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses. 

God used the Israelites to bring his judgment on the inhabitants of Canaan once their sin was "complete" (cf. Gen 15:16).

Ps 149:6-9 Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, ⁷to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, ⁸to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, ⁹to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the LORD! 

This presumably has in view judgment on the previous nations of Canaan or later enemies of Israel.

Ezek 25:14 And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath, and they shall know my vengeance, declares the Lord GOD. 

2Ki 5:26-27 But he [the prophet Elisha] said to him, "Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants? ²⁷Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow. 

This and the following two references from Acts are examples of God's people pronouncing God's immediate judgment. As such they are in a sense at least the means of God's judicial retribution – or part thereof.

Acts 5:9-10 But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 

Acts 13:8-11 But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. 

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Characteristics of God's Judicial Retribution

Note that not all instances of God's judicial retribution display all of the following characteristics – certainly not to the extent of which they are spoken of here. Much of the judgment spoken of in this section is conclusive in its purpose, bringing the finality of death – as opposed to, for example, God's disciplinary judgment.

Subsections

- Awesome power . . .
- . . . and irresistible
- Inescapable
- Terrifying . . .
- . . . causing great grief and anguish
- Horrific consequences . . .
- . . . even complete devastation

Awesome power . . .

See also:

- *God's anger and its consequences are awesome . . .*, p. 67
- *. . . This has been and will be evident upon all nations and the whole earth*, p. 67

Ex 6:6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and *with great acts of judgment*. 

Such "great acts of judgment" involve "mighty power" (CEV, NLT).

Isa 5:26-30 *He will raise a signal for nations far away, and whistle for them from the ends of the earth; and behold, quickly, speedily they come!* ²⁷*None is weary, none stumbles, none slumbers or sleeps, not a waistband is loose, not a sandal strap broken; ²⁸their arrows are sharp, all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs seem like flint, and their wheels like the whirlwind. ²⁹Their roaring is like a lion, like young lions they roar; they growl and seize their prey; they carry it off, and none can rescue. ³⁰They will growl over it on that day, like the growling of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold, darkness and distress; and the light is darkened by its clouds.* 

As with some of the following passages, this speaks of God using powerful foreign armies to execute his judgment.

Isa 10:17-18, 33 The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and *it will burn and devour his* [the Assyrian king's] *thorns and briers in one day.* ¹⁸*The glory of his forest and of his fruitful land the LORD will destroy, both soul and body, and it will be as when a sick man wastes away.*  ... ³³*Behold, the Lord GOD of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low.* 

The thorns, briers (v. 17), forests, fields (v. 18), boughs (v. 33) refer primarily to the Assyrian troops – although quite possibly the "glory of his forest and of his fruitful land" allude to the splendor of the Assyrian empire itself. Such is the "terrifying power" (v. 33) of God's judicial retribution, God would completely destroy the Assyrian forces in a single day (v. 17).

Isa 13:4-5 *The sound of a tumult is on the mountains as of a great multitude! The sound of an uproar of kingdoms, of nations gathering together! The LORD of hosts is mustering a host for battle. ⁵They come from a distant land, from the end of the heavens, the LORD and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.* 

ⁱ Or earth; also verse 9

Isa 27:1 In that day *the LORD with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.* 

Leviathan is taken from Canaanite mythology. There are differing ideas as to what it represents here. Possibilities include wicked nations, evil powers and even Satan.

Isa 29:5-7 *But the multitude of your foreign foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff. And in an instant, suddenly, you will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. ⁷And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.* 

"Ariel" (v. 7) refers to Jerusalem. The LORD would come to her aid with awesome power and effect.

Jer 25:30-32 You, therefore, shall prophesy against them all these words, and say to them: "*The LORD will roar from on high, and from his holy habitation utter his voice; he will roar mightily against his fold, and shout, like those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.* ³¹*The clamor*



will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh, and the wicked he will put to the sword, declares the LORD.' ³²"Thus says the LORD of hosts: *Behold, disaster is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth!* [B]

The "great tempest" (v. 32) denotes a very powerful force – the Babylonians – and/or its destructive effects.

Ezek 14:21 For thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem *my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!* [B]

The awesome power of these four "severe judgments" (NASB, NKJV) would be felt by Jerusalem, with them causing devastating consequences.

Joel 2:1-2 Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, ²a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! *Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations.* [B]

This speaks of an immense locust plague that God used for inflicting his judgment, utterly devastating the land.

Rev 18:8 For this reason *her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.* [B]

... and irresistible

See also:

- *God's anger cannot be quenched*, p. 69
- *God's anger cannot be withstood*, p. 69

Num 24:21-23 And he looked on the Kenite, and took up his discourse and said, "Enduring is your dwelling place, and your nest is set in the rock. ²²*Nevertheless, Kain shall be burned when Asshur takes you away captive.*" ²³*And he took up his discourse and said, "Alas, who shall live when God does this?"* [B]

The rhetorical question (v. 23) implies that no one can resist or endure God's judgment.

Joel 2:11 The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. *For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?* [B]

Mal 3:2 But *who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.* [B]

This seems to be speaking of God judging his people through Jesus Christ on his return, in which he will purify them and take action against the evil among them (cf. vv. 2b-5). God and Jesus Christ are also both in view in Revelation 6:17 immediately below.

Rev 6:16b-17 "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷*for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"* [B]

Isa 47:11 But *evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone;* and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing. [B]

Jer 51:53, 58 *Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify her strong height, yet destroyers would come from me against her, declares the LORD.* [B] ... ⁵⁸"Thus says the LORD of hosts: *The broad wall of Babylon shall be leveled to the ground, and her high gates shall be burned with fire. The peoples labor for nothing, and the nations weary themselves only for fire.*" [B]

The last part of v. 58 refers to peoples of the nations used as slaves by Babylon in building its defenses. All their efforts will be for nothing in the face of God's overwhelming judgment.

Amos 2:13-15 Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down. ¹⁴*Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life;* ¹⁵*he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life;* ... [B]

Amos 5:6 Seek the LORD and live, *lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel,* ... [B]

Mic 2:3 Therefore *thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster,^k from which you cannot remove your necks,* and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster. [B]



^k The same Hebrew word can mean *evil* or *disaster*, depending on the context

✦ **The effects of God's judgment on his people would be incurable:**

Jer 30:12-13, 15 For thus says the LORD: *Your hurt is incurable, and your wound is grievous.* ¹³*There is none to uphold your cause, no medicine for your wound, no healing for you.* ☞ ... ¹⁵*Why do you cry out over your hurt? Your pain is incurable.* Because your guilt is great, because your sins are flagrant, I have done these things to you. ☞

Jeremiah figuratively illustrates that no one or nothing (apart from God himself) could cure the people's plight resulting from God's judgment. He makes the same point with similar imagery in 8:22 and 14:19.

Inescapable

See also:

▪ [Amos 2:13-15](#) ↑

Job 11:20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail; *all way of escape will be lost to them*, and their hope is to breathe their last. ☞

Jer 11:11 Therefore, thus says the LORD, *Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape.* Though they cry to me, I will not listen to them. ☞

Jer 25:34-35 Wail, you shepherds, and cry out, and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come, and you shall fall like a choice vessel. ³⁵*No refuge will remain for the shepherds, nor escape for the lords of the flock.* ☞

Jer 46:5b-6 Their warriors are beaten down and have fled in haste; they look not back— terror on every side! declares the LORD. ⁶*The swift cannot flee away, nor the warrior escape; in the north by the river Euphrates they have stumbled and fallen.* ☞

Lam 2:22 You summoned as if to a festival day my terrors on every side, and *on the day of the anger of the LORD no one escaped or survived*; those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed. ☞

Joel 2:3 Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and *nothing escapes them.* ☞

Amos 9:1-4 I saw the Lord standing beside¹ the altar, and he said: "Strike the capitals until the thresholds shake, and shatter them on the heads of all the people;^m and those who are left of them I will kill with the sword; *not one of them shall flee away; not one of them shall escape.* ²*If they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; if they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down.* ³*If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search them out and take them; and if they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them.* ⁴*And if they go into captivity before their enemies, there I will command the sword, and it shall kill them; and I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good.*" ☞

¹ Or on

^m Hebrew *all of them*

Matt 23:33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, *how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?* ☞

Rom 2:3 *Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?* ☞

1Thes 5:1-3 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers,ⁿ you have no need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, "There is peace and security," *then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.* ☞

ⁿ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 4, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27

Heb 2:2-3a For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³*how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?* ☞

Heb 12:25 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. *For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.* ☞

Amos 5:18-20 Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? *It is darkness, and not light,* ¹⁹*as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him.* ²⁰Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? ☞



The two scenes in v. 19 illustrate how inescapable judgment will be on "the day of the LORD" (vv. 18, 20), showing that while fleeing one danger people would be beset by another. Isaiah 24:18a has a similar illustration: "He who flees at the sound of the terror shall fall into the pit, and he who climbs out of the pit shall be caught in the snare."

‡ All people for whom God's judgment is intended will succumb to it:

Ezek 6:12 *He who is far off shall die of pestilence, and he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who is left and is preserved shall die of famine. Thus I will spend my fury upon them.* 📖

Terrifying . . .

See also:

- [Isa 13:6-8](#) ↓; [Jer 4:19](#) ↓; [Jer 49:23-24](#) ↓

Deut 32:25 *Outdoors the sword shall bereave, and indoors terror, for young man and woman alike, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs.* 📖

Isa 2:19 *And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground,^o from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.* 📖

^o Hebrew *dust*

Isa 19:1, 16-17 An oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt; and *the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.* 📖 ... ¹⁶*In that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand that the LORD of hosts shakes over them.* ¹⁷*And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians. Everyone to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the purpose that the LORD of hosts has purposed against them.* 📖

Note that the last clause refers to what God is planning against Egypt.

Isa 21:2-4 A stern vision is told to me; the traitor betrays, and the destroyer destroys. Go up, O Elam; lay siege, O Media; all the sighing she has caused I bring to an end. ³*Therefore my loins are filled with anguish; pangs have seized me, like the pangs of a woman in labor; I am bowed down so that I cannot hear; I am dismayed so that I cannot see.* ⁴*My heart staggers; horror has appalled me; the twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.* 📖

In vv. 3-4, either: Babylon is portrayed as speaking; or Isaiah is speaking – staggering and trembling because the vision of Babylon's downfall (v. 2) is so dire and terrifying. Note that v. 3a probably portrays anguish more than terror, and as such is more pertinent to the following subsection.

Isa 28:18-19 Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through, you will be beaten down by it. ¹⁹As often as it passes through it will take you; for morning by morning it will pass through, by day and by night; and *it will be sheer terror to understand the message.* 📖

Jer 4:9 "In that day, declares the LORD, courage shall fail both king and officials. *The priests shall be appalled and the prophets astounded.*" 📖

Such would be God's judgment that the priests and the prophets would be "shocked and terrified" (CEV).

Ezek 22:14 *Can your courage endure, or can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you?* I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it. 📖

This implies that no one's courage would endure nor would anyone remain strong in the face of God's awesome and terrifying judgment.

Ezek 32:10 *I will make many peoples appalled at you, and the hair of their kings shall bristle with horror because of you, when I brandish my sword before them. They shall tremble every moment, every one for his own life, on the day of your downfall.* 📖

God's judgment on Egypt would be so staggering that the surrounding nations would be terrified by it.

Jer 46:5b *They are dismayed and have turned backward. Their warriors are beaten down and have fled in haste; they look not back— terror on every side! declares the LORD.* 📖

Ezek 21:7 And when they say to you, "Why do you groan?" you shall say, "Because of the news that it is coming. *Every heart will melt, and all hands will be feeble; every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water.* Behold, it is coming, and it will be fulfilled," declares the Lord GOD. 📖

Nah 2:10 Desolate! Desolation and ruin! *Hearts melt and knees tremble; anguish is in all loins; all faces grow pale!* 📖

Heb 10:26-27, 30-31 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷*but a fearful expectation of*



judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.  ... ³⁰For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 

... causing great grief and anguish

See also:

- [Isa 21:3](#) ; [Nah 2:10](#) 
- [Amos 8:3](#) 
- *There will be darkness and torment*, p. 752
- *God punishes sin, which can mean physical suffering and emotional anguish . . .*, p. 1832

Ex 12:30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. *And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.* 

Isa 8:22 And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness. 

Isa 13:6-8 *Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty^p it will come!* ⁷Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt. ⁸*They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame.* 

^p The Hebrew words for *destruction* and *almighty* sound alike

Isa 50:11b *This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.* 

Jer 4:8, 19, 31 For this *put on sackcloth, lament and wail, for the fierce anger of the LORD has not turned back from us.*  ... ¹⁹*My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! Oh the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent, for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.*  ... ³¹*For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor, anguish as of one giving birth to her first child, the cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands, "Woe is me! I am fainting before murderers."* 

Jer 46:12 The nations have heard of your shame, and *the earth is full of your cry*; for warrior has stumbled against warrior; they have both fallen together. 

Jer 48:4-5, 20, 37 *Moab is destroyed; her little ones have made a cry.* ⁵*For at the ascent of Luhith they go up weeping;*^a *for at the descent of Horonaim they have heard the distressed cry^r of destruction.*  ... ²⁰Moab is put to shame, for it is broken; *wail and cry!* Tell it beside the Arnon, that Moab is laid waste.  ... ³⁷*For every head is shaved and every beard cut off. On all the hands are gashes, and around the waist is sackcloth.* 

^a Hebrew *weeping goes up with weeping*

^r Septuagint (compare Isaiah 15:5) *heard the cry*

Luhith and Horonaim were likely towns or places in Moab. The references to "the ascent of Luhith" and "the descent of Horonaim" appear to speak of God's retribution encompassing all of Moab, i.e. the heights and depths of Moab.

Jer 49:23-24 Concerning Damascus: *"Hamath and Arpad are confounded, for they have heard bad news; they melt in fear, they are troubled like the sea that cannot be quiet. ²⁴Damascus has become feeble, she turned to flee, and panic seized her; anguish and sorrows have taken hold of her, as of a woman in labor.* 

Ezek 4:16 Moreover, he said to me, "Son of man, behold, I will break the supply^s of bread in Jerusalem. *They shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay.* 

^s Hebrew *staff*

The references to "weight" and "measure" speak of rationing due to siege (cf. vv. 1-8).

Ezek 21:6, 12 As for you, son of man, *groan; with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan before their eyes.*  ... ¹²*Cry out and wail, son of man, for it is against my people.* It is against all the princes of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with my people. *Strike therefore upon your thigh.* 

The striking of the thigh (v. 12b) was indicative of lament.

Ezek 30:16 And I will set fire to Egypt; *Pelusium shall be in great agony*; Thebes shall be breached, and Memphis shall face enemies^t by day. 

^t Or *distress*

Amos 8:10 *I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.* 

Matt 13:42 ... and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place *there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* 



‡ Prophecies of God's judgment can be so grave as to be unbelievable:

Hab 1:5-6 *Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. ⁶For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.* ￼

Horrific consequences . . .

See also:

- *God's anger and its consequences are awesome . . .*, p. 67
- *. . . This has been and will be evident upon all nations and the whole earth*, p. 67
- *If the Israelites disobeyed the law and broke the covenant, there would be dreadful consequences . . .*, p. 338

Ex 12:29 *At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock.* ￼

Isa 5:14 *Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure, and the nobility of Jerusalem^u and her multitude will go down, her revelers and he who exults in her.* ￼

^u Hebrew *her nobility*

Jer 9:21-22 *For death has come up into our windows; it has entered our palaces, cutting off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares. ²²Speak, "Thus declares the LORD: 'The dead bodies of men shall fall like dung upon the open field, like sheaves after the reaper, and none shall gather them.'"* ￼

Jer 13:14 *And I will dash them one against another, fathers and sons together, declares the LORD. I will not pity or spare or have compassion, that I should not destroy them.* ￼

Jer 19:7-9 *And in this place I will make void the plans of Judah and Jerusalem, and will cause their people to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth. ⁸And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its wounds. ⁹And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his neighbor in*

the siege and in the distress, with which their enemies and those who seek their life afflict them. ￼

The references to hissing (v. 8) appear to speak of contempt or of condemnation.

Jer 25:33 *And those pierced by the LORD on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall be dung on the surface of the ground.* ￼

Ezek 7:5-7 Thus says the Lord GOD: *Disaster after disaster!^v Behold, it comes. ⁶An end has come; the end has come; it has awakened against you. Behold, it comes. ⁷Your doom^w has come to you, O inhabitant of the land. The time has come; the day is near, a day of tumult, and not of joyful shouting on the mountains.* ￼

^v Some Hebrew manuscripts (compare Syriac, Targum); most Hebrew manuscripts *Disaster! A unique disaster!*

^w The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain; also verse 10

Ezek 32:4-6 *And I will cast you on the ground; on the open field I will fling you, and will cause all the birds of the heavens to settle on you, and I will gorge the beasts of the whole earth with you. ⁵I will strew your flesh upon the mountains and fill the valleys with your carcass.^x ⁶I will drench the land even to the mountains with your flowing blood, and the ravines will be full of you.* ￼

^x Hebrew *your height*

Amos 8:2-3 *And he said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me, "The end^y has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them. ³The songs of the temple^z shall become wailings^a in that day," declares the Lord GOD. "So many dead bodies!" "They are thrown everywhere!" "Silence!" ￼*

^y The Hebrew words for *end* and *summer fruit* sound alike

^z Or *palace*

^a Or *The singing women of the palace shall wail*

Nah 3:3 *Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, hosts of slain, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end— they stumble over the bodies!* ￼

1Cor 10:8 *We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.* ￼



Rev 9:5-6 They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and *their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone.* ⁶And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. 

Rev 14:18-20 And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." ¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.^b 

^b About 184 miles; a *stadion* was about 607 feet or 185 meters

This is probably speaking of the final judgment, although some suggest that it may have in view the judgments of the end times. The trampling of grapes in a winepress was an OT symbol of God's wrath and judgment on people (cf. Isa 63:3). The amount of shed blood is likely hyperbole, symbolizing incredible slaughter.

... even complete devastation

See also:

- ... *The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God's judgment of the wicked*, p. 727

Gen 7:20-23 The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits^c deep. ²¹And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. ²²Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. ²³He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. 

^c A *cubit* was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

Deut 32:22 For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. 

This portrays judgment on Israel for breaking the covenant. It illustrates that there are no limitations to God's wrath and the effects that it can have.

Isa 30:13-14 ... therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; ¹⁴and its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern. 

This most likely means that the figurative wall of their sin would collapse, bringing their destruction – destruction so complete that nothing of value will be left (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Jer 4:20, 23-26 Crash follows hard on crash; the whole land is laid waste. Suddenly my tents are laid waste, my curtains in a moment.  ... ²³I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. ²⁴I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. ²⁵I looked, and behold, there was no man, and all the birds of the air had fled. ²⁶I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger. 

This portrays the complete devastation of Judah.

Jer 12:11-12, 17 They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart. ¹²Upon all the bare heights in the desert destroyers have come, for the sword of the LORD devours from one end of the land to the other; no flesh has peace.  ... ¹⁷But if any nation will not listen, then I will utterly pluck it up and destroy it, declares the LORD. 

Jer 19:10-11 Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you, ¹¹and shall say to them, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: *So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that it can never be mended.* Men shall bury in Topheth because there will be no place else to bury. 

Jer 50:26 Come against her from every quarter; open her granaries; pile her up like heaps of grain, and devote her to destruction; let nothing be left of her. 

Jer 51:26, 37 No stone shall be taken from you for a corner and no stone for a foundation, but you shall be a perpetual waste, declares the LORD.  ... ³⁷and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing, without inhabitant. 



Ezek 7:11b *None of them shall remain, nor their abundance, nor their wealth; neither shall there be preeminence among them.*^d 📖

^d The meaning of this last Hebrew sentence is uncertain

Ezek 28:18-19 By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries; so *I brought fire out from your midst; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you.* ¹⁹*All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.* 📖

This speaks of the king of Tyre. Similarly 26:21 says of Tyre itself: "I will bring you to a horrible end and you will be no more. You will be sought, but you will never again be found, declares the Sovereign LORD."

Ezek 32:15 *When I make the land of Egypt desolate, and when the land is desolate of all that fills it, when I strike down all who dwell in it, then they will know that I am the LORD.* 📖

Obad 1:5-6, 9, 18 *If thieves came to you, if plunderers came by night— how you have been destroyed!— would they not steal only enough for themselves? If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings? ⁶How Esau has been pillaged, his treasures sought out! 📖 ... ⁹And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman, so that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter. 📖 ... ¹⁸The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.* 📖

Unlike the aftermath of robbery or grape picking (v. 5), there would be nothing left of value in what was Edom (v. 6).

Zeph 3:6 *I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant.* 📖

✦ **God fully carries out his judgments:**

Rom 9:28 *... for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment

Subsections

- The wicked often prosper
- God shows goodness to the wicked – even their prosperity ultimately comes from him
- Questioning of God's apparent lack of judgment regarding the wicked
- However, the situation of the wicked is precarious
- God does not leave the guilty unpunished
- In due time God does take action . . .
- . . . God's silence in the face of wickedness is followed by his judgment
- God destroys the wicked
- The destruction of the wicked is often sudden
- Note: "The day of the LORD" will bring God's judgment, with its destruction of the wicked

The wicked often prosper

Job 21:7-13, 16-18, 29-30 *Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? ⁸Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes. ⁹Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them. ¹⁰Their bull breeds without fail; their cow calves and does not miscarry. ¹¹They send out their little boys like a flock, and their children dance. ¹²They sing to the tambourine and the lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipe. ¹³They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol. 📖 ... ¹⁶Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me. ¹⁷"How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out? That their calamity comes upon them? That God^e distributes pains in his anger? ¹⁸That they are like straw before the wind, and like chaff that the storm carries away? 📖 ... ²⁹Have you not asked those who travel the roads, and do you not accept their testimony ³⁰that the evil man is spared in the day of calamity, that he is rescued in the day of wrath? 📖*

^e Hebrew *he*

The implication of the rhetorical questions in vv 17-18 is that such things do not happen very often at all.



Ps 10:5-6 *His ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them. ⁶He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity."* 📖

Ps 73:3-5, 12 For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. ⁵They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. 📖 ... ¹²Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. 📖

Ecc 7:15 In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and *there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing.* 📖

Here and below in 8:14 the writer is not necessarily saying that this is generally the case, but the implication is that the fact that it happens at all seems quite unjust.

Ecc 8:14 There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and *there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous.* I said that this also is vanity. 📖

Mal 3:15 *And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.* 📖

God shows goodness to the wicked – even their prosperity ultimately comes from him

Isa 26:10 *If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the LORD.* 📖

The verse suggests that at times such "favor" is shown to the wicked. This "favor" more than likely refers to God's merciful continuing provision, providing such things as rain for crops (cf. [Matt 5:44-45](#) ↓), vital to the prosperity of the wicked.

Matt 5:44-45 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For *he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.* 📖

Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of *the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.* 📖

Job 12:6-9 *The tents of robbers are at peace, and those who provoke God are secure, who bring their god in their hand.^f ⁷"But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; ⁸or the bushes of the earth,^g and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. ⁹Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?* 📖

^f The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

^g Or *speak to the earth*

The meaning of the Hebrew for the last clause of v. 6 is unclear. It may be speaking of God's provision for them (cf. AMP, NASB, NIV text note, NKJV, NRSV text note), pointing to the concept that the prosperity of the wicked comes from God. Verse 9 affirms this concept, referring to people's circumstances being given them by God's "hand" – including that of the wicked who prosper, and righteous Job's miserable lot.

Job 22:18 *Yet he filled their houses with good things— but the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* 📖

Job 24:21-23 They wrong the barren, childless woman, and do no good to the widow. ²²*Yet God^h prolongs the life of the mighty by his power; they rise up when they despair of life. ²³He gives them security, and they are supported, and his eyes are upon their ways.* 📖

^h Hebrew *he*

Ps 17:13b-14 Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword, ¹⁴from men by your hand, O LORD, from *men of the world whose portion is in this life.*ⁱ *You fill their womb with treasure;^j they are satisfied with children, and they leave their abundance to their infants.* 📖

ⁱ Or *from men whose portion in life is of the world*

^j Or *As for your treasured ones, you fill their womb*

Jer 12:2 *You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit; you are near in their mouth and far from their heart.* 📖

‡ **God is good to everyone:**

Ps 145:9 *The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.* 📖

Matthew 5:44-45 and Luke 6:35b above also speak of this.



Questioning of God's apparent lack of judgment regarding the wicked

Jer 12:1 Righteous are you, O LORD, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. *Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?* 

Hab 1:3-4, 13 *Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. ⁴So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.*  ... ¹³You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, *why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?* 

Verses 3-4 are part of Habakkuk's first complaint about God allowing the wicked and injustice to prevail in Judah. After hearing God's reply that he has appointed the ruthless Babylonians to execute judgment on Judah (cf. vv. 5-11), Habakkuk then questions why these people who are even more wicked should be allowed to swallow up the people of Judah (v. 13).

Job 24:1, 12 *Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days?*  ... ¹²From out of the city the dying groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help; yet *God charges no one with wrong.* 

In v. 1, "his days" refers to days of God's judgment.

Ps 10:1-2 *Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?* ²In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. 

Ps 94:3 *O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?* 

Mal 2:17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?" 

This verse serves as a warning that we should be wary of questioning God – or at least of how we question him.

✦ A somewhat frustrated wish that God would destroy the wicked:

Ps 139:19a *Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!* 

However, the situation of the wicked is precarious

Job 8:14-15 *His confidence is severed, and his trust is a spider's web.*^k ¹⁵*He leans against his house, but it does not stand; he lays hold of it, but it does not endure.* 

^k Hebrew house

This speaks of the fragility of both the prosperity and security of the wicked.

Job 24:24 *They are exalted a little while, and then are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like the heads of grain.* 

Job 20:4-5, 22 Do you not know this from of old, since man was placed on earth, ⁵that *the exulting of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment?*  ... ²²*In the fullness of his sufficiency he will be in distress; the hand of everyone in misery will come against him.* 

Verse 5 speaks of the relative brevity of the happiness of the wicked.

Ps 37:35-36 *I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree.*¹ ³⁶*But he passed away,*^m *and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found.* 

¹ The identity of this tree is uncertain

^m Or *But one passed by*

Ps 92:6-7 The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this: ⁷that *though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever; ...* 

The psalmist probably is referring to the wicked being destroyed in their life on earth, with their destruction being forever. Obviously his words are very applicable to the fate that awaits the wicked on judgment day.

Isa 26:11 *O LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them.* 

Although the wicked are not aware of it, God's judgment looms.

God does not leave the guilty unpunished

See also:

▪ [Job 24:24](#) ↑

Ex 34:6-7 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger,



and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands,ⁿ forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but *who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.*"

☞

ⁿ Or *to the thousandth generation*

The latter part of v. 7 appears to speak of the ongoing effects of severe punishment still being felt by future generations. Some commentators think that it alludes to the sin itself filtering through to later generations, and so being accompanied by appropriate punishment – although this would not apply to repentant children.

Nah 1:3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and *the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.* His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

☞

Job 10:14 *If I sin, you watch me and do not acquit me of my iniquity.* ☞

Mic 6:10-13 *Can I forget any longer the treasures^o of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accursed? ¹¹Shall I acquit the man with wicked scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? ¹²Your^p rich men are full of violence; your inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. ¹³Therefore I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins.* ☞

^o Or *Are there still treasures*

^p Hebrew *whose*

Col 3:25 *For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.* ☞

Josh 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; *he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.*" ☞

God does not forgive unrepentant people of their sins.

‡ **God is well aware of the deeds of the wicked:**

Ps 94:7, 9-10a ... and they [the wicked] say, "*The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.*" ☞ ... ⁹*He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? ¹⁰He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke?* ☞

In due time God does take action . . .

Deut 32:34-35 *'Is not this laid up in store with me, sealed up in my treasuries? ³⁵Vengeance is mine, and recompense,^a for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.'* ☞

^a Septuagint *and I will repay*

That which God has "laid up in store" and sealed in his "treasuries" (v. 34) refers either to: the injustices of Israel's enemies against her (cf. CEV) – implying he will not forget them; or God's sure plans to take revenge on these enemies, as referred to in v. 35.

Ps 37:12-13 The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, ¹³*but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.* ☞

Note that God's laughter and contempt for the wicked is also mentioned elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Job 12:21; Ps 2:4; 59:8; Prov 1:26; Nah 3:6).

Ps 75:2 *At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity.* ☞

God sets an appointed time to exact judgment on the wicked (cf. vv. 4-5).

Prov 16:4 *The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.* ☞

The "day of trouble" is that of God's punishment of the wicked.

Ecc 3:17 I said in my heart, *God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.* ☞

Just as God has set a time for every activity and deed, so he has set a time in which he will bring to judgment the wicked (and the righteous).

Isa 13:22 Hyenas^r will cry in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; *its time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged.* ☞

^r Or *foxes*

The reference is to Babylon.

Jer 51:6, 13, 33 "Flee from the midst of Babylon; let every one save his life! Be not cut off in her punishment, for *this is the time of the LORD's vengeance, the repayment he is rendering her.*" ☞ ... ¹³O you who dwell by many waters, rich in treasures, *your end has come; the thread of your life is cut.* ☞ ... ³³*For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time when*



it is trodden; yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come." 

Verse 33 speaks of the approaching time of Babylon's judgment, in which she will be thrashed, the product of her deeds.

Ezek 21:28-29 And you, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach; say, *A sword, a sword is drawn for the slaughter. It is polished to consume and to flash like lightning*—²⁹while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the profane wicked, whose day has come, the time of their final punishment. 

Ezek 24:14 I am the LORD. *I have spoken; it shall come to pass; I will do it. I will not go back; I will not spare; I will not relent; according to your ways and your deeds you will be judged, declares the Lord GOD.* 

Mic 7:4 The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. *The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand.* 

The “watchmen” are the prophets, who had warned of a coming day of God's judgment – a day now at hand.

Matt 13:24-30 He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds^s among the wheat and went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷And the servants^t of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ ²⁸He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ *So the servants said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?”* ²⁹But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” 

^s Probably darnel, a wheat-like weed

^t Greek *bondservants*; also verse 28

The “weeds” referred to were quite possibly darnel (cf. text note), which in the early stages of growth looks like wheat, but can easily be distinguished later. God delays final consummate judgment of “the sons of the evil one” (cf. v. 38) until the time of the end of the age. Verse 29 implies that this is in part at least to avoid undue harm to his own, who are in the midst of these “weeds”.

Acts 7:6-7 And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, *who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years.* ⁷“But I will judge the nation that they serve,” said God, “and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.” 

The Israelites suffered at the hands of the Egyptians for four hundred years before God's appointed time for judgment on the Egyptians eventuated.

Rev 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰*They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”* ¹¹*Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants^u and their brothers^v should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.* 

^u Greek *fellow bondservants*

^v Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

... God's silence in the face of wickedness is followed by his judgment

Ps 50:21 *These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I^w was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.* 

^w Or *that the I AM*

Isa 42:13-14 *The LORD goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.* ¹⁴*For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant.* 

The final statement (v. 14b) is alluding to God's zeal in executing judgment on his enemies (v. 13) and/or in bringing forth his people out of exile (cf. v. 16).

Isa 57:11-13a Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, did not lay it to heart? *Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and you do not fear me?* ¹²*I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you.* ¹³*When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you!* 



God had kept silent for some time and the people's wickedness had grown (v. 11). But the time had come – or was approaching – for God to intervene (v. 12). Note that in v. 12 “righteousness” is used with irony. The people either wrongly saw themselves as righteous, or pretended to be so.

Isa 65:6-7 Behold, it is written before me: “I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will indeed repay into their bosom ⁷both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities together, says the LORD; because they made offerings on the mountains and insulted me on the hills, I will measure into their bosom payment for their former deeds.”^x 

^x Or I will first measure their payment into their bosom

Job 34:26, 29 He strikes them for their wickedness in a place for all to see,  ... ²⁹When he is quiet, who can condemn? When he hides his face, who can behold him, whether it be a nation or a man?— 

Elihu asserts that God does punish the wicked (v. 26), while acknowledging that God does have the right to remain silent (v. 29a) when he sees fit.

‡ Despite the smugness of the wicked, the psalmist confidently looked to God to act:

Ps 10:11-15 He [the wicked man] says in his heart, “God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it.” [The psalmist:] ¹²Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. ¹³Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, “You will not call to account”? ¹⁴But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless. ¹⁵Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none. 

God destroys the wicked

1Sam 2:9 He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. 

Ps 9:5, 17 You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish; you have blotted out their name forever and ever.  ... ¹⁷The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God. 

Ps 52:1a, 5 Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man?  ... ⁵But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living. Selah 

Ps 73:16-20 But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, ¹⁷until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. ¹⁸Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. ¹⁹How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! ²⁰Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. 

In v. 16 the psalmist is referring to trying to understand the prosperity of the wicked, which he found oppressive – till he understood their final destiny (vv. 17-19).

Ps 75:8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs. 

As noted earlier, the “cup with foaming wine” signifies God's potent judgment. The wicked will have no choice but to suffer all of it, drinking it down to the last drop.

Ps 94:23 He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the LORD our God will wipe them out. 

Ps 119:119 All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross, therefore I love your testimonies. 

Ps 145:20 The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. 

Prov 21:12 The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked; he throws the wicked down to ruin. 

Isa 3:11 Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him. 

Jer 30:23 Behold the storm of the LORD! Wrath has gone forth, a whirling tempest; it will burst upon the head of the wicked. 

2Pet 2:4-6, 9 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell^y and committed them to chains^z of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;^a  ... ⁹then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^b and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ... 

^y Greek Tartarus

^z Some manuscripts pits



^a Some manuscripts *an example to those who were to be ungodly*

^b Or *temptations*

Verse 9b could be meaning that God persistently punishes the ungodly even prior to judgment day. Alternatively it may be speaking of them being kept for their ultimate punishment to be pronounced on judgment day.

‡ The wicked do experience the wrath of God in this life:

Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

While the wrath of God spoken of here may also anticipate that of the final judgment, it appears to be speaking of the present. Paul may have in mind God giving people over to the natural consequences of sin (cf. vv. 24, 26, 28) and/or particular acts of judgment.

The destruction of the wicked is often sudden

See also:

- [Ps 73:19](#)
- [Zeph 1:18](#)

Deut 32:35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense,^c for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and *their doom comes swiftly*.

^c Septuagint *and I will repay*

Ps 64:7 But God shoots his arrow at them; *they are wounded suddenly*.

Prov 6:15 ... therefore *calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing*.

Prov 24:21-22 My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, ²²*for disaster will arise suddenly from them*, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?

Prov 28:18 Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered, but *he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall*.

Isa 30:13 ... therefore *this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; ...*

Isa 47:11 But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and *ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing*.

Jer 48:16 The calamity of Moab is near at hand, and *his affliction hastens swiftly*.

1Thes 5:3 While people are saying, "There is peace and security," *then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape*.

Rev 18:10 They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For *in a single hour your judgment has come*."

‡ Be assured that the wicked will not go unpunished:

Prov 11:21, 31 *Be assured, an evil person will not go unpunished, but the offspring of the righteous will be delivered*. ... ³¹*If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!*

Opinions differ on whether the first clause in v. 31 is referring to the righteous being rewarded for their goodness, or to even them receiving some punishment for their sin. Either way it makes the point that the ungodly and sinners will certainly receive their due punishment.

Note: "The day of the LORD" will bring God's judgment, with its destruction of the wicked

See also:

- *Note: The time of Jesus Christ's return is referred to as "the day of the Lord", p. 700*
- *On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed, p. 704*
- *Prelude: There will be a final "day" of God's judgment, p. 706*
- *... The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God's judgment of the wicked, p. 727*
- *e) The Punishment for the Ungodly, p. 749*

Passages referring to "the day of the LORD" largely speak of a time of God's intervention and judgment – usually in what was then the near future or at the end of the age, or with links to both. It is generally understood by Christians that prophecies of "the day of the LORD" – or of such a "day" of God's reckoning – will be consummately fulfilled at the end of the age.



Isa 13:6, 9-13 *Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; as destruction from the Almighty^d it will come!* ☞ ... ⁹*Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it.* ¹⁰*For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.* ¹¹*I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.* ¹²*I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir.* ¹³*Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.* ☞

^d The Hebrew words for *destruction* and *almighty* sound alike

Ezek 30:1-3 The word of the LORD came to me: ²*“Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Wail, ‘Alas for the day!’* ³*For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for^e the nations.* ☞

^e Hebrew lacks *doom for*

Joel 1:15 *Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty^f it comes.* ☞

^f *Destruction* sounds like the Hebrew for *Almighty*

Joel 2:1-2a, 11, 31 Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! *Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near, ²a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!* ☞ ... ¹¹The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. *For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?* ☞ ... ³¹*The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.* ☞

Verses 2:1-2a, 11 speak of a day of judgment on Judah through a great locust plague. It is used to point to and reflect “the great and awesome day of the LORD” (v. 31) that will come upon all nations.

Joel 3:12-14 *Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.* ¹³*Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.* ¹⁴*Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.* ☞

The Valley of Jehoshaphat (v. 12) seems to be symbolic for a location where God will implement his ultimate judgment on the nations who have oppressed his people (cf. vv. 2-6). The illustrations in v. 13 depict God implementing his judgment as him cutting down the nations – that in their wickedness are “ripe” for harvest – and trampling them in his winepress of judgment.

Amos 5:18, 20 *Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light,* ☞ ... ²⁰*Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?* ☞

Some of the wicked in Israel longed for “the day of the LORD”, with its deliverance of God’s people. But they were unaware that it would bring judgment on their own wickedness and unfaithfulness.

Obad 1:15-16 *For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.* ¹⁶*For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually; they shall drink and swallow, and shall be as though they had never been.* ☞

“For as you have drunk on my holy mountain” (v. 16a) may in the context of the book of Obadiah portray the neighboring Edomites’ gloating over the destruction of Jerusalem. Alternatively, possibly the enemy nations who destroyed Jerusalem are being referred to. Irrespective of which is the case, the verses speak of a wider implication that concerns all nations. Their fete will parallel these depictions, with them having to “drink” of God’s judgment (v. 16b).

Zeph 1:7-10, 14-18 Be silent before the Lord GOD! *For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.* ⁸*And on the day of the LORD’s sacrifice— ‘I will punish the officials and the king’s sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.* ⁹*On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master’s^s house with violence and fraud.* ¹⁰*“On that day,” declares the LORD, “a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills.* ☞ ... ¹⁴*The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there.* ¹⁵*A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,* ¹⁶*a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.* ¹⁷*I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.* ¹⁸*Neither their silver nor their gold shall be*



able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.



g Or *their Lord's*

In vv. 7-10, God's judgment on Judah is in view. This was fulfilled in the Babylonian conquest of Judah, although it is not necessarily without an eschatological application. Verses 14-18 speak of God's judgment of all nations, with a more obvious eschatological application. The phrase "all the inhabitants of the earth" (v. 18) appears to be somewhat figurative, with the ungodly presumably being in view.

2Pet 3:7, 10 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being *kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly*. ...¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies^h will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.ⁱ

^h Or *elements*; also verse 12

ⁱ Greek *found*; some manuscripts *will be burned up*

‡ **Those who call on the name of the LORD will be saved:**

Joel 2:32 *And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.*

The context is "the great and awesome day of the LORD" (v. 31 †).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Repayments for the Wicked and the Righteous

See also:

- *God destroys the wicked*, p. 457
- *Acting justly brings blessing*, p. 1582
- *Injustice brings God's judgment*, p. 1583

In the Bible, the term "the righteous" basically denotes God's people, those who live in accordance with God's laws and will. The OT particularly often contrasts the wicked and their circumstances with the righteous and their circumstances. Some of the following contrasting repayments for the wicked and the righteous are natural or intrinsic outcomes of their actions. Other outcomes are spoken of as being directly due to God's intervention and judgment.

Bear in mind that OT verses often speak of what were ramifications of wickedness/disobedience and blessings of righteousness/obedience under the first covenant. Generally these have a spiritual application under the new covenant and also an application to the afterlife. Also note that verses from OT wisdom literature speaking of outcomes of wickedness and righteousness often contain what are considered to be generalizations.

Subsections

- [The wicked reap what they sow . . .](#)
- [. . . The wicked are brought down by their own evil deeds](#)
- [In contrast to the wicked, the righteous reap what is good](#)
- [God blesses the righteous](#)
- [God takes care of the righteous, in contrast to the wicked](#)
- [The future of the righteous contrasts with the end of the wicked . . .](#)
- [. . . This will be most evident in the afterlife](#)
- [The wicked and ungodly are bereft of hope](#)
- [Discourses on perils that the wicked typically face](#)
- [Note: Further contrasts between the righteous and the wicked](#)

The wicked reap what they sow . . .

See also:

- *Note: In effect, it is people's own actions that brings God's punishment on themselves*, p. 434
- *Ill-gotten gain has ill consequences*, p. 1624

All of the wicked face destruction in the next life. As this and the following subsections show, many also suffer consequences for their actions in this life.

Job 4:8 *As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.*

Prov 22:8 *Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail.*



Hos 8:7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it shall yield no flour; if it were to yield, strangers would devour it. 

Israel had broken the covenant and turned to idols (cf. vv. 1-6). They had sown the "wind", possibly in the sense that what they had done was hollow and futile. Furthermore, it produced the "whirlwind" of God's judgment, through Assyria. The second and third statements may be figurative – implying that their deeds would yield nothing useful and that even if something of some value was produced, it would be taken from them.

Hos 10:13a You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. 

Here "reaped injustice" appears to refer to the injustice inflicted by oppressors (cf. AMP), with devastation by enemies prophesied against Israel (cf. vv. 13b-15).

Prov 14:14 The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways. 

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 

... The wicked are brought down by their own evil deeds

Note that the following subsection, in contrasting the outcomes of righteousness with those of wickedness, contains a number of verses that further indicate that the wicked reap what they sow and "are brought down by their own wickedness" (**Prov 1:5** ↓).

Ps 7:15-16 He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. ¹⁶His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends. 

Verse 15 speaks, perhaps metaphorically, of a wicked man making a trap for others (cf. **Ps 9:15** ↓).

Ps 9:15-16 The nations have sunk in the pit that they made; in the net that they hid, their own foot has been caught. ¹⁶The LORD has made himself known; he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. Higgsaion.^j Selah 

^j Probably a musical or liturgical term

Ps 37:14-15 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright; ¹⁵their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. 

Jesus also speaks of the ramifications for those who "draw the sword", saying: "For all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt 26:52b).

Prov 1:18 ... but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives. 

Practices such as attempting to kill others will ultimately lead to one's own death.

Prov 5:22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. 

Prov 21:7 The violence of the wicked will sweep them away, because they refuse to do what is just. 

Jer 2:19 Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts. 

Joel 3:4 What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you paying me back for something? If you are paying me back, I will return your payment on your own head swiftly and speedily. 

Obad 1:15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head. 

Jude 1:10 But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. 

Following their evil instincts would destroy these people.

✦ God catches the "wise" in their own craftiness:

Job 5:13 He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end. 

God traps those who are "cunning" (GNT) or "wicked" (NCV™) – "who think they are wise" (NLT) – in their own crafty schemes.

In contrast to the wicked, the righteous reap what is good

Prov 10:16 The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin. 

"The wages of the righteous" and "the gain of the wicked" refer to the outcomes of righteousness and wickedness.



Prov 11:3-6, 18, 27, 30 *The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.*

⁴Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. ⁵The righteousness of the blameless keeps his way straight, but the wicked falls by his own wickedness.

⁶The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the treacherous are taken captive by their lust.  ... ¹⁸The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.  ... ²⁷Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor,^k but evil comes to him who searches for it.  ... ³⁰The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise. 

¹⁸The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.  ... ²⁷Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor,^k but evil comes to him who searches for it.  ... ³⁰The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise. 

³⁰The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise. 

^k Or acceptance

The wicked man's wages are probably described as "deceptive" (v. 18) because although they at first seem fine, they can bring trouble (cf. [Prov 15:6 ↓](#)) and do not last. In v. 27a "seeks good" is probably speaking of trying to do what is good and right (cf. CEV), in contrast to planning evil – which incurs harm (v. 27b).

Prov 12:13 *An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous escapes from trouble.* 

Prov 13:6 *Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but sin overthrows the wicked.* 

Prov 14:14 *The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways.* 

Prov 15:6 *In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the wicked.* 

The income of the wicked is presumably that which is gained by evil means.

Prov 14:22 *Do they not go astray who devise evil? Those who devise good meet^l steadfast love and faithfulness.* 

^l Or show

The term "go astray" in effect means to "err... and wander from the way of life" (AMP).

Prov 21:21 *Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor.* 

Prov 28:10 *Whoever misleads the upright into an evil way will fall into his own pit, but the blameless will have a goodly inheritance.* 

Prov 29:6 *An evil man is ensnared in his transgression, but a righteous man sings and rejoices.* 

Isa 3:10 *Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds.* 

Isa 32:8 *But he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands.* 

The term "stands" likely means to "stand firm" (GNT).

Isa 32:17 *And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust^m forever.* 

^mOr security

Hos 10:12 *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.* 

The expression "break up your fallow ground" possibly speaks of preparing oneself (primarily by repentance) to be productive and/or for blessing. Doing the things listed would result in God him making his presence known, showering "righteousness" on his people. Here "righteousness" may refer to God righteously fulfilling his promises by showering blessings on his people (cf. GNT) or saving them (cf. CEV). Alternatively it may mean that God would make them righteous.

God blesses the righteous

See also:

- [The future of the righteous contrasts with the end of the wicked . . .](#), p. 464
- [. . . This will be most evident in the afterlife](#), p. 465
- [Acting justly brings blessing](#), p. 1582

1Ki 3:6 *And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day."* 

1Sam 26:23 *The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the LORD's anointed.* 

Ps 5:12 *For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.* 

Ps 18:24 *So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.* 



Prov 3:33 The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.

Prov 10:6 Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

"Blessings" from God are presumably primarily in view.

Job 36:7 He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne he sets them forever, and they are exalted.

The second half of the verse speaks metaphorically of God's great blessing of the righteous.

Ps 97:11 Light is sownⁿ for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.

ⁿ Most Hebrew manuscripts; one Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint, Syriac, Jerome *Light dawns*

"Light" would appear to refer to the "light of his [God's] favor" (NirV®).

Prov 15:19 The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.

This implies that the path of the righteous is easy to progress along (cf. [Isa 26:7](#) ↓).

Isa 26:7 The path of the righteous is level; you make level the way of the righteous.

Ps 92:12-15 The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God. ¹⁴They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, ¹⁵to declare that the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

This largely speaks of the prosperity of the righteous, flourishing through their relationship with God. Proverbs 11:28 below uses similar imagery.

Prov 11:28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

God takes care of the righteous, in contrast to the wicked

See also:

- [Prov 3:33](#) ↑
- [The godly, blameless and pure are cared for and blessed by God](#), p. 1874
- [God hears the cries of the godly and rescues them . . .](#), p. 1977

Ps 1:6 ... for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

The term translated as "knows" may have the sense "watches over" (NIV®, NLT).

Ps 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

Ps 34:15-17, 19-20 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. ¹⁶The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. ¹⁷When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. ... ¹⁹Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. ²⁰He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.

Ps 37:16-17, 32-33, 39-40 Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. ¹⁷For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous. ... ³²The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. ³³The LORD will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial. ... ³⁹The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. ⁴⁰The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Ps 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Ps 140:13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name; the upright shall dwell in your presence.

The thanks of the righteous and the assertion that the upright will live before God, both attest to God's saving care of them (cf. v. 12).

Ps 146:9 The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.



Prov 10:3, 29 *The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.*  ... ²⁹*The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the blameless, but destruction to evildoers.* 

In v. 3, “the craving of the wicked” probably alludes to “the desire of the wicked” (AMP; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV). In v. 29, “The way of the LORD” refers either to the way God does things or the way he would have people live. With either meaning this verse attests to both: God’s protection of the righteous; and the ruin of the wicked being ultimately caused by God and/or their disregard for his commands. Hosea 14:9b makes a similar point to v. 29 – “... the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”

Prov 11:8 *The righteous is delivered from trouble, and the wicked walks into it instead.* 

God may well be in view here and in 12:21 immediately below, as being behind such outcomes.

Prov 12:21 *No ill befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble.* 

Note that the book of Proverbs (as with the book of Job) contains many observations or insights that are generally true, i.e. generalizations. Obviously the first clause is not always the case.

Prov 15:29 *The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.* 

See also *Note: It is vital for prayer that we live righteously . . .*, p. 1220.

Prov 18:10 *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.* 

The righteous look to the LORD for protection and find in him a strong refuge.

Matt 6:31-33 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 

✦ **The path of the righteous is like light, in contrast to the darkness of the way of the wicked:**

Prov 4:18-19 *But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.* ¹⁹*The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.* 

The way of the wicked is like walking in great darkness (v. 19) – hazardous and insecure. This contrasts to the way of the

righteous which is likened to light, blessed with God’s favor (cf. [Ps 97:11](#) ). For the righteous this contrast is taken further in Psalms 112:4, which speaks of light being given to the righteous amidst darkness (i.e. in dark times): “Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.” Again God is probably in view as the ultimate source of such “light”.

The future of the righteous contrasts with the end of the wicked . . .

See also:

- [c\) The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment](#), p. 452

Ps 37:1-2, 9-10, 17-20, 28, 37-38 Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! ²For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.  ... ⁹For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. ¹⁰In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.  ... ¹⁷For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous. ¹⁸The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; ¹⁹they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance. ²⁰But the wicked will perish; the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.  ... ²⁸For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.  ... ³⁷Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace. ³⁸But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the future of the wicked shall be cut off. 

In v. 9, “the land” refers primarily to the promised land of Canaan. Verse 18a speaks of God having the future of the blameless well in hand, watching over them throughout their lives (cf. NCV, NIV).

Ps 52:6-7 *The righteous shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying,* ⁷*“See the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and sought refuge in his own destruction!”*^o 

^o Or in his work of destruction

“See the man” (v. 7) presumably refers to the wicked man’s grave (cf. v. 5). The meaning given by the text note on v. 7 has support amongst other translations (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT).



Ps 58:10-11 *The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked.*
¹¹Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth."

Ps 75:10 *All the horns of the wicked I will cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.*

It is debatable who the speaker is here. But most likely it is either God (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, Nlrv, NLT) or one speaking of God. The "horns" speak of strength.

Ps 112:6-10 *For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. ⁷He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. ⁸His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. ⁹He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor. ¹⁰The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish!*

Prov 10:7, 24-25 *The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot. ... ²⁴What the wicked dreads will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted. ²⁵When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever.*

Verse 7a appears to speak of the blessing of being well remembered, as reflected by the contrasting end of "the name of the wicked" in the subsequent clause (v. 7b).

Prov 11:19 *Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live, but he who pursues evil will die.*

This speaks of a righteous person having a security of life, although it also has an application to the afterlife.

Prov 12:7 *The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.*

The "house" (cf. [Prov 14:11](#) ↓) either denotes the family of the righteous in particular (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT) or the righteous and all that they have.

Prov 14:11 *The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.*

Prov 24:16 *... for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity.*

Prov 28:18 *Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered, but he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall.*

References to the wicked falling, generally have their ruin or destruction in view.

Isa 58:8 *Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.*

The clause "your righteousness shall go before you" implies that one's righteousness leads to the security of one's future. However note that "your righteousness" may instead here be a reference to God.

Ecc 8:12-13 *Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. ¹³But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.*

The apparent contradiction that a wicked person "prolongs his life" (v. 12), but "neither will he prolong his days like a shadow" (v. 13) has a few possible explanations, including: the latter may be a reference to life beyond the grave; the writer may be alternating between a notable exception (v. 12) and a generalization (v. 13); and after the first assertion the writer may be quoting a common proverb (vv. 12b-13; cf. CEV, GNT), which he does not necessarily agree with.

Ezek 18:20 *The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*

People will be rewarded according to their own deeds, with the righteous receiving the outcomes of their righteousness and the wicked receiving the outcomes of their wickedness.

... This will be most evident in the afterlife

See also:

- [Eternal life will be the reward for godliness](#), p. 709
- [God's wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness](#), p. 709
- [Those who have believed in Jesus Christ will be saved and have eternal life](#), p. 714
- [Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned](#), p. 715
- [II. The Afterlife](#), p. 726

Mal 3:16-18 *Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. ¹⁷"They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured*



possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. 

Matt 13:40-43 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. 

Rom 2:7-10 ... to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸but for those who are self-seeking^p and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 

^p Or contentious

Ps 17:13b-15 Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword, ¹⁴from men by your hand, O LORD, from men of the world whose portion is in this life.^q You fill their womb with treasure;^r they are satisfied with children, and they leave their abundance to their infants. ¹⁵As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. 

^q Or from men whose portion in life is of the world

^r Or As for your treasured ones, you fill their womb

Verse 14a points out that what good things the wicked may obtain, are limited to this life – the afterlife holds nothing good for them. Verse 15 may well have the afterlife in view (cf. *God's people will see God*, p. 745). Note that similar to v. 15, Psalms 11:7 says, "...the upright shall behold his face."

Prov 14:32 The wicked is overthrown through his evildoing, but the righteous finds refuge in his death. 

The meaning of the Hebrew of the final clause is somewhat unclear (cf. CEV text note). As translated here, it points to the righteous – in contrast to the wicked – having hope or protection in death. On a similar theme Isaiah 57:2 says of the righteous man, "he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness."

Ps 1:4-5 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ... 

Verse 5 is saying that the wicked will be condemned on the day of judgment and so will have no place with the righteous (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). Here "the judgment" is probably not referring primarily to God's final judgment, but it is very much applicable to it.

2Thes 2:11-12 Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 

✦ Righteousness leads to life:

Prov 12:28 In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death. 

Here "life" probably refers to a secure and fulfilled life, rather than eternal life – although it is certainly applicable to it.

The wicked and ungodly are bereft of hope

Job 8:11-13 Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water? ¹²While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither before any other plant. ¹³Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish. 

Job 11:20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail; all way of escape will be lost to them, and their hope is to breathe their last. 

The last clause appears to mean that the only hope of the wicked will be to die.

Job 27:8 For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts him off, when God takes away his life? 

Prov 10:28 The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish. 

Note that the "expectation" of the wicked is contrasted with the "hope" of the righteous, the two terms being similar (cf. *Prov 11:7* ↓).

Prov 11:7, 23 When the wicked dies, his hope will perish, and the expectation of wealth^s perishes too.  ... ²³The desire of the righteous ends only in good; the expectation of the wicked in wrath. 

^s Or of his strength, or of iniquity



Prov 24:20 ... for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out. 

Eph 2:12 ... remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, *having no hope and without God in the world.* 

1Thes 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 

✦ What will the wicked do "when the end comes"?:

Jer 5:31 ... the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but *what will you do when the end comes?* 

The implication is that the wicked will have no recourse at the time of God's judgment.

Discourses on perils that the wicked typically face

The first three of the following passages are extracts from discourses given by each of Job's three friends – using often poetically heightened images. The discourse from which the fourth extract comes is attributed to Job, but some scholars attribute it to one his three friends, Zophar. The reasons for this possibility is that it would complete the cycles of speeches – Zophar otherwise having one speech less than the other two friends – and that the theology is more consistent with his than Job's. For in the chapters following each his friends' discourses, Job basically rejects their simplified view that the wicked always suffer as such and the righteous always have pleasant lives.

Job 15:20-30, 32-34 *The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless. ²¹Dreadful sounds are in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer will come upon him. ²²He does not believe that he will return out of darkness, and he is marked for the sword. ²³He wanders abroad for bread, saying, 'Where is it?' He knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand; ²⁴distress and anguish terrify him; they prevail against him, like a king ready for battle. ²⁵Because he has stretched out his hand against God and defies the Almighty, ²⁶running stubbornly against him with a thickly bossed shield; ²⁷because he has covered his face with his fat and gathered fat upon his waist ²⁸and has lived in desolate cities, in houses that none should inhabit, which were ready to become heaps of ruins; ²⁹he will not be rich, and his wealth will not endure, nor will his possessions spread over the earth;^t ³⁰he will not depart from darkness; the flame*

will dry up his shoots, and by the breath of his mouth he will depart.  ... ³²It will be paid in full before his time, and his branch will not be green. ³³He will shake off his unripe grape like the vine, and cast off his blossom like the olive tree. ³⁴For the company of the godless is barren, and fire consumes the tents of bribery. 

^t Or nor will his produce bend down to the earth

Job 18:5-19 *Indeed, the light of the wicked is put out, and the flame of his fire does not shine. ⁶The light is dark in his tent, and his lamp above him is put out. ⁷His strong steps are shortened, and his own schemes throw him down. ⁸For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walks on its mesh. ⁹A trap seizes him by the heel; a snare lays hold of him. ¹⁰A rope is hidden for him in the ground, a trap for him in the path. ¹¹Terrors frighten him on every side, and chase him at his heels. ¹²His strength is famished, and calamity is ready for his stumbling. ¹³It consumes the parts of his skin; the firstborn of death consumes his limbs. ¹⁴He is torn from the tent in which he trusted and is brought to the king of terrors. ¹⁵In his tent dwells that which is none of his; sulfur is scattered over his habitation. ¹⁶His roots dry up beneath, and his branches wither above. ¹⁷His memory perishes from the earth, and he has no name in the street. ¹⁸He is thrust from light into darkness, and driven out of the world. ¹⁹He has no posterity or progeny among his people, and no survivor where he used to live.* 

The terms "light" and "lamp" (vv. 5, 6) symbolize wellbeing and life. Verse 13 may well be referring to disease (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV, NLT, NRSV), with the term "the firstborn of death" perhaps speaking of disease as death's main weapon. The title "the king of terrors" (v. 14) most likely refers to death itself (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV).

Job 20:6-8, 14-18, 20-29 Though his height mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds, *he will perish forever like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?'* ⁸He will fly away like a dream and not be found; he will be chased away like a vision of the night.  ... ¹⁴yet his food is turned in his stomach; it is the venom of cobras within him. ¹⁵He swallows down riches and vomits them up again; God casts them out of his belly. ¹⁶He will suck the poison of cobras; the tongue of a viper will kill him. ¹⁷He will not look upon the rivers, the streams flowing with honey and curds. ¹⁸He will give back the fruit of his toil and will not swallow it down; from the profit of his trading he will get no enjoyment.  ... ²⁰"Because he knew no contentment in his belly, he will not let anything in which he delights escape him. ²¹There was nothing left after he had eaten; therefore his prosperity will not endure. ²²In the fullness of his sufficiency he will be in



distress; the hand of everyone in misery will come against him. ²³To fill his belly to the full, God^u will send his burning anger against him and rain it upon him into his body. ²⁴He will flee from an iron weapon; a bronze arrow will strike him through. ²⁵It is drawn forth and comes out of his body; the glittering point comes out of his gallbladder; terrors come upon him. ²⁶Utter darkness is laid up for his treasures; a fire not fanned will devour him; what is left in his tent will be consumed. ²⁷The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him. ²⁸The possessions of his house will be carried away, dragged off in the day of God's^v wrath. ²⁹This is the wicked man's portion from God, the heritage decreed for him by God." 

^u Hebrew *he*
^v Hebrew *his*

Verses 14-16 appear to portray ill-gained riches bringing the downfall of the wicked.

Job 27:13-23 *This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage that oppressors receive from the Almighty: ¹⁴If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword, and his descendants have not enough bread. ¹⁵Those who survive him the pestilence buries, and his widows do not weep. ¹⁶Though he heap up silver like dust, and pile up clothing like clay, ¹⁷he may pile it up, but the righteous will wear it, and the innocent will divide the silver. ¹⁸He builds his house like a moth's, like a booth that a watchman makes. ¹⁹He goes to bed rich, but will do so no more; he opens his eyes, and his wealth is gone. ²⁰Terrors overtake him like a flood; in the night a whirlwind carries him off. ²¹The east wind lifts him up and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place. ²²It^w hurls at him without pity; he flees from its^x power in headlong flight. ²³It claps its hands at him and hisses at him from its place.* 

^w Or *He* (that is, God); also verse 23
^x Or *his*; also verse 23

‡ **There is no peace for the wicked:**

Isa 57:20-21 *But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. ²¹There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."* 

In the same vein, Isaiah 59:8 – quoted in Romans 3:17 – says, "The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths; they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace."

Note: Further contrasts between the righteous and the wicked

Ps 107:42 *The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth.* 

God's acts of judgment (cf. vv. 39-40) and salvation (cf. v. 41) lead the upright to rejoice, while silencing the wicked.

Prov 10:20, 32 *The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth.  ... ³²The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse.* 

Verse 20b means that the thoughts of the wicked are of little value.

Prov 15:28 *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.* 

Prov 11:10-11 *When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish there are shouts of gladness. ¹¹By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown.* 

Verse 11b appears to be referring to the wicked within a city bringing it to ruin by their deceitful and malicious talk.

Prov 12:3 *No one is established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will never be moved.* 

Prov 12:5-6 *The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful. ⁶The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright delivers them.* 

Prov 12:26 *One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor,^y but the way of the wicked leads them astray.* 

^y Or *The righteous chooses his friends carefully*

Prov 21:15 *When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.* 

Prov 21:29 *A wicked man puts on a bold face, but the upright gives thought to^z his ways.* 

^z Or *establishes*

This appears to be implying that the wicked may put on a brave front in the face of what is often perilous circumstances resulting from their evil deeds, but the upright have the confidence and security that comes from giving careful, righteous thought to their ways.

Prov 28:1 *The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.* 



This appears to be speaking of a wicked person's guilt and accompanying fear of getting caught, producing persistent apprehension.

Hab 2:4 *Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.^a* 

^a Or *faithfulness*

This contrasts the proud Babylonians with the righteous who will live by their faith in God or faithfulness (cf. text note, AMP, GNT).

✦ **Through righteousness a nation becomes great – in contrast to the dishonor of sin:**

Prov 14:34 *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Epilogue: God's Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy

See also:

- *God is faithful even if his people are unfaithful and do wrong*, p. 821

Subsections

- Many times God called and warned his wayward people, through his prophets
- Eventually God determined to bring destruction on unresponsive Israel
- The temple and Jerusalem were destroyed
- God's judgment on unfaithful Israel culminated in exile from the promised land
- However, God would not completely destroy Israel . . .
- . . . God promised to spare a remnant of Israel
- God also promised to return people of Israel to the land
- Jews did return to the land – rebuilding the temple and Jerusalem's walls
- Note: Because God remembers his covenant with Abraham, God cares for and is merciful to Israel

Many times God called and warned his wayward people, through his prophets

2Ki 17:13 *Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets."* 

Note that the final clause appears to be speaking of the prophets handing on or repeating God's law to various generations of Israel (cf. CEV, GNT), subsequent to the law's initial revelation.

2Chr 24:19 *Yet he [God] sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention.* 

2Chr 36:15 *The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place.* 

Neh 9:26, 29-30 Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. 
... ²⁹And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey. ³⁰Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. 

Jer 3:12 *Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, "'Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever.* 

Jer 6:8 *Be warned, O Jerusalem, lest I turn from you in disgust, lest I make you a desolation, an uninhabited land.* 

Jer 11:7 *For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey my voice.* 

Jer 25:4-6 You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the LORD persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets, ⁵saying, "Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds, and dwell upon the land that



the LORD has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever. ⁶Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them, or provoke me to anger with the work of your hands. Then I will do you no harm.' 

Jer 26:4-6 You shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, ⁵and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, ⁶then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.' 

Jer 36:3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. 

✦ Israel's unsurpassed, appalling act of exchanging their glorious God for worthless idols:

Jer 2:11-13 Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. ¹²Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, ¹³for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. 

Note that in v. 13 useless idols are likened to wells or reservoirs that are cracked and therefore useless for holding water.

Eventually God determined to bring destruction on unresponsive Israel

See also:

- [2Chr 24:19](#) ; [Neh 9:26, 29-30](#) ; [Jer 25:4](#) 

2Ki 21:12-15 ... therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster^b that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. ¹³And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. ¹⁴And I will forsake the remnant of my heritage and give them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies, ¹⁵because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day. 

^b Or evil

The "measuring line" and the "plumb line" (v. 13) symbolized God's measures for standards used in his judgment.

Isa 65:12 I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter, because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my eyes and chose what I did not delight in. 

Jer 7:24-34 But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. ²⁵From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. ²⁶Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. ²⁷"So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. ²⁸And you shall say to them, "This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips. ²⁹"Cut off your hair and cast it away; raise a lamentation on the bare heights, for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath." ³⁰"For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight, declares the LORD. They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. ³¹And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. ³²Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth, because there is no room elsewhere. ³³And the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the beasts of the earth, and none will frighten them away. ³⁴And I will silence in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, for the land shall become a waste. 

Jer 13:10, 14 This evil people, who refuse to hear my words, who stubbornly follow their own heart and have gone after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be like this loincloth, which is good for nothing.  ... ¹⁴And I will dash them one against another, fathers and sons together, declares the LORD. I will not pity or spare or have compassion, that I should not destroy them. 

Jer 15:6-7 You have rejected me, declares the LORD; you keep going backward, so I have stretched out my hand against you



and destroyed you— I am weary of relenting. ⁷I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork in the gates of the land; I have bereaved them; I have destroyed my people; they did not turn from their ways. 

Mic 6:13, 16 Therefore I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins.  ... ¹⁶For you have kept the statutes of Omri,^c and all the works of the house of Ahab; and you have walked in their counsels, that I may make you a desolation, and your^d inhabitants a hissing; so you shall bear the scorn of my people. 

^c Hebrew For the statutes of Omri are kept

^d Hebrew its

‡ Israel was even more sinful than the surrounding nations – and would suffer accordingly:

Ezek 5:5-9 Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. ⁶And she has rebelled against my rules by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries all around her; for they have rejected my rules and have not walked in my statutes. ⁷Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are all around you, and have not walked in my statutes or obeyed my rules, and have not^e even acted according to the rules of the nations that are all around you, ⁸therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, even I, am against you. And I will execute judgments^f in your midst in the sight of the nations. ⁹And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. 

^e Some Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac lack not

^f The same Hebrew expression can mean obey rules, or execute judgments, depending on the context

Note that Daniel 9:12 in the following subsection attests to the fulfillment of the prophecy in v. 9.

The temple and Jerusalem were destroyed

2Ki 25:8-10, 13-15 In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹And he burned the house of the LORD and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. ¹⁰And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem.  ... ¹³And the pillars of bronze that were in the house of the LORD, and the stands and the bronze sea

that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces and carried the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴And they took away the pots and the shovels and the snuffers and the dishes for incense and all the vessels of bronze used in the temple service, ¹⁵the fire pans also and the bowls. What was of gold the captain of the guard took away as gold, and what was of silver, as silver. 

2Chr 36:18-19 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. ¹⁹And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. 

Ps 74:2-7 Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old, which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage! Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt. ³Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins; the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary! ⁴Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place; they set up their own signs for signs. ⁵They were like those who swing axes in a forest of trees.⁸ ⁶And all its carved wood they broke down with hatchets and hammers. ⁷They set your sanctuary on fire; they profaned the dwelling place of your name, bringing it down to the ground. 

⁸ The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

The "sanctuary" (vv. 3, 7) was God's temple, his "dwelling place" (v. 7).

Ps 79:1 O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins. 

Isa 64:10-11 Your holy cities have become a wilderness; Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. ¹¹Our holy and beautiful^h house, where our fathers praised you, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins. 

^h Or holy and glorious

Jer 44:4-6 Yet I persistently sent to you all my servants the prophets, saying, 'Oh, do not do this abomination that I hate!' ⁵But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods. ⁶Therefore my wrath and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they became a waste and a desolation, as at this day. 



Lam 2:1-8, 17 *How the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud! He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger. ²The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers. ³He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel; he has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around. ⁴He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire. ⁵The Lord has become like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel; he has swallowed up all its palaces; he has laid in ruins its strongholds, and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. ⁶He has laid waste his booth like a garden, laid in ruins his meeting place; the LORD has made Zion forget festival and Sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest. ⁷The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary; he has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they raised a clamor in the house of the LORD as on the day of festival. ⁸The LORD determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion; he stretched out the measuring line; he did not restrain his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament; they languished together. ... ¹⁷The LORD has done what he purposed; he has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.*

The terms "daughter of Zion" (vv. 1, 4, 8) and "daughter of Judah" (vv. 2, 5) signify Jerusalem and her people.

✦ **Nothing had ever been done like what was done to Jerusalem:**

Dan 9:12 He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us,ⁱ by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem.

ⁱ Or our judges who judged us

God's judgment on unfaithful Israel culminated in exile from the promised land

See also:

- ... *Their destruction would culminate in exile from the promised land*, p. 339

Note that the two Israelite kingdoms were conquered at different times. The northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, who captured the main city of Samaria in 722 B.C. Later the Babylonians destroyed the southern kingdom of Judah, with the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. On both occasions the conquering nations exiled the Israelite people.

2Ki 17:5-8, 18-23 Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it. ⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. ⁷And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods ⁸and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. ... ¹⁸Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. ¹⁹Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. ²⁰And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight. ²¹When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. ²²The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, ²³until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

Note that v. 21a is referring to the division of Israel into two kingdoms.

2Ki 25:10-12 And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile. ¹²But the captain of the



guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen. 

2Chr 36:20 *He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, ...* 

1Chr 9:1a *And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their breach of faith.* 

Jer 16:12-13 *... and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to me. ¹³Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.* 

Jer 52:27-30 *And the king of Babylon struck them down, and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was taken into exile out of its land. ²⁸This is the number of the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, 3,023 Judeans; ²⁹in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem 832 persons; ³⁰in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Judeans 745 persons; all the persons were 4,600.* 

The people of Judah were exiled to Babylon in three stages, with the final one following the actual destruction of Jerusalem.

Hos 9:3, 17 *They shall not remain in the land of the LORD, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria.  ... ¹⁷My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations.* 

The northern kingdom of Israel was sometimes referred to by the name of its leading tribe, Ephraim (v. 3).

Mic 4:10 *Writhe and groan,^j O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.* 

^j Or push

✦ **The resettlement of the former northern kingdom of Israel with foreigners, with the resultant false worship:**

2Ki 17:24, 28-29, 32-34 *And the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim,*

and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the people of Israel. And they took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities.  ... ²⁸So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear the LORD. ²⁹But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived.  ... ³²They also feared the LORD and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. ³³So they feared the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. ³⁴To this day they do according to the former manner. They do not fear the LORD, and they do not follow the statutes or the rules or the law or the commandment that the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel. 

Foreign national groups were settled in the former northern kingdom of Israel, the whole region also being known as Samaria. They intermarried with the Israelites who had remained. These foreigners brought their pagan worship practices (vv. 29, 33-34), which were intermingled with some attempt to worship the true God (vv. 28, 33). Thus later the people of Judah, the Jews, came to look down on the people of Samaria, the Samaritans, as not being true Israelites and because of their false worship.

However, God would not completely destroy Israel . . .

Isa 65:8 *Thus says the LORD: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and they say, 'Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it,' so I will do for my servants' sake, and not destroy them all.* 

Jer 5:10, 18 *Go up through her vine rows and destroy, but make not a full end; strip away her branches, for they are not the LORD's.  ... ¹⁸"But even in those days, declares the LORD, I will not make a full end of you.* 

Verse 10 is speaking symbolically of the nation as a whole.

Jer 30:11 *For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished.* 

Jer 31:35-37 *Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the*



LORD of hosts is his name: ³⁶*"If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever."* ³⁷*Thus says the LORD: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD."*

Amos 9:8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that *I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD.*

God would destroy "the sinful kingdom" of Israel, but would not totally destroy its people.

Jer 4:27 For thus says the LORD, *"The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end.*

As with his people, God would ruin the land – but not completely.

... God promised to spare a remnant of Israel

See also:

- [Isa 65:8](#)

Deut 4:27 And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and *you will be left few in number* among the nations where the LORD will drive you.

2Ki 19:30-31 And *the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.* ³¹*For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD will do this.*

Note that apart from the use of "the LORD of hosts" in the last statement, this promise is repeated verbatim in Isaiah 37:31-32.

Ezra 9:8, 13, 15 But now for a brief moment *favor has been shown by the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant* and to give us a secure hold^k within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery. ... ¹³And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and *have given us such a remnant as this,* ... ¹⁵O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for *we are left a remnant* that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this.

^k Hebrew *nail, or tent-pin*

Note that v. 13b suggests that in sparing a remnant God had punished the people of Israel less than they had deserved (cf. NLT).

Isa 6:13 And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned¹ again, *like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled."* *The holy seed^m is its stump.*

¹ Or *purged*

^m Or *offspring*

The "holy seed" are the faithful few. They are the "stump" that would remain, from which Israel would grow again (cf. [Isa 17:6](#) ↓).

Isa 8:18 *Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.*

The meanings of Isaiah's name (Yahweh saves) and his sons' names – one of which was Shear-Jashub (a remnant will return) signified that a remnant of the people would be saved.

Isa 17:6 *Gleanings will be left in it, as when an olive tree is beaten— two or three berries in the top of the highest bough, four or five on the branches of a fruit tree, declares the LORD God of Israel.*

Like an olive tree or a fruit tree would have just a few olives or pieces of fruit left after reaping, a remnant of Israel's people would be left after God's judgment of her.

Jer 50:20 In those days and in that time, declares the LORD, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none, and sin in Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon *those whom I leave as a remnant.*

Ezek 6:8a *"Yet I will leave some of you alive.*

God also promised to return people of Israel to the land

See also:

- *God will gather the remnant of exiled Israel from the nations and bring them home,* p. 981
- *God will aid them on the journey home and the nations also will assist,* p. 982

Note that there are a number of other verses in which God promises to return the people of Israel and/or Judah to his land. Many of these appear to be speaking (primarily at least) of a return to a restored Israel of the end times. Many such verses can be found in the above cross references. A number



of the following passages also can be applied to this still future restoration of Israel.

Jer 23:7-8 *"Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when they shall no longer say, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,'⁸ but 'As the LORD lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where heⁿ had driven them.' Then they shall dwell in their own land."* 

ⁿ Septuagint; Hebrew *I*

Isa 35:10 *And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* 

Ezek 20:41-42 *As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. ⁴²And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your fathers.* 

Ezek 34:11-13 *For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country.* 

Jer 27:21-22 ... thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem: ²²They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day when I visit them, declares the LORD. *Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.* 

This is speaking about furnishings of the temple rather than the people themselves, but it is also applicable to the people, being reflective of their circumstances.

Mic 4:10 *Writhe and groan,^o O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.* 

^o Or *push*

✚ **God promised to bring the exiles from Judah back after seventy years in Babylon:**

Jer 29:10 *For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.* 

Jeremiah had earlier spoken of the exile lasting seventy years in Babylon in 25:11-12 (cf. 2Chr 36:21; Dan 9:2).

Jews did return to the land – rebuilding the temple and Jerusalem's walls

After 70 years of captivity in Babylon (cf. 2Chr 36:21; Zec 1:12; 7:5), descendants of the southern Israelite kingdom of Judah did return to the land. They were known as "Jews", the term coming from the name "Judah".

Ezra 1:1-8, 11 *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ²Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem." ⁵Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem. ⁶And all who were about them aided them with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, with beasts, and with costly wares, besides all that was freely offered. ⁷Cyrus the king also brought out the vessels of the house of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and placed in the house of his gods. ⁸Cyrus king of Persia brought these out in the charge of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.  ... ¹¹all the vessels of gold and of silver were 5,400. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when the exiles were brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.* 

This marked the beginning of the return of exiles to Judah. Note that Sheshbazzar (vv. 8, 11) appears to have been the designated governor of Judah (cf. CEV, GNT), or at least the official who initially led or oversaw the returning exiles.



Ezra 2:1-2 *Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town.* ²*They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: ...* 

The subsequent verses (cf. vv. 3-63) contain a list numbering the returning exiles in their clans.

Ezra 2:64-68, 70 *The whole assembly together was 42,360, ⁶⁵besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 200 male and female singers. ⁶⁶Their horses were 736, their mules were 245, ⁶⁷their camels were 435, and their donkeys were 6,720. ⁶⁸Some of the heads of families, when they came to the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site.  ... ⁷⁰Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all the rest of Israel^p in their towns.* 

^p Hebrew *all Israel*

Ezra 3:1-3 *When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. ²Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. ³They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening.* 

Ezra 6:14-16 *And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; ¹⁵and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. ¹⁶And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.* 

This is speaking of the rebuilding of the temple. Note that this was later replaced piecemeal largely by Herod the Great, who began his work in 20-19 B.C. Herod's temple took 46 years to complete (cf. John 2:20).

Neh 2:17-18 *Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." ¹⁸And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work.* 

Neh 6:15-16 *So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.* 

✦ Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the temple:

Luke 21:5-6 *And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."* 

This prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans captured Jerusalem and burned the temple, the one built largely by Herod the Great.

Note: Because God remembers his covenant with Abraham, God cares for and is merciful to Israel

Ex 2:23-25 *During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.* 

The last phrase indicates that God took notice (cf. NASB, NKJV, NRSV) of his people's predicament, and implies that he was concerned for them (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). Note that God's covenant with Abraham was confirmed with his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob.

Ex 6:2-8 *God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. ³I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty,⁴ but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. ⁴I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. ⁵Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to*



them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.”

⁹ Hebrew *El Shaddai*

Lev 26:40-45 “But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴²then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.”

In v. 45 and probably also in v. 44, it is God's covenant made at Sinai with the Israelites that is primarily in view. Like the aforementioned covenant with Abraham and the other patriarchs (v. 42), because of God's faithfulness to it he would remember it and mercifully care for the people. Note that God's promise to remember his covenant with the rebellious Israelites was dependant on them repenting (vv. 40-41).

Deut 4:31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

God's covenant with Abraham and the other patriarchs is probably the one spoken of here.

2Ki 13:22-23 Now Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. ²³But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now.

Ps 105:7-11, 42-45 He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. ⁸He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, ⁹the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, ¹⁰which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, ¹¹saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.” ... ⁴²For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. ⁴³So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. ⁴⁴And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, ⁴⁵that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD!

Luke 1:68-75 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷²to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

✦ God acted faithfully in all that happened to Israel:

Neh 9:33 Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.

Despite Israel's great guilt, God acted faithfully; he did not forsake them (vv. 7-32).

Pray for persecuted Christians



Unit C

God and the World: Jesus Christ

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God's Promised Messiah

I. The Messiah's Identity

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I. The Messiah's Identity

The OT Scriptures speak of a leader chosen and sent by God to save his people and to reign forever. This leader is known as the "Christ" or the "Messiah" – which are Greek and Hebrew terms respectively, meaning the "anointed" or the "Anointed One". In NT times the Jews looked forward to the Messiah's coming and many still do today. But the NT provides compelling evidence that this Messiah was in fact Jesus Christ.

Note that this chapter is in a sense a prologue to the whole of *Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ*, as Jesus being the Christ or Messiah undergirds many of the topics.

a) The Promise of a Messiah in OT Scripture

See also:

- *Prelude: The OT Scriptures speak of God instituting a new covenant with his people – through the Messiah*, p. 664
- *God will establish the Messiah as ruler over all, forever*, p. 718
- *The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace*, p. 720

Note that in addition to the references in this section, there are a number of other OT passages that are understood to refer to the Messiah, many of which appear in the subsections cross-referenced immediately above and at the beginning of some of the following subsections.

Subsections

- The OT Scriptures speak of a coming anointed one of God, who would have God's Spirit on him . . .
- . . . They describe him as a remarkable chosen servant of God
- The OT promises that such a one would arise as a great ruler of Israel
- The OT says the ruler will bring justice and salvation to the nations
- The OT speaks of the ruler crushing the wicked

- The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David
- The OT also says he would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted

The OT Scriptures speak of a coming anointed one of God, who would have God's Spirit on him . . .

Ps 2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against *his Anointed*, saying, ... 

This was composed for the coronation of Davidic kings, but is understood to be messianic – ultimately speaking of the Messiah.

Dan 9:24-26a "Seventy weeks^a are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and *to anoint a most holy place*.^b ²⁵Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶And *after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.* 

^a Or *sevens*; also twice in verse 25 and once in verse 26

^b Or *thing, or one*

The text note at the end of v. 24 indicates that "to anoint a most holy place" may be referring to the anointing of a most holy "one" – i.e. the Messiah, spoken of in the subsequent verses. As the ESV text stands, quite possibly the consecration of a future temple of God is in view. Verse 26a was fulfilled in Jesus Christ's death. Regarding the "weeks", many scholars understand the term to denote seven years – and thus the seventy "weeks" (v. 24) to be 490 years. However there is a lack of agreement as to what periods of time are being referred to. Note that "to seal both vision and prophet" (v. 24) is usually understood as meaning to confirm and/or fulfill prophecies (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Ps 45:6-7 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; ⁷you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore *God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;* ... 

Psalm 45 is seen as messianic, as borne out in v. 6a.



Ps 132:17 There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. 📖

Probably "my anointed" refers at least primarily to David, but it is often understood to ultimately be speaking of the coming messianic anointed one of God – "My Anointed" (NKJV).

Isa 61:1 *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;*^c he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;^d ... 📖

^c Or *afflicted*

^d Or *the opening [of the eyes] to those who are blind; Septuagint and recovery of sight to the blind*

These words are prophetically attributed to the Messiah.

Isa 11:1-2 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ²*And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.* 📖

Isa 42:1b *I have put my Spirit upon him;* he will bring forth justice to the nations. 📖

... They describe him as a remarkable chosen servant of God

Isa 42:1a *Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;* ... 📖

Isa 49:1-3, 5-7 Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. *The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. ²He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. ³And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."* 📖 ... ⁵And now the LORD says, *he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— ⁶he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."* ⁷Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: *"Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall*

prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." 📖

^e Or *I will display my beauty*

Verse 2 speaks of God readying the one he had called for the decisive work ahead. In v. 3 "Israel" is usually understood to be a reference to the messianic servant, quite possibly as the one who would embody and accomplish all that Israel should have been and done in bringing God's salvation to all nations.

Isa 52:13 *Behold, my servant shall act wisely;*^f *he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.* 📖

^f Or *shall prosper*

Isa 53:11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see^g and be satisfied; *by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.* 📖

^g Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *he shall see light*

Hag 2:23 On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, *I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a^h signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts.* 📖

^h Hebrew *the*

Many understand Zerubbabel – an ancestor of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 1:12-13) – to be spoken of here as foreshadowing the Messiah. This is reflected in him being "chosen" by God and being described as God's "servant" and "signet ring" – the latter term implying that he was representative of God's authority, to implement his will.

Zec 3:8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: *behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.* 📖

The term "the Branch" is a messianic title (cf. [Zec 6:12-13](#) ↴).

✦ **The Jews also spoke of "the Christ of God, his Chosen One":**

Luke 23:35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is *the Christ of God, his Chosen One!*" 📖

Here the Jewish rulers refer to OT teaching of the coming of God's Christ, speaking of him as the one chosen by God.



The OT promises that such a one would arise as a great ruler of Israel

See also:

- *The Davidic Messiah will reign over Israel*, p. 997
- *The Messiah will rule forever over Israel, in righteousness and peace*, p. 997

Gen 49:10 *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him;ⁱ and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

- ⁱ By a slight revocalization; a slight emendation yields (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Targum) *until he comes to whom it belongs; Hebrew until Shiloh comes, or until he comes to Shiloh*

Particularly in view of the text note (cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NLT), this is commonly understood to refer to a great ruler coming from the tribe of Judah. Both this and the following prophecy from Numbers 24:17-19 may have been initially fulfilled in David, but probably both primarily or ultimately refer to the promised, divinely appointed leader.

Num 24:17-19 *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the foreheadⁱ of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. ¹⁸Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. ¹⁹And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!*

- ⁱ Hebrew *corners* [of the head]

This speaks of the messianic leader of Israel crushing Israel's enemies, exercising dominion beyond Israel.

Jer 30:21 *Their prince shall be one of themselves; their ruler shall come out from their midst; I will make him draw near, and he shall approach me, for who would dare of himself to approach me? declares the LORD.*

Dan 9:25a Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to *the coming of an anointed one, a prince*, there shall be seven weeks.

In this context, "a prince" speaks of a significant ruler of Israel.

Mic 5:2 ^kBut you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, *from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

- ^k Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

Zec 6:11-13 Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹²And say to him, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "*Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.* ¹³*It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*"

This crowning of the high priest (v. 11) is understood to be symbolic, portraying the messianic King-Priest who would build the temple of God (v. 12). The final statement (v. 13b) affirms that this leader will combine and bring harmony between the two offices of Priest and King (cf. AMP). Note that the temple of God (v. 12) is quite possibly a reference to the church, although some consider it to represent a millennial temple.

Zec 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, *your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he*, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zec 10:4 *From him [Judah] shall come the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler—all of them together.*

A number of commentators understand this to be messianic. The terms "cornerstone" and "tent peg" invoke thoughts of a supportive mainstay; the "battle bow" signifies might against enemies. Arguably "every ruler" looks forward to the ultimate ruler, the Messiah.

Mal 3:1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. *And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.*

This verse points to the messianic ruler – "the Lord" – bringing a new covenant, between God and his people.

Ps 80:16-18 They have burned it with fire; they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your face! ¹⁷But *let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!* ¹⁸*Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name!*

Verse 16a speaks of Israel, God's people (v. 16b). The nation of Israel may also be in view in v. 17 (cf. vv. 14-15). Alternatively v. 17 may speak of a Davidic king – possibly in particular the Messiah, through whom the nation would be given life (v. 18). This is perhaps supported by the use of the



term "the son of man", which was commonly used by Jesus Christ as a reference to himself. But note that v. 15 speaks of Israel with similar terminology – "the son whom you made strong for yourself".

Ezek 21:25-27 And you, O profane¹ wicked one, prince of Israel, whose day has come, the time of your final punishment, ²⁶thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted. ²⁷A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it. This also shall not be, *until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him.* 

¹ Or *slain*; also verse 29

Some commentators understand the "turban" to refer to the high priesthood. This being the case, with the reference also to the "crown", these verses would point to the dual role of high priest and king of the one to come (cf. **Zec 6:13** ). Verse 27 appears to be speaking of Jerusalem and/or Israel being made a ruin, until the one comes "to whom judgment belongs" – the Messiah, to whom the right to rule would be given (v. 27; cf. AMP, NCV, Nlrv). Note, however, that in light of the rendering in some translations of v. 27b, Nebuchadnezzar could be in view (cf. CEV, GNT) as the ruler of the Babylonians who would sack Jerusalem.

The OT says the ruler will bring justice and salvation to the nations

See also:

- [Gen 49:10](#) 
- *The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace*, p. 720

Isa 11:3-4 And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴but *with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth*; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 

Isa 42:1-4, 6-7 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged^m till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.  ... ⁶"I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the

hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. 

^mOr *bruised*

Verse 4b appears to speak of "foreign nations" (CEV; cf. GNT, NCV, NLT) putting their hope in the Messiah's "law" or rule to bring justice and salvation. Note that these verses are part of the first of Isaiah's four "servant songs" – possibly extending to v. 9. The others are in 49:1-7 or 1-13 (extracts of which follow); 50:4-9 or 4-11; and 52:13-53:12. Some consider that 61:1-3, or 1-11 to be a fifth "servant song". Most commentators understand each of these to be primarily speaking of the Messiah, the divinely appointed leader.

Isa 49:5-6 And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him— for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— ⁶he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; *I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*" 

Isa 52:15 ... *so shall he sprinkleⁿ many nations*; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. 

ⁿ Or *startle*

The meaning of the Hebrew term translated here as "sprinkle" is not clear (cf. NRSV text note). It possibly means "cleanse" (NLT text note) – as "sprinkle" implies – in which case "sprinkle many nations" would have in view the cleansing and consequent salvation of the Gentiles by the Messiah.

Isa 55:4 Behold, *I made him a witness to the peoples*, a leader and commander for the peoples. 

This is either referring to the Messiah or back to David (cf. v. 3) as "one (One) who shall testify of salvation" to the peoples (AMP). Even if David is primarily in view, the prophecy is ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah.

Ezek 17:22-23 Thus says the Lord GOD: "*I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain.* ²³*On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And*



under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. 

This is understood to be a messianic promise. The “sprig” (v. 22) – i.e. a small stem – likely symbolizes the Messiah, who is thus portrayed as being given a place of authority above all others. The birds (v. 23b) most likely represent other nations or people from them, who would find shelter in the messianic kingdom produced by the “sprig”. As such this points to the Messiah’s salvation – and even his justice – for all peoples.

Isa 9:1-2 ^oBut there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but *in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.*^p ^q*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.* 

^o Ch 8:23 in Hebrew

^p Or of the Gentiles

^q Ch 9:1 in Hebrew

The Messiah is in view here (cf. vv. 6-7) as bringing light – effectively the light of salvation – to Gentiles.

Isa 51:4-5 Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for *a law^r will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.* ⁵My righteousness draws near, *my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples;* the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. 

^r Or for teaching; also verse 7

This speaks of God bringing justice and salvation to the nations. However the references elsewhere in Isaiah to God’s messianic servant bringing justice (cf. [Isa 11:4 ↑](#); [Isa 42:1-4 ↑](#)) and salvation (cf. [Isa 49:6 ↑](#)) – and “light” (cf. [Isa 42:6 ↑](#); [Isa 49:6 ↑](#)) – point to God doing this through the work of the Messiah.

‡ The OT Scriptures speak of God giving the Messiah sovereign authority and of all peoples serving him:

Dan 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and *behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.* ¹⁴*And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* 

The OT speaks of the ruler crushing the wicked

Isa 11:4b ... *he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.* 

Isa 49:1-2 Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. ²*He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.* 

Particularly in view of the imagery in 11:4b above, this may well point to the Messiah inflicting judgment on the wicked (vv. 8-9; cf. Rev 19:15). However a number of commentators understand it to be speaking primarily of the power and incisiveness of the Messiah’s words.

Ps 2:6-9 [God:] “As for me, *I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.*” ⁷I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.* ⁹*You shall break^s them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”* 

^s Revocalization yields (compare Septuagint) *You shall rule*

Like the following two references (21:8-9; 110:5-6), this is from a psalm concerning a Davidic king and with messianic applications. Installed by God as King in Zion (v. 6), the Messiah will assert his authority over the nations (vv. 8-9). In so doing, he will shatter the wicked among them (v. 9b; cf. Rev 19:15).

Ps 21:8-9 *Your hand will find out all your enemies; your right hand will find out those who hate you.* ⁹*You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The LORD will swallow them up in his wrath, and fire will consume them.* 

The final statement (v. 9b) speaks of the manifestation of God’s wrath with the appearance of the Davidic king.

Ps 110:5-6 *The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.* ⁶*He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs^t over the wide earth.* 

^t Or the head

Note that the “Lord” (v. 5) refers either to God, as he crushes rulers through his Messiah, or to the Messiah himself, referred to in v. 1 both as “Lord” and as being seated at God’s right hand as may be the case here in v. 5a.

Hag 2:21-23 “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, *I am about to shake the heavens and the earth,* ²²*and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy*



the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. ²³On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a^u signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts.”

^u Hebrew *the*

As commented earlier, many understand Zerubbabel here as foreshadowing the Messiah. The passage quite possibly ultimately points to the day of the LORD when God's Messiah will come with his authority and the earthly powers will be crushed.

Mal 3:1-2, 5 Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ... ⁵“Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

This is generally understood as referring to the Messiah's coming and God's judgment through him. The wicked who have done things such as those things mentioned in v. 5 will not be able to endure or stand on that day.

The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David

See also:

- *God's covenant with David, promising that David's royal dynasty would last forever*, p. 354
- *The Davidic Messiah will reign over Israel*, p. 997

1Chr 17:11-14 When your [David's] days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹²He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, ¹⁴but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.

This is God's promise to David, as referred to in the above subheading, of a permanent kingdom under a godly and powerful king from David's line. It speaks initially of David's son Solomon, but the promise is understood to be consummately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In vv. 12, 14, the "house" refers firstly to the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem; in a messianic context it is readily applicable to God's people, the church.

Ps 132:11, 17-18 The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body^v I will set on your throne. ... ¹⁷There [in Zion] I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. ¹⁸His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine."

^v Hebrew *of your fruit of the womb*

As is the case with the other passages in this subsection, this is understood to be messianic. The "horn" and "lamp" (v. 17) speak of the strength ("horn") and continuation ("lamp") of David's dynasty, and would be embodied by the Messiah. The "lamp" metaphor appears to come from or allude to God's promise to David that he would "always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem" (1Ki 11:36).

Isa 11:1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

Jesse was David's father. The "stump of Jesse" refers to the family or line of David – likening David's line to the remains of a tree that had been "cut down" (GNT), primarily in reference to the fall of Jerusalem (587 B.C.).

Isa 16:5 ... then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.

Jer 23:5 Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Jer 33:14-17, 25-26 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' ¹⁷"For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, ... ²⁵Thus says the LORD: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven



and earth, ²⁶then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not *choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.”

Mark 12:35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?”

Jesus is not questioning that the Christ is the son of David, but using this acknowledged truth to begin making a point.

John 7:42 *Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?*

Acts 2:29-30 Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that *God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne*, ...

‡ Jesus' followers associated him with the promised establishment of David's kingdom:

Mark 11:9-10 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!* ¹⁰*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!* Hosanna in the highest!”

The OT also says he would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted

See also:

- [For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .](#), p. 492
- [Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' rejection and betrayal](#), p. 497
- [Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' death . . .](#), p. 497
- [. . . Further OT Scriptures fulfilled or reflected in Jesus' death](#), p. 499

Isa 50:6 *I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.*

This appears to anticipate the suffering of the messianic servant detailed shortly afterwards in Isaiah, in the extracts below.

Isa 52:13-15 Behold, my servant shall act wisely;^w *he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.* ¹⁴*As many were*

astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind— ¹⁵*so shall he sprinkle^x many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.*

^w Or *shall prosper*

^x Or *startle*

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (cf. [Isa 53:1-12 ↓](#)) is the fourth of Isaiah's “servant songs”. It depicts the sufferings of the messianic servant and the resulting atonement for God's people. It has been called “the gospel in the OT” and is quoted in the NT more than any other OT passage. Verse 13 speaks of the Messiah's exaltation. In speaking of the Messiah being exalted (cf. v. 15) after dying (cf. v. 14), such references imply that he would be raised to life (cf. [Isa 53:10-12 ↓](#)). Regarding the use of “sprinkle” (v. 15a), see the earlier comment under [The OT says the ruler will bring justice and salvation to the nations](#), p. 485. The remainder of v. 15 indicates that such will be the exaltation of the messianic servant that kings will be “speechless with amazement” (GNT) when they see his exaltation, and understand who he is and what he has accomplished.

Isa 53:3-12 *He was despised and rejected^y by men; a man of sorrows,^z and acquainted with^a grief;^b and as one from whom men hide their faces^c he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* ⁴*Surely he has borne our sorrows and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.* ⁵*But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.* ⁶*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* ⁷*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.* ⁸*By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?* ⁹*And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.* ¹⁰*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;^d when his soul makes^e an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.* ¹¹*Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see^f and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.* ¹²*Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,^g and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,^h because*



he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. 

^y Or *forsaken*

^z Or *pains*; also verse 4

^a Or *and knowing*

^b Or *sickness*; also verse 4

^c Or *as one who hides his face from us*

^d Or *he has made him sick*

^e Or *when you make his soul*

^f Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *he shall see light*

^g Or *with the great*

^h Or *with the numerous*

The clause "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (v. 6) may well allude to the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16) placing his hands on the scapegoat and confessing Israel's sins, symbolically placing these sins on it. Verse 10 appears to speak of God raising his messianic servant to life (following his death): "... he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days ..." The term "his offspring" (v. 10b) refers to the messianic servant's spiritual descendants – those who would be given life through him. The resurrection of the Messiah is further spoken of in vv. 11-12. The phrase rendered "by his knowledge" (v. 11) may mean "because of what he has experienced" (NLT) or "by knowledge of him" (NIV® text note). All these alternatives are pertinent.

Dan 9:26a And after the sixty-two weeks, *an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.* 

Zec 12:10 And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, *when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.* 

This speaks of the people of Israel grieving over the Messiah whom they had killed. The phrase "when they look on me" could possibly be speaking of them looking "to" him (cf. NIV text note) in faith, or physically looking on him, presumably on his return. The latter interpretation in particular implies that the Messiah would be raised from death to life.

Zec 13:7 "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones." 

The "shepherd" is the Messiah, spoken of here as being killed or executed.

✦ The OT Scriptures say that the Christ will remain forever:

John 12:34a So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever." 

Note that the cross references at the start of this and the previous subsection speak further of the everlasting reign of the Christ or Messiah.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

See also:

- *a) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General*, p. 112

Bear in mind that in his first advent, or coming, Jesus Christ did not come as an all-conquering ruler, which is how the Messiah is depicted in much of OT messianic prophecy. The NT indicates that this aspect of messianic prophecy will be fulfilled on Jesus Christ's second coming.

Subsections

- Jesus Christ is the one chosen and appointed by God
- Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit ...
- ... Jesus is the messianic Holy One of God
- The OT Scriptures testify to Jesus being the Messiah, the Christ
- For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus ...
- ... and the OT speaks of the messianic salvation that would come through Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the one chosen and appointed by God

See also:

- **Matt 12:18** ↓
- ... *They describe him as a remarkable chosen servant of God*, p. 483

Luke 9:35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One;ⁱ listen to him!" 

ⁱ Some manuscripts *my Beloved*



Luke 23:35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if *he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!*" 

Here the Jewish leaders make reference to Jesus' claims about himself, the validity of which they had failed to grasp.

1Pet 1:20 *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world* but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ... 

The term "foreknown" suggests that Christ was chosen (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

1Pet 2:4, 6 As you come to *him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,*  ... ⁶*For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."* 

This portrays Jesus Christ as God's chosen "stone" (vv. 4, 6), the prophesied chosen "cornerstone" on which God's people would depend (v. 6).

Acts 3:20 ... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send *the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,* ... 

Heb 3:1-2 Therefore, holy brothers,^j you who share in a heavenly calling, consider *Jesus, the apostle* and high priest of our confession, ²*who was faithful to him who appointed him,* just as Moses also was faithful in all God's^k house. 

^j Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

^k Greek *his*; also verses 5, 6

As "apostle" means "one who is sent", the reference to "Jesus, the apostle" (v. 1) has messianic overtones. Consequently the reference in v. 2 to Jesus Christ being appointed by God as apostle and high priest (cf. AMP) can be understood to point to him being the Messiah appointed by God.

John 10:36 ... do you say of *him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world,* 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? 

Here Jesus speaks of himself as the one God had "consecrated" – "set apart" (AMP, NIV) – in effect the one whom God had chosen (cf. NCV, NLT) and appointed.

Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit . . .

See also:

- *The OT Scriptures speak of a coming anointed one of God, who would have God's Spirit on him . . .*, p. 482
- *God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission*, p. 542
- *The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did*, p. 543

Luke 2:10-12 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David *a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 

Such references to Jesus as "Christ" mean that he is "the Anointed One", as is underscored here by the expanded title "Christ the Lord". Note that the terms "Christ" (Greek) and "Messiah" (Hebrew) both mean the "Anointed One".

Acts 4:26-27 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against *his Anointed*¹— ²⁷for truly in this city there were gathered together against *your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed,* both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ... 

¹ Or *Christ*

In v. 26 the believers are quoting from Psalm 2, applying "his Anointed" to Jesus Christ – as they make clear in v. 27.

Matt 3:16-17 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and *behold, the heavens were opened to him,*^m *and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;*¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,ⁿ with whom I am well pleased." 

^m Some manuscripts omit *to him*

ⁿ Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

The descending of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus at his baptism was God's anointing of Jesus for his mission (cf. [Acts 10:38 ↓](#)) – somewhat similar to the Holy Spirit in the OT coming upon some people at the start of their ministries, empowering them. This also marked Jesus as the Messiah – the "Anointed One" – fulfilling OT prophecies that God would bestow his Spirit on the Messiah (cf. [Matt 12:18 ↓](#); [Luke 4:17-19, 21 ↓](#)).

John 1:32 And John bore witness: "*I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.*" 



Acts 10:38 ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 

The coupling of the Holy Spirit and power may well be pointing to Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit empowering him for his mission.

Matt 12:15-19 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all ¹⁶and ordered them not to make him known. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁸"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. ¹⁹He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; ... 

The quotation, which finishes in v. 21, is from Isaiah 42:1-4. It is applied here to Jesus, asserting him to be the Messiah, the one on whom God had bestowed his Spirit.

Luke 4:17-19, 21 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."  ... ²¹And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 

... Jesus is the messianic Holy One of God

See also:

- [Acts 4:27](#) 
- [a\) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God \(I\): General](#), p. 112
- [b\) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God \(II\): Testimony](#), p. 115

Mark 1:24 "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." 

The title "the Holy One of God" (cf. [John 6:69](#) ) is a messianic title.

John 6:69 ... and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God. 

Acts 3:14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ... 

Note that this may be speaking primarily of Jesus' pure and righteous character – in contrast to the murderer Barabbas – rather than primarily of his messiahship. But it would appear to at least point to the latter.

Acts 13:35 Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption." 

Paul is applying this quotation to Jesus Christ (cf. vv. 30-37).

Acts 3:20 ... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ... 

This speaks of Jesus being the Christ – God's "chosen Messiah" (CEV; cf. GNT, NCV).

✦ All who believe that Jesus is the Christ are "born of God":

1Jn 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 

The OT Scriptures testify to Jesus being the Messiah, the Christ

See also:

- [c\) Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus](#), p. 494

This and the following two subsections are composed mainly of NT references asserting that the OT Scriptures as a whole testify to Jesus Christ being the Messiah and to aspects of his messiahship. The following chapter section, cross-referenced immediately above, largely contains NT references citing particular OT Scriptures as evidencing that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

Acts 18:28 ... for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus. 

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 

Philip was convinced that the OT testimony about the Christ matched the man Jesus from Nazareth.

John 5:39, 46 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,  ... ⁴⁶For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. 

Jesus implies that the OT writings showed that he was the Messiah. (Note that Moses is generally accredited with writing the first five books of the OT.)



John 12:41 *Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.* 📖

This may indicate that Isaiah spoke of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. vv. 37-40; NLT).

Acts 28:23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. 📖

Paul tried to convince the Jews in Rome that Jesus was the Messiah of the OT scriptures (cf. Acts 18:28 †).

For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .

See also:

- 1Pet 1:10-12 ↓
- *The OT also says he would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted*, p. 488

Acts 17:2-3 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." 📖

Matt 26:24, 52-56 *The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.* 📖 ... ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" ⁵⁵At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. ⁵⁶But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled. 📖

Jesus accepted his fate that the OT Scriptures prophesied so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled.

Luke 24:25-27, 44-47 And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the

Scriptures the things concerning himself. 📖 ... ⁴⁴Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 📖

Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection – and subsequent ascension – showed emphatically that he did indeed fulfill the prophecies of the Scriptures referred to here – leading to the ensuing fulfillment of that spoken of in v. 47.

John 20:9 ... for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 📖

Acts 2:29-33 Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. 📖

In vv. 30-31, Peter asserts that David had spoken (cf. vv. 35-38) of the Christ being resurrected to assume the Davidic throne, as the descendant whom God had promised David would be placed on his throne. In vv. 32-33, Peter implies that God's resurrection of Jesus Christ and his exaltation of Christ to his right hand (pointing to Christ's enthronement) shows him to be the one of whom David had spoken.

Acts 3:15, 17-18 ... and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 📖 ... ¹⁷"And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. 📖

The title "the Author of life" (v. 15) refers to Jesus Christ (cf. vv. 13-14).

Acts 13:27-33 For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. ²⁸And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹And when they had carried out all that was written



of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³²And we bring you the good news that *what God promised to the fathers*, ³³this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “*You are my Son, today I have begotten you.*”

In vv. 27-29 Paul indicates that the sufferings of the Messiah were foretold in the OT Scriptures and that these were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In v. 32, “what God promised to the fathers” is obviously a reference to OT promises and prophecies of the Messiah, but precisely what aspects of these and how God fulfilled them “by raising Jesus” (v. 33) is debatable. The phrase “raising Jesus” (v. 33) is taken by some to refer to God sending Jesus, viewing the quotation from Psalm 2:7 as referring to Jesus’ birth. But more often it is understood to be speaking of Jesus’ resurrection – in keeping with the subsequent verses – with Psalm 2:7 being fulfilled in the Father begetting (cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV, NRSV) or giving life to the Son, God raising Jesus from death to life. Possibly it refers to Jesus’ resurrection along with his ensuing exaltation and lordship. For further comment see Acts 13:32-37 in *Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’ resurrection*, p. 500.

Acts 26:22-23 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but *what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass*: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.

As Jesus fulfilled these prophecies – which Paul implies in this chapter of Acts – they showed that he was the Christ.

1Cor 15:3-5 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures*, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

... and the OT speaks of the messianic salvation that would come through Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Luke 24:46-47](#) ↑; [Acts 26:22-23](#) ↑
- *The OT says the ruler will bring justice and salvation to the nations*, p. 485

The following references refer to the OT speaking of salvation, or aspects of it, coming through the Messiah. Additionally, they assert or imply that Jesus was this

messianic savior, who would or did bring these OT prophecies of salvation to fruition.

Luke 1:69-70 ... and [God] has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ...

Here Zechariah refers to the messianic salvation prophesied in the writings of the prophets (v. 70), as coming through Jesus (cf. vv. 76-79) – the “horn of salvation” from the line of David (v. 69).

Luke 2:25-32 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹“Lord, now you are letting your servant^o depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

^o Greek *bondservant*

In vv. 31-32 Simeon alludes to OT messianic prophecies of the Messiah bringing salvation to all people (cf. Isa 42:6; 49:6), seeing the fulfillment of them in Jesus. Note that in v. 25 “the consolation of Israel” refers to the comfort and salvation (vv. 30-32) associated with the coming of the Messiah.

John 5:39-40 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

In conjunction with speaking of the Scriptures as testifying to him being the Christ, Jesus may be implying that the Scriptures indicated that eternal life – a key aspect of salvation – would come through him, the Christ, the one who can give life (v. 40).

Acts 10:43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Rom 3:21-22a But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.



Rom 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to *my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages* ²⁶*but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known* to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—

The “mystery of the plan of redemption” (AMP) – redemption which comes through Jesus Christ – has been made known through the writings of the prophets.

1Pet 1:10-12 *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully,* ¹¹*inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.* ¹²*It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

The “glories” (v. 11) most likely primarily refers to those of Christ (cf. CEV, NLT), but some see them as also encompassing those associated with believers’ salvation (v. 10a). The “things” (v. 12) refers to the various aspects of the gospel message of salvation – including Christ’s sufferings and the subsequent “glories”.

✦ **All the prophets foretold Jesus Christ’s coming and the new covenant era:**

Acts 3:24 *And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.*

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus

See also:

- *The OT Scriptures testify to Jesus being the Messiah, the Christ*, p. 491
- *For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .*, p. 492
- *. . . and the OT speaks of the messianic salvation that would come through Jesus Christ*, p. 493

Broadly speaking, there are two ways in which prophecies are spoken of as being fulfilled by Jesus Christ. One is that prophecies or predictions were accomplished or came true in Jesus’ life. The other is that aspects of his life have marked parallels in OT Scripture which they thus fulfill in the sense that they correspond to them and reveal a deeper, more complete meaning in them. See also the comments at the beginning of . . . *Further OT Scriptures fulfilled or reflected in Jesus’ death*, p. 499; and *Other messianic OT Scriptures applied to Jesus Christ*, p. 501.

Subsections

- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’ birth and early years
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’ life and ministry
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’ rejection and betrayal
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’ death . . .
- . . . Further OT Scriptures fulfilled or reflected in Jesus’ death
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’ resurrection
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’ ascension and exaltation
- Other messianic OT Scriptures applied to Jesus Christ

Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus’ birth and early years

See also:

- *The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God’s promise to David*, p. 487
- *Jesus was a descendant of David*, p. 519

Matt 1:18-23 Now the birth of Jesus Christ^p took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed^a to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for *that which*



is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). 

^p Some manuscripts of the Christ

^q That is, legally pledged to be married

The conception of Jesus through the Holy Spirit (vv. 18b, 20b) fulfilled Isaiah 7:14, which is understood to point to the Messiah being born of a virgin. In regard to the relevance of the latter part of the prophecy in v. 23b, possibly Matthew was implying a correlation between the meanings of "Jesus" (v. 21) and "Immanuel" (v. 23b). The former means "the LORD saves", and the latter "God with us" (v.23b).

Matt 2:1-6 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men^r from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose^s and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." 

^r Greek *magi*; also verses 7, 16

^s Or in the east; also verse 9

Matt 2:13-15 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." 

Matt 2:22-23 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene." 

The prophecy in question is not a quotation from a particular verse, as perhaps intimated by Matthew's general reference to the "prophets". One of the more prominent interpretations of this is that Matthew had in view the portrayal of the Christ

in the prophets (and Psalms) as being despised, and correlated this with Nazareth being renowned as despised by many people of the time.

✦ **The prophecy fulfilled in Herod's attempt to kill Jesus:**

Matt 2:16-18 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." 

Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' life and ministry

See also:

- [Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit . . .](#), p. 490

In addition to the prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' life and ministry below, note that the above cross reference shows how Jesus also fulfilled prophecies regarding God bestowing his Spirit on the Messiah (cf. [The OT Scriptures speak of a coming anointed one of God, who would have God's Spirit on him . . .](#), p. 482), for the Messiah's work.

Matt 4:12-16 Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." 

Matt 8:16-17 That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases." 

Matt 11:2-5 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ⁴And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk,



lepers^t are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 

^t Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Jesus' reply to the enquiry as to whether he was the promised Christ, alludes to prophecies regarding the work of the Christ – e.g. Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1 (cf. [Luke 4:17-21](#) ↓) – implying that he was fulfilling them, as the Christ.

Matt 12:14-21 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him. ¹⁵Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all ¹⁶and ordered them not to make him known. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁸“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. ¹⁹He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; ²⁰a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; ²¹and in his name the Gentiles will hope.” 

Matthew may be meaning that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy (vv. 18-20) in two ways. Firstly, Jesus was not antagonistic and avoided unnecessary confrontation (vv. 14-16); and secondly, he was not loud, even avoiding publicity (v. 16). These aspects of his approach were in accordance with – and in fulfillment of – the quoted prophecy of the messianic servant (vv. 19-20).

Matt 13:34-35 All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:^u “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.” 

^u Some manuscripts *Isaiah the prophet*

Luke 4:17-21 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” 

Jesus' claim to fulfill the messianic prophecy of one who would be anointed by God with the Holy Spirit to carry out God's messianic work (vv. 18-19) was supported by his

proclamation of the good news of God's salvation and in his healing works, whereby he liberated people from various kinds of bondage. The release from sin that Jesus would accomplish was a further aspect of his fulfillment of this prophecy.

John 2:14-17 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.” ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” 

John 12:12-16 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” ¹⁴And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!” ¹⁶His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that *these things had been written about him and had been done to him.* 

In addition to the fulfillment of the prophecy in vv. 14-15, note that the terms used in regard to Jesus in v. 13 also have messianic significance – as John suggests in v. 16. Regarding the crowd's use of “Hosanna!”, it is apparent that their use has messianic significance in view of both Matthew's account and it being an exclamation of praise. In Matthew's account the crowd uses the word in two expressions: “Hosanna to the Son of David!” and “Hosanna in the highest!” (Matt 21:9); the first is obviously messianic. The crowd's quotation of Psalm 118:26 (“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”; v. 13) indicates that they considered Jesus to be the Messiah and in a sense it is a fulfillment of that verse and prophecy. The title “the King of Israel” is obviously messianic.

✚ **John the Baptist's fulfillment of prophecy of the one would prepare the way for the Christ:**

Mark 1:2-4 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,^v “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, ³the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare^w the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’” ⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 

^v Some manuscripts *in the prophets*

^w Or crying: *Prepare in the wilderness*



Mark combines quotations from two prophets and attributes it to the major one, Isaiah (cf. Matt 27:9-10). In addition to these two prophecies, John the Baptist is likewise understood to have fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 4:5 as the "prophet Elijah" who would come before the "day of the LORD" – as indicated in: Matthew 11:14 ("he is Elijah who is to come"); Matt 17:10-13; and Luke 1:17 ("he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah").

Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' rejection and betrayal

John 12:37-41 *Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,* ³⁸*so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"* ³⁹*Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,* ⁴⁰*"He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."* ⁴¹*Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.* ☞

Note that vv. 39-40 are interpreted by many commentators to not mean that God prevented the people from believing, but rather that because they had purposely and repeatedly rejected God's message (cf. vv. 37-38), God bestowed on them a judicial blindness and hardening of heart. The consequence of rejecting God's message time after time is that one loses the capacity to believe.

John 15:24-25 *If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.* ²⁵*But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: "They hated me without a cause."* ☞

Matt 21:37-39, 42 *Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son."* ³⁸*But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance."* ³⁹*And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.* ☞ ... ⁴²*Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;'^x this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"* ☞

^x Greek *the head of the corner*

Verses 37-39 are from a parable in which Jesus portrays the Jews' rejection of him. Jesus subsequently implies in v. 42 that their rejection of him fulfilled the quoted Scripture, with them rejecting the one whom God would make the "cornerstone" of his kingdom.

John 13:18, 21, 26, 30 *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled,^y 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'* ☞ ... ²¹*After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."* ☞ ... ²⁶*Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.* ☞ ... ³⁰*So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.* ☞

^y Greek *But in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled*

In v. 18 Jesus indicates that not all the disciples belonged to him, but that in one of them the scripture would be fulfilled that spoke of betrayal by a close associate, as he clarifies in v. 21. That Judas would be the one is made apparent in vv. 26, 30.

Matt 27:3-10 *Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus^z was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders,* ⁴*saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself."* ⁵*And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.* ⁶*But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money."* ⁷*So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers.* ⁸*Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.* ⁹*Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel,* ¹⁰*and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."* ☞

^z Greek *he*

The Scripture referred to is not a direct quotation. Matthew appears to have in view verses from both Zechariah and Jeremiah (cf. NIV text note on v. 10), which he attributes to the latter, presumably as the major prophet.

Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' death . . .

Matt 26:31, 56 *Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'* ☞ ... ⁵⁶*But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.* ☞



Mark 15:27 And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.^a 📖

^a Some manuscripts insert verse 28: *And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "He was numbered with the transgressors"*

The text note speaks of this fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 53:12. Jesus also refers to his fulfillment of this prophecy in Luke 22:37, prior to his arrest – "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."

John 18:8-9 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹*This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."* 📖

This and vv. 31-32 immediately below speak of fulfillments of Jesus' own prophecies (cf. Matt 12:39-40; Luke 24:6-7) rather than OT prophecies, which make up the bulk of the other entries in this section.

John 18:31-32 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." *The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death."* ³²*This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.* 📖

The reference to Jesus' words being fulfilled (v. 32) most likely has in view references such as [John 3:14](#) ↓ and [John 12:32-33](#) – 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' ³³He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.' The Jews maneuvered Pilate into executing Jesus, which involved the Roman form of execution (crucifixion) rather than the Jewish form (stoning), thus fulfilling Jesus' words.

John 19:23-24 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, *they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic.*^b But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." *This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."* So the soldiers did these things, ... 📖

^b Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

John 19:28-29 After this, *Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."* ²⁹*A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.* 📖

The Scripture John refers to is probably Psalms 69:21 – "They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink."

John 19:31-37 Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, *they did not break his legs.* ³⁴*But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.* ³⁵He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. ³⁶*For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken."* ³⁷*And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."* 📖

Acts 8:32-35 Now *the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."* ³⁴*And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"* ³⁵*Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.* 📖

The accounts of Jesus' crucifixion and the preceding events attest to his sheep-like meekness approaching his death (notably his silence before his accusers), his humiliation, the injustice of his trial, and of course his death – thus comprehensively fulfilling the prophecy quoted from Isaiah (cf. [1Pet 2:21-25](#) ↓).

1Pet 2:21-25 For to this you have been called, because *Christ also suffered for you*, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* 📖

This passage draws heavily from Isaiah 53 and – as does Acts 8:32-33 above – clearly implies that Jesus fulfilled what is a monumental messianic prophecy. In addition to the quotation of 53:9 in v. 22: v. 23 appears to refer to 53:7 ("He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his



mouth ..."); v. 24a to 53:11 ("... he shall bear their iniquities"; cf. 53:4, 12); v. 24b to 53:5 ("... with his stripes we are healed"); and v. 25 to 53:6 ("All we like sheep have gone astray ...").

... Further OT Scriptures fulfilled or reflected in Jesus' death

Unlike the bulk of the previous references, the OT verses quoted or reflected in the following NT passages are not actually said by the NT passages to have been fulfilled in Jesus, nor were all of them necessarily seen by the Jews to be speaking of the Messiah. But each of them is reflected in the circumstances of Jesus' death, and as such it can be argued that they were "fulfilled" in his death.

Matt 27:39-46 *And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads⁴⁰ and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."⁴¹ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴²"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"⁴⁴ And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. ⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour^c there was darkness over all the land^d until the ninth hour.^e ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* 

^c That is, noon

^d Or *earth*

^e That is, 3 P.M.

Just as v. 46 is a direct quotation from Psalm 22, the mocking and insults (vv. 39-44; cf. [Rom 15:3 ↓](#)) parallel vv. 7-8 of the same psalm; in particular much of v. 43 appears to be an unconscious quotation from v. 8 of the psalm. Thus many consider Jesus' suffering on the cross to be a fulfillment of these verses. Additionally, there is the fulfillment of v. 18 of this same psalm in John 19:23-24 (in the previous subsection), and further parallels with his suffering in other parts of the psalm. For example: "... they have pierced my hands and feet ..." (v. 16b), which is emulated in Jesus being nailed to the cross. In the light of all this, Psalm 22 is not surprisingly considered a messianic psalm, to a large degree fulfilled in Jesus' death.

Matt 27:57-60 *When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹And Joseph took*

the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud ⁶⁰and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. 

The fact that Jesus' body was laid to rest in a rich man's tomb, quite possibly an expensive one in a location amongst other such tombs of rich people, is understood by many to be a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9 – "And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death ..."

Luke 23:46 *Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.* 

From the cross Jesus quotes Psalms 31:5. In a sense Jesus fulfills it in his fitting utterance of it, with his dire circumstances paralleling that of the quote's context.

John 3:14-15 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*^f 

^f Some interpreters hold that the quotation ends at verse 15

On one occasion when the Israelites spoke against God, God sent venomous snakes among them (cf. Num 21:6-9). In response to their repentance and Moses' intercession, God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole, designating that anyone who had been bitten by a snake could look at it and live. This was paralleled – and in a sense fulfilled – in God's provision of salvation through Jesus Christ, with Jesus being "lifted up" (v. 14) on a cross in order to provide eternal life (v. 15).

Acts 4:25-27 ... who through the mouth of our father David, your servant,^g said by the Holy Spirit, "*Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed^h— ²⁷for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ...*" 

^g Or *child*; also verses 27, 30

^h Or *Christ*

Rom 15:3 *For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."* 

Matthew 27:39-46 above shows that this quotation of Psalm 69:9 was fulfilled in Jesus' death.



‡ OT Scripture pointing to Jesus' death as the consummate sin sacrifice:

Heb 10:5-7, 10 Consequently, when Christⁱ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" ¶ ... ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¶

ⁱ Greek *he*

Psalm 40:6-8 was fulfilled in Jesus in that, as affirmed here in v. 10, he came in accordance with God's will to offer his body as a sacrifice for sin, which – unlike previous sacrifices and offerings – was effective in dealing with the problem of sin once for all and so pleasing to God.

Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' resurrection

Acts 2:25-32 For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' ²⁹"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ¶

Acts 13:32-37 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." ³⁴And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." ³⁵Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption." ³⁶For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. ¶

The OT quotations here are all indicated to be ultimately fulfilled by the Messiah. In particular they relate to God's

promises to David (cf. 2 Sam 7) which ultimately were to be bestowed upon and manifested through David's messianic descendant. Paul asserts that these prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus, largely in God raising him from the dead. In this Paul may well also have Jesus Christ's subsequent exaltation and lordship in view – particularly with Psalm 2 (cf. v. 33) being a coronation psalm. For further comment on this passage see *God raised Jesus from the dead, by his power . . .*, p. 579. For more comment on "raising Jesus" (v. 33) in particular, see *For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .*, p. 492.

‡ Jesus fulfilled his own prophecies of his death and resurrection:

Luke 24:6-7 He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise. ¶

On more than one occasion Jesus had foretold his death and resurrection (and his betrayal). For example in Luke 9:22, 44 Jesus says: "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." ... ⁴⁴"Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' ascension and exaltation

See also:

▪ [Acts 2:28](#) ↑

Acts 2:33-36 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, ³⁵until I make your enemies your footstool." ³⁶Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." ¶

Peter asserts that in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 Jesus ascended to heaven, to God's right hand (v. 33), where God has made him Lord and Christ over all (v. 36).

Eph 4:7-11 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."⁹(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?¹⁰)



¹⁰*He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.*) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^k and teachers,^l ...

^j Or *the lower parts of the earth?*

^k Or *pastors*

^l Or *the shepherd-teachers*

Paul sees in Christ's ascension (v. 10) – along with his bestowing spiritual gifts on his people (vv. 7, 11) – the fulfillment of Psalm 68:18.

Heb 1:5, 8-9, 13 For to which of the angels did God ever say, *"You are my Son, today I have begotten you"*? Or again, *"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"*? ... ⁸But of the Son he says, *"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."* ... ¹³And to which of the angels has he ever said, *"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"*?

The psalms quoted from here are royal psalms, with Psalm 2 being a coronation psalm. From early times they were widely understood as messianic. These quotations, along with a key aspect of God's promise to David (v. 5b), are presented here as being fulfilled by Jesus Christ in his enthronement at God's right hand on his ascension and glorification. For further comment on v. 5, see *Following his death and resurrection, God exalted Jesus Christ to his right hand . . .*, p. 685.

Heb 2:5-9 Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶It has been testified somewhere, *"What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor,^m ⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet."* Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹But we see him who *for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor* because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

^mSome manuscripts insert *and set him over the works of your hands*

One interpretation of this passage is that the writer is presenting the quotation from Psalm 8 – where it referred to humankind and the present world – as being ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ in his dominion over the world to come. At present we do not see everything in this world subject to humankind (v. 8; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV); but we

do see in Jesus Christ, with his glorification and enthronement, the one who is Lord of all creation and to whom the world to come will be comprehensively subjected.

Heb 5:5-6, 8-10 So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, *"You are my Son, today I have begotten you"*; ⁶as he says also in another place, *"You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."* ... ⁸Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰*being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

Following his resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ was "designated by God a high priest in the order of Melchizedek" (v. 10), thus fulfilling Psalm 110:4 (quoted here in v. 6). (Note that Heb 7:17, 21 also quote Psalm 110:4 in regard to Christ's appointment by God as a high priest in the order of Melchizedek.) Additionally, the phrase "he was a son" (v. 8) may well be alluding to the quotation from Psalm 2:7 in v. 5, implying that Christ fulfilled it. Quite possibly the writer uses the quotation here to affirm Christ's sonship (cf. 1:5) and his uniquely close relationship with God, both of which are critical to his priesthood.

Other messianic OT Scriptures applied to Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Titles of God are applied to Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 122
- *. . . Other OT references to God are applied to Jesus Christ*, p. 123

It is difficult to ascertain to what extent some OT Scriptures applied to Jesus Christ in the NT were understood to be messianic. Some were obviously generally understood to be messianic; others were obviously seen by the NT writers as messianic, but not necessarily by Jews in general; while with some it is not clear if even the NT writers themselves were using them as messianic references. As with the majority in the preceding subsections, most of the following references clearly belong to the first two categories, but with some it is debatable.

Note that there are likely other OT messianic references mentioned in the NT that have not been included in this or the preceding subsections. There are also some OT verses that are reflected in Jesus' life that are not specifically referred to in the NT (e.g. Isa 50:6; Dan 9:25-26).

Acts 3:20-26 ... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and *that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,* ²¹*whom heaven must receive until the*



time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²²Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people." ²⁴And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed." ²⁶God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. 📖

Peter sees Jesus Christ as fulfilling Moses' prophecy of a coming great prophet (vv. 22-23). He seems to portray the prophecy as applicable both to Jesus Christ's work in his first coming (v. 26) and to his return (vv. 20-21). In v. 24 Peter indicates that predictions of the OT prophets were fulfilled in Jesus Christ's mission and the new covenant age that had now begun. Peter may also imply that Jesus Christ is the consummate "offspring" of Abraham through whom all peoples will be blessed (v. 25) – particularly with v. 26 speaking of him bringing blessing firstly to the Jews. Alternatively it is possible that Peter may be referring to the Jews themselves (cf. v. 25a); but in Galatians 3:8, 16 below Paul certainly understands Jesus Christ to be in view in the original prophecy.

Rom 11:26-27 *And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; ²⁷and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."* 📖

In v. 26, Paul most likely is applying Isaiah 59:20 to Israel's salvation in the end times, quite possibly implying that it will come through the return of Jesus Christ, with him probably being in view as "The Deliverer" (v. 26). This being the case, Paul's subsequent quotation of Jeremiah 31:33, 34 in v. 27 suggests that he also sees this as being fulfilled through Jesus Christ on his return.

Rom 15:8-9, 12 *For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." 📖 ... ¹²And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope." 📖*

Note that the first quotation (v. 9) is not necessarily messianic and is not being applied to Jesus Christ directly, but it is being

applied to his work (in bringing salvation to the Gentiles) or at least to the results of it (cf. vv. 10-11).

Rom 15:20-21 ... and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, ²¹but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." 📖

Heb 2:11-13 *For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.ⁿ That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,^o ¹²saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." ¹³And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me." 📖*

ⁿ Greek *all are of one*

^o Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verse 12

The writer sees an application of the three quotations to Christ. The reasons for the inclusion of the two in v. 13 are not so obvious. Perhaps to show that Christ and Christians "all have one source" (v. 11), the writer may be using them to illustrate a common nature, with Christ being one who trusted in God during his time on earth and they being his children (cf. ZBC).

Note that in their original setting (cf. Isa 8:17-18), these two quotations in v. 13 shortly follow the messianic sounding: "... a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling ..." (Isa 8:14; cf. **1Pet 2:4-8** ↓). This adds plausibility to the writer's messianic interpretation of them here, in applying them to Jesus Christ.

1Pet 2:4-8 *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." ⁷So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"^p ⁸and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do." 📖*

^p Greek *the head of the corner*

The term "stone" was understood to be a messianic title by Jews as well as Christians. For further examples of these OT verses being applied to Jesus Christ, see Matthew 21:42



(above in *Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' rejection and betrayal*), Acts 4:10-12 and Romans 9:32-33.

✦ Jesus' claim to be "the Son of Man":

Matt 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on *you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.*" 

Here Jesus claims to "the Son of Man" who was prophesied about in Daniel 7:13-14 (cf. *God will establish the Messiah as ruler over all, forever*, p. 718).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Further Testimony to Jesus Being the Messiah

See also:

- *b) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (II): Testimony*, p. 115

Subsections

- Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ
- Jesus himself claimed to be the Christ
- Jesus' followers acknowledged him as the Christ . . .
- . . . and Jesus being the Christ was a central aspect of his followers' teaching
- Others also acknowledged Jesus as the Christ
- Note: The Christ is understood to be the Son of God

Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ

See also:

- *Jesus' deeds validated his claims about himself and God*, p. 545
- *Jesus Christ's deeds* [give reason to believe in him], p. 1045

Matt 11:2-5 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ⁴And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk,

lepers⁴ are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 

⁴ *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

As indicated earlier in this chapter, Jesus here effectively says, "Yes." His reply implies that by his deeds he was fulfilling prophecies from Isaiah concerning the Messiah (cf. Isa 35:4-6; 61:1).

Matt 12:22-23 Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" 

John 6:9-15 [Andrew:] "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So *the men sat down, about five thousand in number.* ¹¹Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." ¹³So they gathered them up and *filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.* ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" ¹⁵Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. 

The "Prophet" (v. 14) is quite possibly a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15-19, where Moses speaks of God raising up a prophet like him. As such some scholars consider it to not or not necessarily be a messianic ascription. However the people's associated intention to make Jesus king (v. 15) suggests strongly that they were using it as a messianic ascription and did see Jesus as the Messiah, due largely to his astonishing miracle (vv. 9-13).

John 7:31 Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?" 

John 10:24-25 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? *If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.*" ²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. *The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ...*" 



John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. 

Jesus himself claimed to be the Christ

See also:

- [Matt 11:3b-5](#) ; [John 10:24-25](#) 

John 4:25-26 The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” ²⁶Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.” 

Matt 16:20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. 

Note that a common explanation for Jesus giving this command at this point in time, concerns the common Jewish misconception that the Messiah would be a powerful political figure that would release the Jews from their oppressors. If the people had realized at that point that he was the Messiah, it would have made it more difficult for Jesus to fulfill his mission as the Messiah who would suffer and die for his people, due to the Jewish expectations and corresponding Roman reaction. Another common explanation of Jesus' command was that it was due to the Jewish people having largely rejected him.

Matt 23:10 Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. 

Here Jesus is speaking, in reference to himself.

Matt 26:63-64a But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, “You have said so. 

Mark 9:41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. 

Here Jesus refers to himself as “Christ”.

Luke 23:2-3 And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” ³And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” 

The title “the King of the Jews” is a messianic one – which Pilate may have realized, with his question (v. 3) immediately following the Jews' accusations that Jesus “claims to be Christ, a king” (v. 2). Jesus' answer was in recognition of it being a messianic title.

John 13:19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 

It appears that “before it takes place” refers to Jesus' death – with the preceding events – and his resurrection. With the phrase “I am He” (cf. 8:38), Jesus may well have been speaking of himself as the Messiah, the one for whom the Jews were waiting.

✦ Jesus Christ's messianic claim in Revelation:

Rev 22:16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” 

The title “the root and the descendant of David” is a messianic one (cf. Isa 1:1, 10), and this may also be the case with “the bright morning star” (cf. Num 24:17).

Jesus' followers acknowledged him as the Christ . . .

Matt 16:16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 

John 1:41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). 

John 1:45, 49 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”  ... ⁴⁹Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” 

John 6:69 ... and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God. 

Quite likely Peter is here acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah (cf. AMP, GNT).

John 11:27 She [Martha] said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” 

Acts 3:6 But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” 



The fact that titles such as "Jesus Christ" (cf. [Rom 1:1](#) ↓; [2Pet 1:16](#) ↓) are regularly used of Jesus in the NT clearly indicates that his followers acknowledged him as the Christ.

Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant^r of *Christ Jesus*, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ... 

^r Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

2Pet 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of *our Lord Jesus Christ*, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 

... and Jesus being the Christ was a central aspect of his followers' teaching

See also:

- *For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .*, p. 492

John 20:31 ... but *these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ*, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. 

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, *they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*. 

Acts 9:22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by *proving that Jesus was the Christ*. 

Acts 17:2-3 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days *he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."* 

Acts 18:5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, *Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus*. 

Acts 2:36 *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified*. 

Acts 13:23 Of this man's offspring *God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised*. 

Although the term Christ is not used here, it is apparent that Paul is speaking to his listeners of Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Others also acknowledged Jesus as the Christ

See also:

- [Luke 1:32-33](#) ↓; [Luke 4:41](#) ↓

Matt 2:1-4 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, *wise men^s from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose^t and have come to worship him."* ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, *he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born*. 

^s Greek *magi*; also verses 7, 16

^t Or *in the east*; also verse 9

The wise men may not necessarily have been familiar with the promise of a Messiah, but their description of Jesus as "king of the Jews" (v. 2) is in essence a reference to him being the promised Christ – as Herod was acutely aware (v. 4).

Luke 2:25-32 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was *Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel*, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶*And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.* ²⁷*And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law,* ²⁸*he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,* ²⁹*"Lord, now you are letting your servant^u depart in peace, according to your word;* ³⁰*for my eyes have seen your salvation* ³¹*that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,* ³²*a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."* 

^u Greek *bondservant*

As commented earlier, "the consolation of Israel" (v. 25) refers to the comfort and salvation (vv. 30-32) associated with the coming of the Messiah.

Matt 21:9 *And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"* 

The crowd was acknowledging Jesus as the Christ, referring to him with messianic expressions in declaring him to be "the Son of David" and the one "who comes in the name of the Lord".

Matt 27:17 So when they had gathered, *Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"* 



In referring to Jesus as the Christ (cf. [John 19:19-22](#) ↓), Pilate was unlikely himself acknowledging Jesus as the Christ. But his words imply that this was what a number of others were saying about Jesus.

Luke 1:67-70 And his father *Zechariah* was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, ⁶⁸*“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people”* ⁶⁹*and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,* ⁷⁰*as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ...* 📖

Zechariah speaks of Jesus as being God's chosen Christ – the one God “raised up” (v. 69), from the line of David (v. 69), as the OT prophets had prophesied (v. 70).

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 📖

Here an angel is declaring that Jesus is the Christ (cf. [Luke 1:32-33](#) ↓). This angel was almost immediately joined by a great company of angels (cf. vv. 13-14), who no doubt were in agreement with this angel's declaration.

✦ Pilate's notice on Jesus' cross:

John 19:19-22 *Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”* ²⁰Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” ²²*Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”* 📖

“The King of the Jews” was a messianic title – no doubt a major reason for the Jews' objection (v. 21). Pilate may have used it in retaliation for the Jews forcing him into allowing an innocent man to be crucified, rather than because of any belief of his own. Nevertheless its place on the cross in three notable languages is significant and striking.

Note: The Christ is understood to be the Son of God

The understanding that the Christ would be the Son of God appears to be largely based on OT messianic passages where God speaks of the Christ or Messiah as his Son (cf. [2Sam 7:11b-14a](#) ↓; [Ps 2:6-7](#) ↓; [Ps 89:27](#) ↓).

2Sam 7:11b-14a Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for my

name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴*I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.* 📖

This promise to David initially referred to Solomon, but was understood to ultimately point to the Messiah, who would in an exclusive sense be God's son (v. 14a; cf. [Ps 89:27](#) ↓).

Ps 2:6-7 “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” ⁷I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.” 📖

Note that this and [2 Samuel 7:11b-14a](#) above are quoted from in [Hebrews 1:5](#) in reference to Jesus Christ – “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?

Ps 89:26-27 *He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’* ²⁷*And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.* 📖

The description of the Messiah – in this messianic psalm – as “the firstborn” (v. 27) implies that the Messiah would have a position of sonship above all others.

Matt 16:16 Simon Peter replied, “You are *the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” 📖

Matt 26:63 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are *the Christ, the Son of God.*” 📖

Bear in mind that here it is the high priest who speaks of the Christ as being the Son of God. As such this correlation is not a uniquely Christian teaching.

Luke 1:32-33 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³*and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.* 📖

The reference to kingship here – as with occurrences in the following verses (cf. the comment on [John 1:49](#) ↓) – is speaking of the Christ. With this immediately following the reference to him being “called the Son of the Most High” (v. 32a), these verses indicate that the Christ is understood to be the Son of God.

Luke 4:41 And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because *they knew that he was the Christ.* 📖

The final thought reflects on the demons' exclamation, showing a correlation between the Son of God and the Christ.

John 1:49 Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” 📖



Note that as with "The King of the Jews" ([John 19:19-22](#) ↑; cf. [Matt 2:2-4](#) ↑), "the King of Israel" is a messianic title (cf. vv. 41, 45). In Mark 15:32 it is correlated with "Christ" – "the Christ, the King of Israel". The correlation is also seen in Matthew 2:2-4 in the preceding subsection.

John 10:24-25, 36 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? *If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.*" ²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ☞ ... ³⁶do you say of *him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world*, 'You are blaspheming,' because *I said, 'I am the Son of God'*? ☞

Here Jesus appears to correlate being the Christ (vv. 24-25a) – "him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world" (v. 36a) – with being "the Son of God" (v. 36b).

John 11:27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that *you are the Christ, the Son of God*, who is coming into the world." ☞

John 20:31 ... but these are written so that you may believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and that by believing you may have life in his name. ☞

Acts 9:20, 22 And immediately *he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."* ☞ ... ²²But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by *proving that Jesus was the Christ.* ☞

The close proximity of these verses with the former having "He [Jesus] is the Son of God" (v. 20) and the latter having "Jesus was the Christ" (v. 22) as the focus of Paul's message or ministry, implies that these descriptions are being used more or less interchangeably and that there is a close correlation between the two.

1Jn 5:1-5 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God*, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For *everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world*. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵*Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* ☞

This appears to correlate believing that Jesus is the Christ (v. 1a) with believing that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 5b). In addition to both being referred to in a like manner and in close proximity, this is further shown by the intervening discussion associating being born of God (linked with believing that Jesus is the Christ in v. 1a) and overcoming the world (linked with believing that Jesus is the Son of God in v. 5).

✦ Further reference to the divinity or deity of the Messiah:

Isa 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon^v his shoulder, and *his name shall be called^w Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* ☞

^v Or *is upon*

^w Or *is called*

Also, in 7:14b Isaiah says, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This too speaks of the Messiah's divinity or deity as "Immanuel" means "God with us".

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

Arguably the fundamental assertion of the NT is that God sent the Messiah – Jesus Christ – into the world to save people from sin and its devastating consequences. For this mission, Jesus Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and became fully human – further assertions that are very significant to the Christian faith. In fulfilling the objectives of the mission, Jesus Christ lived a life which was faultless, with his character being both exemplary and inspiring. The following teaching shows the NT's testimony to these crucial matters.

a) Jesus Christ's Mission from God

See also:

- [12. Jesus Christ's Mission](#), p. 537
- [I. Salvation from Sin](#), p. 588

Subsections

- [God sent Jesus Christ into the world](#)
- [God sent Jesus to take away sins . . .](#)
- [. . . God sent Jesus to save the world](#)
- [Jesus came to bring spiritual light into the world . . .](#)
- [. . . Jesus came to bring truth](#)
- [Jesus came to enable us to know God](#)
- [Jesus came to destroy Satan's power and work](#)
- [Further objectives of Jesus Christ's mission](#)
- [Note: Jesus Christ's mission took place at a time chosen by God . . .](#)
- [. . . and aspects of Jesus Christ's mission occurred at designated or appropriate times](#)

God sent Jesus Christ into the world

[John 5:36-38, 43](#) But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. *For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.* ³⁷*And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.* His voice you

have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe *the one whom he has sent.*  ... ⁴³*I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.* 

Verse 37a implies that God had testified that he had sent Jesus. This testimony of God may primarily have been the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism (cf. Matt 3:16-17) or God's word (cf. vv. 38-40) – or possibly the weighty testimony of the work that the Father had given Jesus (v. 36). Jesus' claim in v. 43 that he had come in God's name, reflects the fact that God had sent him.

[John 7:28-29](#) So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. *He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.* ²⁹*I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.*" 

Note that Jesus' first statement in v. 28 was quite possibly spoken in irony – "Do you really think you know me and where I came from?" (CEV; cf. AMP, GNT). Most of the people knew where he had grown up, but were not aware of where he had initially come from.

[John 8:42](#) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for *I came from God* and I am here. *I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.*" 

[John 10:36](#) ... do you say of *him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world*, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? 

[John 11:41-42](#) So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²*I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.*" 

Here Jesus thanks God prior to God performing through him the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead (cf. vv. 43-44). Jesus does this publicly so that the miracle would demonstrate that God had sent him (v. 42).

[John 16:30](#) Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; *this is why we believe that you came from God.* 

[John 17:8, 25](#) For I have given them the words that you gave me, and *they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.*  ... ²⁵*O righteous Father, even though the world*



does not know you, I know you, and *these know that you have sent me.* 

John 3:13, 31 No one has ascended into heaven except *he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.*^a  ... ³¹He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. *He who comes from heaven* is above all. 

^a Some manuscripts add *who is in heaven*

The inference is that Jesus came from God, in heaven.

✦ **Jesus is the “apostle”:**

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers,^b you who share in a heavenly calling, consider *Jesus, the apostle* and high priest of our confession, ... 

^b Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

Referring to Jesus as “the apostle” points to him being sent by God (cf. GNT, NCV) – “God’s Messenger” (NLT).

God sent Jesus to take away sins . . .

See also:

- [Luke 1:76-79](#) 

John 1:29 The next day *he [John] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* 

The description of Jesus as “the Lamb of God” alludes to him being given or sent by God as a sacrifice – just as lambs were used in some sacrifices – to take away sin.

Rom 8:3 For *God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,*^c *he condemned sin in the flesh, ...* 

^c Or *and as a sin offering*

God sent Jesus Christ “for sin”, to deal with sin as a sin offering (cf. text note), thus effectively condemning sin, sounding its “death knell”.

1Jn 3:5 You know that *he appeared to take away sins*, and in him there is no sin. 

1Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and *sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* 

In the NT “propitiation” means to turn away or appease the wrath of God against sinners in their guilt. God sent Jesus to do this, by effectively taking away sin.

Matt 1:21 She will bear a son, and *you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* 

“Jesus” is the Greek form of “Joshua”, which means “the LORD saves” (cf. NIV text note).

. . . God sent Jesus to save the world

See also:

- [Matt 1:21](#) 
- [God is love – as epitomized in him giving his only Son, to save us](#), p. 74
- [The OT says the ruler will bring justice and salvation to the nations](#), p. 485
- [God saves people through Jesus Christ](#), p. 533
- [a\) The Savior of the World](#), p. 608

John 3:16-17 For *God so loved the world,*^d *that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* ¹⁷*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* 

^d Or *For this is how God loved the world*

1Jn 4:9, 14 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that *God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*  ... ¹⁴*And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.* 

John 12:47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for *I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.* 

1Tim 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*, of whom I am the foremost. 

Luke 19:10 For *the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.* 

Acts 13:23 Of this man's offspring *God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.* 

It can be inferred from this that God sent Jesus as Savior, to save Israel – and all peoples.

Luke 1:68-69, 76-79 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for *he has visited and redeemed his people* ⁶⁹*and has raised up a horn of salvation for us* in the house of his servant David,  ... ⁷⁶*And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,* ⁷⁷*to*



give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us^e from on high ⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." 

^e Or when the sunrise shall dawn upon us; some manuscripts since the sunrise has visited us

Verses 76-79 speak of God's salvation coming through Jesus Christ's mission in both John the Baptist's preparatory work (v. 77; cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT) and Jesus himself (vv. 78-79).

Luke 2:27-32 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹"Lord, now you are letting your servant^f depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." 

^f Greek *bondservant*

John 6:32-33, 51 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."  ... ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 

The "bread" given (or sent) by God figuratively refers to Jesus' flesh or body, which he would sacrifice "for the life of the world" (v. 51). The phrase "eats of this bread" (v. 51) is a metaphor meaning to believe in Jesus (cf. v. 40), trusting in what he would accomplish by his sacrifice. Such faith saves one, bringing life forever.

✦ **Jesus was the propitiation for the sins of the whole world:**

1Jn 2:2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 

Jesus came to bring spiritual light into the world . . .

See also:

▪ **John 14:6** 

Jesus came as a light of revelation, showing the way to salvation and spiritual, eternal life. His spiritual light enables people to escape the spiritual darkness of this world and its sin. (Note that this and the following subsections speak of other important objectives of Jesus Christ's mission, that

were to be accomplished in conjunction with the key objective of saving the world from sin.)

John 12:46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. 

Isa 42:6-7 I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. 

This and 49:6b below are generally understood to have been ultimately fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Verse 7 speaks of the Messiah giving spiritual sight and spiritual release from the darkness of sin.

Isa 49:6b I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. 

Matt 4:15-16 "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—¹⁶the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." 

The region referred to in v. 15 had a less predominately Jewish population than Judea, and was viewed as somewhat heathen by many other Jews. As with the above prophecies from Isaiah, this reference and Luke 1:78-79 below appear to foreshadow or allude to the enlightening of the Gentiles through Jesus Christ's mission.

Luke 1:78-79 ... because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us^g from on high ⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. 

^g Or when the sunrise shall dawn upon us; some manuscripts since the sunrise has visited us

Here Zechariah prophecies of the approaching advent of the Messiah, "the sunrise", who would bring light and salvation. In speaking of "those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death", Zechariah refers to Isaiah 9:2 (quoted above in Matthew 4:15-16) and so may primarily be referring to the Gentiles, living in the darkness of their sins. Peace with God is paramount in the final phrase.

Luke 2:30-32 ... for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel. 

This was spoken by Simeon on being presented with the infant Jesus.



John 1:4-5, 9 *In him was life,^h and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ... ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*

^h Or *was not any thing made. That which has been made was life in him*

Verse 4 may well be alluding to spiritual or eternal life being in Jesus Christ, available to all people through him. As such this life gave spiritual light to all people, showing the way to salvation.

John 3:19 *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*

John 8:12 *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

John 9:5 *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

Acts 26:23 ... that the Christ must suffer and that, *by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.*

Through Jesus' resurrection the light of the way to salvation would be made known to all peoples.

... Jesus came to bring truth

See also:

- ... *Jesus himself is identified with truth*, p. 568

John 18:37 Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. *For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth.* Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Jesus' answer seems to associate the fact that he came into the world "to bear witness to the truth" with his kingship, perhaps pointing to his authority to proclaim truth. Note that the clause: "For this purpose I was born", could actually be referring primarily to him being king (cf. NIV, NLT), rather than primarily to him testifying to the truth. As such it would appear to be a reference to him coming as the Messiah.

John 1:14, 17 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

✦ Jesus is "the way and the truth and the life":

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

Jesus did not just simply bring the truth, he is "the truth" – the embodiment of truth, as revealed by his life and teaching. (cf. BBC)

Jesus came to enable us to know God

See also:

- *Jesus Christ is the image of God*, p. 113
- *Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God – equality in nature*, p. 114
- *To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father*, p. 120
- *God is revealed and known through Jesus Christ*, p. 243
- *God and Jesus Christ enable their people to know them*, p. 811

1Jn 5:20 *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*

John 1:18 *No one has ever seen God; the only God,ⁱ who is at the Father's side,^j he has made him known.*

ⁱ Or *the only One, who is God*; some manuscripts *the only Son*

^j Greek *in the bosom of the Father*

The phrase "at the Father's side" points to the intimacy of the Son with the Father and the Son's unique knowledge of him. As such Jesus Christ was in a position to make God known.

John 8:38 *I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.*

By "what I have seen with my Father", Jesus may have been speaking of what God had "shown" him (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV), but it may more specifically be referring to what he had seen of the Father himself.

John 17:2-3, 6, 26 ... since you have given him authority over all flesh, *to give eternal life to all whom you have given*



him. ³And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ¶ ... ⁶"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ¶ ... ²⁶I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." ¶

Eternal life involves knowing God and Jesus Christ (v. 3) in an ongoing, progressive, intimate relationship. As the one who gives eternal life (v. 2), it is Jesus Christ who enables us to have this personal knowledge of God – as subsequently referred to in vv. 6, 26. Note that such references to God's "name" (v. 26) are indicative of God himself, here even inclusive of all that can be known about him. Jesus made God known to a deeper, more comprehensive extent than previous revelation had done.

John 5:37-38 And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. *His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen,* ³⁸and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. ¶

Given the context, v. 37b may be alluding to the Jews' lack of spiritual perception in not believing the one God sent – with "His voice" (v. 37b) and "his word" (v. 38a) possibly referring to God speaking through Jesus, and "his form" (v. 37b) alluding to God's presence in Jesus. Thus this would evidence that believing Jesus Christ, the one God sent, leads to knowledge of God. However, "His voice" may alternatively refer to God's voice testifying to Jesus at his baptism, or to the Scriptures – which also may well be the meaning of "his word". Furthermore, in saying that they had never seen God's "form", Jesus may simply have been meaning that – in contrast to himself – like all people they had not "seen him face to face" (CEV, NLT; cf. GNT).

‡ No one knows God except those Jesus Christ reveals him to:

Matt 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and *no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* ¶

Jesus came to destroy Satan's power and work

See also:

- *Jesus delivered people from demons and Satan – demonstrating power over evil*, p. 560
- *Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil*, p. 605

- *Jesus Christ drove out demons . . .*, p. 1818
- *. . . Jesus Christ gave some of his followers similar authority over demons*, p. 1818

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ¶

"Now" refers to Jesus' imminent death, by which Satan would be defeated, with Jesus' death and resurrection nullifying Satan's power over people through sin and death. For comment on the phrase "cast out", see the comment on **John 12:31** – under *Note: Satan hurled down from heaven to the earth*, p. 191.

Heb 2:14-15 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, *he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,* ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¶

The term "destroy" appears to have the sense "break the power of" (NLT), although it may also allude to Jesus Christ's death being significant in Satan's ultimate destruction. Note that a further, related objective of Jesus' mission is given in v. 15.

1Jn 3:8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* ¶

The "works of the devil", which Jesus Christ came to destroy, involves people's sin – as pointed to by the first statement here and by v. 5 ("... he appeared to take away sins ..."). As such it also encompasses the results of sin – such as separation from God, enslavement to sin, and death.

Gen 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^k and her offspring; *he shall bruise your head*, and you shall bruise his heel. ¶

^k Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis

The prophecy "he shall bruise your head" is understood by many to chiefly or ultimately speak of Christ's victory over Satan through his mission.

‡ Jesus' overpowering of Satan:

Luke 11:14, 21-22 Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. ¶ ... ²¹When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; ²²but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. ¶



In v. 22 Jesus is referring to his overpowering of Satan in Satan's worldly domain, taking away Satan's defenses and laying hold of what Satan had. The reality of this truth was demonstrated by Jesus driving out demons and thus releasing people (v. 14) from Satan's power.

Further objectives of Jesus Christ's mission

See also:

- [Heb 2:15](#) ↑
- *Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God*, p. 566
- a) *God's New Covenant*, p. 664

Luke 4:43 ... but he said to them, *"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."* 

See also *The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission*, p. 677.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* 

Acts 3:26 *God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.* 

Matt 5:17-18 Do not think that I have come to abolish *the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.* ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, *until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.* 

There are differing views as to what Jesus meant by saying he had come "to fulfill" (v. 17) the Law and the Prophets. It involves the fact that they pointed to Jesus as the Messiah and he would do or "bring about" (NCV™) that of which they spoke (as discussed in the first two sections of this chapter). Other things that commentators suggest that "to fulfill" entails are: providing the righteousness before God that was the objective of the law; expounding God's laws so as to "give them their full meaning" (CEV); and fulfilling the law's requirements by perfectly obeying all of it. The phrase "until all is accomplished" (v. 18) refers to Jesus fulfilling "all" of which the law spoke. Presumably this will be ultimately completed in the consummation of his work at the end of the age.

Matt 20:28 ... even as *the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* 

Luke 1:69-75 ... and [God] *has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,* ⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹*that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;* ⁷²*to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,* ⁷³*the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us* ⁷⁴*that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,* ⁷⁵*in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.* 

The term "horn of salvation" (v. 69) refers to Jesus Christ. The use of "enemies" (vv. 71, 74) probably encompasses spiritual enemies and even sin, as well as other oppressors. According to some commentators at least, v. 73 appears to have God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-18 in view. This would mean that vv. 74-75 are expounding some of the implications of this oath.

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because *he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,* ¹⁹*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* 

Here Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61:1-2, a messianic passage. In the context of Jesus' ministry, the phrase "liberty to the captives" (v. 18b) most likely refers at least partly to release from sin. The clause "set at liberty those who are oppressed" possibly also alludes to this; Jesus' liberating healing ministry is presumably also in view.

Luke 12:49, 51-53 *"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!*  ... ⁵¹*Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.* ⁵²For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. ⁵³They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." 

The use of "fire" (v. 49) may also allude to judgment, but it would appear in this context to primarily denote the division and conflict subsequently spoken of (vv. 51-53). Such division and conflict were the inevitable result of Jesus coming to a hostile world of darkness, for his message and his instituting of God's kingdom were at odds with this world.

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; *grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* 

Along with bringing truth (cf. ... *Jesus came to bring truth*, p. 511), the implementation of God's "grace" was another significant objective or outcome of Jesus' mission.



John 9:39 *Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."* 

Jesus' coming brought judgment in that those who acknowledge their spiritual blindness and accept his truth will be rewarded with spiritual sight, while those who self-righteously claim to be spiritually aware – leading them to reject Jesus' truth – will be blinded to the truth. See also the comment on [Luke 2:34](#) ↓.

✦ **Simeon's prophecy of what Jesus was destined to do:**

Luke 2:34-35 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, *this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed*³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), *so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.*" 

The phrase "the fall and rising of many" (v. 34) appears to refer to the condemnation ("fall") of those who would reject Jesus and the salvation ("rising") of those who would believe in him. The "thoughts" (v. 35) probably are of those who would speak against him (cf. GNT, NCV). The responses of people to Jesus would expose their thoughts and hearts, showing where they stood in relation to God.

Note: Jesus Christ's mission took place at a time chosen by God . . .

Most of the following references do not speak explicitly of Jesus' mission. But the matters which they speak of as occurring at a time chosen by God are all closely associated with Jesus' mission. Thus they give credence to the assertion that Jesus' mission took place at God's appointed time.

Note also that one could argue that the verses are not necessarily saying that God chose such times well in advance, instead deeming the time to be right closer to the event. However, arguably the contexts and other scriptures (cf. [e\) God Fulfills His Plans](#), p. 266) suggest that God does choose such times well in advance, even before creation.

Gal 4:1-5 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave,¹ though he is the owner of everything,² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles^m of the world. ⁴But *when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son*, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 

¹ Greek *bondservant*; also verse 7

^mOr *elemental spirits*; also verse 9

In vv. 2-3 Paul uses an illustration as a parallel to the point he makes in vv. 3-5. As such the phrase "when the fullness of time had come" (v. 4) parallels the earlier phrase "the date set by his father" (v. 2), implying that it also speaks of a time or date chosen by God.

Dan 9:24-26a *"Seventy weeksⁿ are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.^o ²⁵Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. ²⁶And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.* 

ⁿ Or *sevens*; also twice in verse 25 and once in verse 26

^o Or *thing, or one*

There are varying interpretations of these verses, but most commentators consider the passage to be speaking of the Messiah, largely in reference to Jesus Christ's first coming. A number of commentators consider that the period of time indicated between the restoration of Jerusalem and "the anointed one" (v. 25) corresponds well with the time between the restoration after the Babylonian exile and Jesus Christ's death. Thus they consider Jesus to have fulfilled this prophecy (yet a further example of Jesus fulfilling a messianic prophecy). As such this is indicative of Jesus' mission taking place at God's appointed time. Note, however, that others consider that the coming of "the anointed one" refers to Christ's second coming.

Mark 1:15 ... and saying, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* 

When the time had come, the kingdom of God was "at hand" with the commencement of Jesus' mission.

Heb 4:7 ... again *he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."* 

The "certain day" which God set for people to respond to his offer of salvation rest (cf. vv. 1-11) came or began with Jesus' mission, appearing to indicate that the mission took place at God's appointed time. Note that the context suggests that the writer is applying "day" (and "Today") to the present era, beginning with Jesus' mission. This is the period of time in which people can respond to God's offer of salvation, through Jesus Christ.



Titus 1:2-3 ... in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began^{p 3} and *at the proper time manifested in his word* through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ...



^p Greek *before times eternal*

The reference here is to the Gospel message about Jesus Christ, initiated by his coming. Thus these verses imply that Jesus Christ's mission took place at God's "proper time".

Dan 2:44 *And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ...*

The phrase "in the days of those kings" suggests an appointed time, with it being linked to certain kings. But note that the inclusion of this verse here is somewhat debatable. For not all scholars consider this verse to have in view Christ's first coming and the introduction of the kingdom of God, instead understanding it to be speaking of the setting up of a millennial kingdom on Christ's return.

... and aspects of Jesus Christ's mission occurred at designated or appropriate times

See also:

- [Dan 9:26a](#) ↑
- [Jesus' suffering and death \(and resurrection\) were planned . . .](#), p. 576

Note that a number of commentators understand references such as the following to suggest that God had chosen times for all the events of Jesus' life.

John 2:4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? *My hour has not yet come.*"

"My hour" appears to refer to the time for Jesus to publicly reveal who he was.

John 7:6, 8 *Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. ...⁸You go up to the feast. I am not⁹ going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."*



⁹ Some manuscripts add *yet*

Note that here the references to Jesus' "time" are not necessarily meaning that there had been a particular time designated by God. Jesus may simply have been speaking of an appropriate time for him to go to the Feast of Tabernacles

in Jerusalem, where he would appear to and teach the people.

Matt 26:18 He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, *My time is at hand*. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'"

"My time is at hand" refers to the appointed time (cf. NCV, NIV) of Jesus' death. Note that there are a number of like references in the Gospel of John to the "time" of Jesus' death (cf. [Rom 5:6](#) ↓; [1Tim 2:6](#) ↓), implying that the time of his death had been designated beforehand. In regard to these references, see [Jesus' suffering and death \(and resurrection\) were planned . . .](#), p. 576.

Rom 5:6 For while we were still weak, *at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

This and 1 Timothy 2:6 below, may be speaking of timing in a less precise sense to most of the other verses in this subsection.

1Tim 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man^r *Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

^r *men* and *man* render the same Greek word that is translated *people* in verses 1 and 4

The "testimony" refers to Jesus Christ's sacrifice for sins, given in God's proper time.

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when *Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father*, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Luke 9:51 *When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Jesus Christ's Humanity

See also:

- a) *Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General*, p. 112
- c) *Jesus Christ Is Identified with God*, p. 119

This and the following section speak of Jesus Christ's person in his mission. The sections cross-referenced above are complimentary in that they encompass Jesus Christ's divine nature.

Subsections

- Jesus Christ became a human being
- Jesus was born, of Mary – after being conceived through the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . Jesus' mother Mary was a very godly woman, blessed by God
- Jesus was a descendant of David
- Jesus had family
- Jesus grew from childhood through to adulthood
- Jesus was called a man
- Jesus had a physical body . . .
- . . . and Jesus had physical limitations
- Like all humans, Jesus experienced difficult times – including temptation
- Note: Jesus' humanity was vital to his mission to save people

Jesus Christ became a human being

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 

Jesus Christ is "the Word" who "became human" (NLT) or "became a human being" (CEV, GNT, cf. NCV).

Rom 1:3 ... concerning his Son, who was descended from David^s according to the flesh ... 

^s Or *who came from the offspring of David*

The term "the flesh" refers to humanness.

Rom 8:3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^t he condemned sin in the flesh, ... 

^t Or *and as a sin offering*

God sent Jesus Christ "in a human body like ours" (NLT; cf. NCV).

Phil 2:5-8 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^u ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but *made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant,*^v *being born in the likeness of men.* ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 

^u Or *which was also in Christ Jesus*

^v Greek *bondservant*

Heb 2:9, 14, 17 But we see *him who for a little while was made lower than the angels*, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.  ... ¹⁴Since therefore *the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things*, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,  ... ¹⁷Therefore *he had to be made like his brothers in every respect*, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 

The phrase "made lower than the angels" (v. 9) refers to Jesus Christ becoming a human being, the phrase originally being applied to humans (cf. v. 7; Ps 8:5).

1Jn 4:2-3 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that *Jesus Christ has come in the flesh* is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 

1Jn 5:6-8 *This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood.* And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸*the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.* 

The "water" and "blood" are usually taken as references to Jesus' baptism and death (cf. NLT, CEV text note, NCV text note), used to assert that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was the truly human person who was baptized and who died on the cross.



Jesus was born, of Mary – after being conceived through the Holy Spirit . . .

See also:

- [Luke 1:43](#) ↴

Luke 1:31, 34-37 And behold, *you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.* ¶ ... ³⁴And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”^w ³⁵And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^x will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ¶

^w Greek since I do not know a man

^x Some manuscripts add of you

The Holy Spirit's creative act in Mary supplied the physical means for the physical conception of Jesus (v. 35). This miraculous conception of Jesus through the Holy Spirit – in conjunction with “the power of the Most High” (v. 35) – was necessary because of Jesus' divinity and pre-existence. As such, the “virgin birth” points to the fact that Jesus was both the Son of God and truly human. (cf. BKC) Note that the angel asserts the fact of this “virgin birth” by referring to the similarly impossible event of barren Elizabeth giving birth (v. 36) – neither of which were impossible with God (v. 37).

Matt 1:18-25 Now the birth of Jesus Christ^y took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed^z to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for *that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.* ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: *he took his wife,* ²⁵*but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.* ¶

^y Some manuscripts of the Christ

^z That is, legally pledged to be married

The references to Joseph not having sexual union with Mary prior to Jesus' birth (vv. 18, 25) negate the idea that Jesus was

conceived by Joseph rather than through the Holy Spirit (vv. 18, 20; [Luke 1:34-35](#) ↑).

Luke 2:4-11 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, *his betrothed,*^a *who was with child.* ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¶

^a That is, one legally pledged to be married

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, *born of woman, born under the law, ...* ¶

Isa 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon^b his shoulder, and his name shall be called^c Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ¶

^b Or is upon

^c Or is called

This supports the assertion that Jesus, the Messiah, was actually born.

. . . Jesus' mother Mary was a very godly woman, blessed by God

Luke 1:26-33, 38-45 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed^d to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”^e ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ¶ ... ³⁸And Mary said, “Behold,



I am the servant^f of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. ³⁹In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*" ⁴³And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵*And blessed is she who believed that there would be^g a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.*" 

^d That is, legally pledged to be married

^e Some manuscripts add *Blessed are you among women!*

^f Greek *bondservant*; also verse 48

^g Or *believed, for there will be*

Note that in v. 45 Elizabeth is speaking of Mary as having believed God, rather than encouraging her to do so.

Luke 1:46-55 *And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."* 

This renowned passage is known as the Magnificat, which in Latin means "glorifies". It clearly illustrates Mary's godliness. In it Mary wonderfully glorifies God and appears to show a good knowledge of Scripture, particularly with it reflecting Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

Luke 2:21-24, 39 *And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²²And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."  ... ³⁹And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the*

Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 

Mary and her husband Joseph characteristically complied with God's will, notably here the requirements of "the Law of the Lord" (v. 39).

John 2:1-5 *On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. ³When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."* 

Even at this early stage Mary displays great faith in Jesus, as suggested in v. 3 and more clearly implied in v. 5.

John 19:25 *... but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.* 

The fact that Mary stood by Jesus at his crucifixion arguably reflects her godliness, as well as the unrelenting love and devotion of a mother for her child.

Acts 1:14 *All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*^h 

^h Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verse 15

† **The visit of the wise men, sometime after Jesus' birth:**

Matt 2:1-2, 11 *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise menⁱ from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose^j and have come to worship him."  ... ¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.* 

ⁱ Greek *magi*; also verses 7, 16

^j Or *in the east*; also verse 9

Little is known about the wise men. They may have come from southern Arabia or Persia.



Jesus was a descendant of David

See also:

- *The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David*, p. 487

Matt 1:1-2, 6-7, 16-17 The book of *the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David*, the son of Abraham. ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ⁶... ⁶and *Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon* by the wife of Uriah, ⁷and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,^k ¹⁶... ¹⁶and *Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.*

^k *Asaph* is probably an alternate spelling for *Asa*; some manuscripts read *Asa*; also verse 8

Luke 1:26-27, 31-32 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷*to a virgin betrothed^l to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.* And the virgin's name was Mary. ³¹... ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and *you shall call his name Jesus.* ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of *his father David*, ...

^l That is, legally pledged to be married

As with v. 27 here and other passages in this subsection (cf. **Matt 1:6-7, 16-17** ↑; **Luke 3:23, 31** ↓), Luke 2:4 also directly states that Joseph, Jesus' earthly and legal father, was a descendant of David – “he belonged to the house and line of David.”

Luke 3:23, 31 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, *being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli*, ³¹... ³¹*the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David*, ...

The line of descent in Luke is different to the one in Matthew (cf. **Matt 1:1-2, 6-7, 16-17** ↑). Commentators generally consider that Matthew traces the legal line of descent, through Joseph, whereas Luke traces the actual biological line of descent, through Mary – Jesus' mother. As such both Mary and Joseph are understood to be descendants of David.

Matt 9:27 And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, *Son of David.*”

Rom 1:3 ... concerning *his Son, who was descended from David^m according to the flesh* ...

^mOr *who came from the offspring of David*

Acts 13:22-23 And when he had removed him, he raised up *David to be their king*, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in *David the son of Jesse* a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ ²³*Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus*, as he promised.

2Tim 2:8 Remember *Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David*, as preached in my gospel, ...

Rev 22:16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. *I am the root and the descendant of David*, the bright morning star.”

Jesus had family

Matt 13:55-56 *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?*

John 6:42 They said, “Is not this *Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?* How does he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”

Obviously the previous subsections likewise contain references to Jesus having parents, thus also supporting the assertion that Jesus had family.

Luke 2:48 And *when his parentsⁿ saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.”*

ⁿ Greek *they*

Acts 1:14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and *Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*^o

^o Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verse 15



1Cor 9:5 Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife,^p as do the other apostles and *the brothers of the Lord* and Cephas?

^p Greek *a sister as wife*

The “brothers of the Lord” likely refers to siblings. These include the James who became a key church leader and Judas, who may well have written the Letter of Jude.

Jesus grew from childhood through to adulthood

Luke 2:40-42 And *the child grew and became strong*, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. ⁴¹Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴²And *when he was twelve years old*, they went up according to custom.

Luke 2:52 And *Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature^q* and in favor with God and man.

^q Or *years*

Luke 3:23 *Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age*, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, ...

Luke 4:16a And he came to *Nazareth, where he had been brought up*.

Jesus was called a man

Mark 15:39 And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he^r breathed his last, he said, “Truly *this man* was the Son^s of God!”

^r Some manuscripts insert *cried out and*

^s Or *a son*

John 1:29-30 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes *a man* who ranks before me, because he was before me.’

John 7:12, 15 And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, “*He is a good man*,” others said, “No, he is leading the people astray.” ... ¹⁵The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How is it that *this man* has learning,^t when he has never studied?”

^t Or *this man knows his letters*

John 8:40a ... but now *you seek to kill me, a man* who has told you the truth that I heard from God.

Here Jesus himself refers to himself as “a man”.

John 10:33 The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because *you, being a man*, make yourself God.”

John 19:5 So *Jesus came out*, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “*Behold the man!*”

Acts 17:31 ... because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by *a man whom he has appointed*; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Acts 2:22 Men of Israel, hear these words: *Jesus of Nazareth, a man* attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—

Rom 5:15, 17, 19 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of *that one man Jesus Christ* abounded for many. ... ¹⁷For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through *the one man Jesus Christ*. ... ¹⁹For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by *the one man’s obedience* the many will be made righteous.

Note that in addition to the references to Jesus Christ being a “man”, the comparisons in this – and the following reference from 1 Corinthians 15:21, 47 – between Jesus Christ and the first man Adam, highlight the fact that Jesus Christ was a man.

1Cor 15:21, 47 For as by a man came death, *by a man* has come also the resurrection of the dead. ... ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; *the second man is from heaven*.

1Tim 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, *the man^u Christ Jesus*, ...

^u *men* and *man* render the same Greek word that is translated *people* in verses 1 and 4

‡ **Jesus referred to himself as “the Son of Man”:**

Matt 8:20 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but *the Son of Man* has nowhere to lay his head.”



The term "the Son of Man" was the title Jesus used for himself the most – approximately 80 times. It is a messianic title (cf. Dan 7:13-14), but it also underlines his humanity.

Jesus had a physical body . . .

See also:

- *Jesus Christ became a human being*, p. 516
- *Jesus was raised in a bodily form*, p. 581

Col 1:22 ... he has now reconciled in *his body of flesh* by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ...

Matt 27:58-60 He went to Pilate and *asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.* ⁵⁹*And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud* ⁶⁰*and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.*

Luke 24:39 *See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.*

John 2:21 *But he was speaking about the temple of his body.*

1Tim 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: *He^v was manifested in the flesh*, vindicated^w by the Spirit,^x seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

^v Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^w Or *justified*

^x Or *vindicated in spirit*

Heb 2:14 *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things*, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ...

Heb 10:5, 10 Consequently, *when Christ^y came into the world, he said*, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but *a body have you prepared for me*; ... ¹⁰*And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

^y Greek *he*

1Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins *in his body* on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

1Jn 1:1-2 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, *which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—* ²*the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—*

The "word of life" (v. 1) refers to Jesus Christ. That he appeared, was heard, seen and – in particular – touched, points to him having a physical body.

. . . and Jesus had physical limitations

See also:

- [Col 1:22](#) ↑
- [Luke 4:2](#) ↓
- *The horrific suffering and death of Jesus*, p. 575

Matt 21:18 In the morning, as he was returning to the city, *he became hungry.*

John 19:28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), *"I thirst."*

John 4:6 Jacob's well was there; so *Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey*, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.^z

^z That is, about noon

Mark 4:38a *But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.*

Mark 15:37 *And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.*

1Pet 3:18 For *Christ also suffered^a once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous*, that he might bring us to God, *being put to death in the flesh* but made alive in the spirit, ...

^a Some manuscripts *died*

That Jesus had physical limitations is clearly reflected by the fact that he died.

‡ **Jesus had a spirit, which departed his body on his death:**

John 19:30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, *"It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*



Like all humans, Jesus experienced difficult times – including temptation

See also:

- c) *Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death*, p. 570

Isa 53:3 *He was despised and rejected^b by men; a man of sorrows,^c and acquainted with^d grief;^e and as one from whom men hide their faces^f he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

^b Or *forsaken*

^c Or *pains*; also verse 4

^d Or *and knowing*

^e Or *sickness*; also verse 4

^f Or *as one who hides his face from us*

Mark 14:33-34 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and *began to be greatly distressed and troubled.* ³⁴And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.”^g

^g Or *keep awake*; also verses 37, 38

Luke 12:50 I have a baptism to be baptized with, and *how great is my distress until it is accomplished!*

Luke 22:44 And *being in an agony* he prayed more earnestly; and *his sweat became like great drops of blood* falling down to the ground.^h

^h Some manuscripts omit verses 43 and 44

Sweat “like great drops of blood” is indicative of great anguish.

John 11:33-35 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, *he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.* ³⁴And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵*Jesus wept.*

John 12:27 *Now is my soul troubled.* And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

John 13:21 After saying these things, *Jesus was troubled in his spirit*, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

Heb 5:7-8 In the days of his flesh, Jesusⁱ offered up prayers and supplications, *with loud cries and tears*, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸Although he was a son, he learned obedience *through what he suffered.*

ⁱ Greek *he*

1Pet 4:1 Since therefore *Christ suffered in the flesh*,^j arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ...

^j Some manuscripts add *for us*; some *for you*

Luke 4:1-2, 13 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ²*for forty days, being tempted by the devil.* And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ... ¹³And *when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.*

The reasons why Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted – or tested – by the devil probably include the following: it was to prepare him for what lay ahead (and also proved his worthiness to do the work); it allowed him to assert his dominance over Satan from the beginning of his ministry (not that Satan was one to give up, v. 13); it unequivocally demonstrated his allegiance to God; and it meant he would be in a better position to help his followers when they are tempted (cf. [Heb 2:18](#)).

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but *one who in every respect has been tempted as we are*, yet without sin.

✚ In difficult times Jesus put his trust in God:

Heb 2:13a And again, “*I will put my trust in him.*”

Taken from Isaiah 8:17 where the prophet asserts his trust in God amidst difficult times, this quotation is usually understood to here be speaking of Jesus’ trust in God in his often difficult life on earth as a human being. By trusting God he both identified with and was an example to his “brothers” (cf. vv. 11-12).

Note: Jesus’ humanity was vital to his mission to save people

See also:

- *Jesus Christ is a high priest who is perfect – but can still identify with his people’s humanity*, p. 676

Hebrews 2:14-18 below clearly states that for his redemptive work, it was necessary for Jesus Christ to become fully human. The other references likewise imply or allude to this.

Heb 2:14-18 *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,* ¹⁵*and deliver all those who through*



fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. 📖

Jesus needed to share in the humanity of God's people and become like them so as to be identified with them, in a sense being one with them. As such he could die as a substitute and an offering (cf. [Rom 8:3 ↓](#)) for them. Partaking of their humanity would also be important for him in his ongoing role in helping God's people, as indicated in v. 18 and possibly also in v. 17 (if aspects of his ongoing role as high priest are in view in addition to his sacrificial death).

Rom 8:3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^k he condemned sin in the flesh, ... 📖

^k Or *and as a sin offering*

Rom 5:15-19 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass^l led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness^m leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. 📖

^l Or *the trespass of one*

^m Or *the act of righteousness of one*

The contrasts between death and sin coming through the man Adam with life and righteousness coming through the man Jesus Christ, may suggest that it was necessary for the latter pair to come through a man – i.e. they needed to come in the same way that death and sin came (cf. [1Cor 15:21 ↓](#)). The reasoning may be along the line of the following. Adam as the father of the human race, acted in a sense as representative of all people, who would come from him. Jesus Christ as a human being, acted on behalf of all people, effectively those who would believe in him. In part at least because of this, Jesus Christ's righteousness – stemming from his obedience (v. 19) – could be imputed on all. For further comment on this passage see [Sin results in physical](#)

[death – through Adam's original sin](#), p. 381; and [God and Jesus Christ show abundant grace toward their people](#), p. 826.

1Cor 15:21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 📖

Gal 4:4-5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 📖

Following on from the clause "born of woman", in saying that Jesus was "born under the law" (v. 4) Paul further emphasizes Jesus' humanity and his identification with all humanity which is subject to the law. Paul asserts that as such Christ could redeem those under law. Jesus was human and fully obeyed the law and so was not liable under the law, not having to pay any penalty for himself. As such he was in a position to offer his blameless life as a substitute for the lives of others. In conjunction, bear in mind that just as a human he could die on behalf of humans, as the Son of God his death was worth that of an immeasurable number of humans.

Col 1:22 ... he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ... 📖

It can be inferred from this that Christ's body needed to be a physical, human body for people to be reconciled to God through his death.

1Tim 2:5-6 For there is one God, and *there is one mediator between God and men, the manⁿ Christ Jesus*, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 📖

ⁿ *men* and *man* render the same Greek word that is translated *people* in verses 1 and 4

The reference to "the man Christ Jesus" appears to point to Jesus Christ's humanity as being significant to his role as the "mediator between God and men".

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) Jesus Christ's Personality

See also:

- c) *Jesus Christ's Character*, p. 102

Subsections

- Jesus was loving – shown ultimately in him giving up his life
- Jesus was compassionate
- Jesus was meek
- Jesus was gentle and humble – as a servant
- Jesus was good
- Jesus was righteous
- Jesus showed righteous anger and indignation
- Jesus showed great strength of character, being courageous and composed
- Note: Jesus was prepared to associate with and even support notably sinful people

Jesus was loving – shown ultimately in him giving up his life

See also:

- John 19:26-27 ↴
- *Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them* + ref., p. 819

Mark 10:20-21 And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." ²¹And *Jesus, looking at him, loved him*, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 📖

John 11:5 *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.* 📖

John 11:34-36 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵*Jesus wept.* ³⁶*So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"* 📖

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, *having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* 📖

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as *I have loved you*, you also are to love one another. 📖

John 15:9, 12-13 *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.* Abide in my love. 📖 ... ¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another *as I have loved you.* ¹³*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* 📖

The ultimate depth of Jesus' love is shown emphatically in: v. 9, with the comparison to God's otherwise unmatched love for him; and v. 13, which alludes to Jesus' own love in speaking of the greatest expression of human love, that of laying down one's life for another.

1Jn 2:8 At the same time, it is *a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him* and in you, because^o the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 📖

^o Or *that*

The "command" is the command to love others (cf. 9-11), as demonstrated by Jesus – "true in Him" (NASB, NKJV; cf. NRSV).

Jesus was compassionate

Matt 9:36 When he saw the crowds, *he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* 📖

Matt 14:13-14 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and *he had compassion on them and healed their sick.* 📖

Jesus' compassion for the crowd (v. 14) is all the more notable as he had wanted to be alone (v. 13).

Matt 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "*I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.*" 📖

Matt 20:30-31, 34 And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord,^p have mercy on us, Son of David!" ³¹The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son



of David!"  ... ³⁴And *Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight* and followed him. 

^p Some manuscripts omit *Lord*

Jesus' compassion/pity (v. 34) is accentuated by the crowd's contrasting heartless response to the blind men (v. 31).

Mark 1:40-41 And a leper^a came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."
⁴¹*Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."* 

^a *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Luke 7:12-13 As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. ¹³And when the Lord saw her, *he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."* 

Luke 19:41-44 And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." 

Jesus wept with heartfelt compassion because the people of Jerusalem had not recognized him and the peace that could have come through him (v. 42), and now would face destruction (vv. 43-44). This came by the Romans in A.D. 70.

John 19:25-27 ... but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, *he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"* ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. 

Perhaps thoughtfulness as much as – or more than – compassion is what Jesus shows here; even while he was being crucified, he could still think of others.

† Jesus' mercy shown in asking for forgiveness for those who crucified him:

Luke 23:33-34a And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."† 

^r Some manuscripts omit the sentence *And Jesus . . . what they do*

Jesus was meek

See also:

▪ [Luke 23:33-34a](#) 

As demonstrated by Jesus, meekness is not a sign of weakness. On the contrary it shows strength of character, enabling a person to "take in their stride" any injustices committed against them. (See also the introductory comment on [Be meek](#), p. 1555.)

2Cor 10:1a I, Paul, myself entreat you, *by the meekness and gentleness of Christ* ... 

Matt 26:47-52 While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him." ⁴⁹And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him. ⁵⁰*Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do."* ⁵¹Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant^t of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword." 

^s Or *Friend, why are you here?*

^t Greek *bondservant*

Even amidst the most infamous betrayal in history, Jesus showed no antagonism towards his betrayer (v. 50), but instead meekly accepted his destiny. Luke even records him healing the adversary who lost his ear in v. 51 (cf. Luke 2:47-51).

Matt 26:62-63a And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"^u ⁶³But Jesus remained silent. 

^u Or *Have you no answer to what these men testify against you?*

Here and in 27:12-14 immediately below, Jesus appears to show meekness by making no retort or attempt to justify himself in the face of unjust accusations.



Matt 27:12-14 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. ¹³Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" ¹⁴But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. 📖

1Pet 2:23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 📖

Isa 50:6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. 📖

This and the following verse are from two of the four "servant songs" in Isaiah, which depict aspects of the life and work of the Messiah (the servant). As such they are prophecies fulfilled by Jesus. These two verses speak of his meek response to those inflicting on him great suffering.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 📖

Jesus was gentle and humble – as a servant

See also:

- [2Cor 10:1a](#) ↑
- [d\) Jesus Christ's Direction from God](#), p. 553

Matt 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 📖

The term "lowly in heart" is indicative of humility.

Matt 21:5 "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and^v on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" 📖

^v Or even

That Jesus as king would enter Jerusalem in such a way, reflects not only his humility but also his gentleness (cf. NCV, NIV).

Matt 12:19-20 He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; ²⁰a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; ... 📖

The Messiah would not act like political leaders, arguing and loudly proclaiming his cause in public (v. 19). Instead he had

a largely non-confrontational approach to carrying out his work in the face of opposition (cf. vv. 14-16). His gentleness was also evident in the way he dealt with the sick and weak – not crushing those who were weak (v. 20).

Phil 2:6-8 ... who, though he was in the form of God, *did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant,^w being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* 📖

^w Greek bondservant

This and the following references illustrate Jesus' exemplary humility and also his preparedness to serve, both God (here and [Isa 53:11](#) ↓) and people (the other references below).

Luke 22:27 For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. 📖

John 13:3-5 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and *began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.* 📖

The reference to Jesus' great authority (v. 3) accentuates his humility in performing such a menial task (v. 5). One reason why Jesus washed his disciples' feet was to set them an example of humble service (cf. vv. 12-15).

John 21:9-13 When they got out on land, *they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.* ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. 📖

Even as the risen savior, Jesus was pleased to prepare and serve breakfast to his disciples.

Isa 53:11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see^x and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, *my servant*, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 📖

^x Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *he shall see light*



✦ **Jesus did not seek glory or to glorify himself:**

John 8:50, 54 Yet *I do not seek my own glory*; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. ...⁵⁴Jesus answered, "*If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'*"^y

^y Some manuscripts *your God*

Jesus was good

John 10:11 *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

Mark 10:17-18 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "*Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*"¹⁸And Jesus said to him, "*Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.*"

Note that in his reply (v. 18) Jesus in effect says that only God is truly good. Commentators generally see this as pointing to his oneness with God rather than denying that he himself was good.

John 7:12 And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "*He is a good man,*" others said, "*No, he is leading the people astray.*"

Acts 10:38 ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. *He went about doing good* and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Jesus was righteous

See also:

- ... *Jesus himself is identified with truth*, p. 568
- *Jesus Christ was an unblemished offering – being without sin*, p. 590

Isa 53:11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see^z and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall *the righteous one*, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

^z Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *he shall see light*

Acts 3:14 But you denied *the Holy and Righteous One*, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ...

1Pet 3:18 For *Christ also suffered*^a once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ...

^a Some manuscripts *died*

Matt 22:16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that *you are true and teach the way of God truthfully*, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for *you are not swayed by appearances.*"^b

^b Greek *for you do not look at people's faces*

John 5:30 I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and *my judgment is just*, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

John 7:18 The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but *the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*

Jesus showed righteous anger and indignation

Mark 3:2-5 And they watched Jesus,^c to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him.³And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here."⁴And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent.⁵And *he looked around at them with anger*, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

^c Greek *him*

Here and in John 2:14-17 below Jesus expresses anger (with the remaining references probably more precisely examples of indignation). In both instances his anger has nothing to do with any concern for himself. Rather it is directed at unacceptable attitudes or actions, towards others and God.

John 2:14-17 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.¹⁵*And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.*¹⁶*And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."*¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Note that this passage also shows Jesus' zeal, as emphasized by v. 17.



Mark 10:13-14 And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 📖

Matt 17:17 And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." 📖

Arguably this and the following references evidence indignation in Jesus – and possibly other personal characteristics.

Matt 23:13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.^d 📖

^d Some manuscripts add here (or after verse 12) verse 14: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation*

Mark 8:11-12 The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. ¹²And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." 📖

Jesus showed great strength of character, being courageous and composed

See also:

- [John 2:14-17](#) ↑
- ... [Nobody could match Jesus' wisdom](#), p. 552

Matt 15:1-9 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." ³He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' ⁵But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God,"^e ⁶he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word^f of God. ⁷You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸"This people honors me with their lips, but

their heart is far from me; ⁹in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." 📖

^e Or is an offering

^f Some manuscripts *law*

Jesus did not hesitate to stand up to and rebuke the religious authorities and leaders of the Jews, which he did with astuteness and composure.

Matt 17:18 And Jesus rebuked the demon,^g and it^h came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.ⁱ 📖

^g Greek *it*

^h Greek *the demon*

ⁱ Greek *from that hour*

Jesus was unfazed by evil forces.

Luke 14:1-4 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, *they were watching him carefully.* ²And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. ³And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" ⁴But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. 📖

Jesus knew full well that his opponents were watching him to catch him out and that they would find fault with him healing a person on the Sabbath. Still he did not let the threat that they posed deter him from rightfully healing the man.

John 8:3-9 *The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst* ⁴*they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?"* ⁶*This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."* ⁸*And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 📖*

We do not know what Jesus wrote on the ground (vv. 6, 8). In view of v. 7, possibly it was other commandments, to point out the hypocrisy of the woman's accusers in condemning her for one sin while being guilty themselves of other sins, in breaking other commandments. Whatever it was, along with his insightful directive (v. 7b), it illustrates his courage and in particular his composure under pressure.

John 18:3-11 So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴Then Jesus,



knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"⁵ They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he."⁶ Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶When Jesus^k said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." ¹⁰Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant^l and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" 

^j Greek *I am*; also verses 6, 8

^k Greek *he*

^l Greek *bondservant*; twice in this verse

It appears that Jesus' remarkable composure – and possibly some perception of his majesty – intimidated and unnerved his would-be captors so much that "they drew back and fell to the ground" (v. 6). A number of commentators consider that in saying, "I am he," (v. 5) Jesus may have been alluding to God's name (cf. text note) and so his own authority – adding to his opponents' trepidation.

Note: Jesus was prepared to associate with and even support notably sinful people

See also:

- [John 8:3-9](#) 

In his mission to save the world from sin, Jesus reached out to sinners – in particular those who recognized themselves as such. These included groups of people looked down upon as "sinners" by the self-righteous members of society. Associating with and supporting such people showed Jesus' love and compassion. These actions also reflected his strength of character, with him not being influenced by or giving in to social norms and the pressure of public opinion.

Matt 9:10-13 And as Jesus^m reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹²But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." 

^m Greek *he*

In v. 13, "righteous" is probably used in an ironical sense, denoting the self-righteous, those who considered themselves to be spiritually "well" (v. 12) and not in need of what Jesus offered.

Matt 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."ⁿ 

ⁿ Some manuscripts *children* (compare Luke 7:35)

Although stated judgmentally, Jesus opponents were basically correct in saying that Jesus was a friend of sinners. Regarding the last statement, "wisdom" refers either to that expressed in the approach of Jesus and John the Baptist (cf. v. 18) or to God's wisdom, as the one who sent them. This "wisdom" would be vindicated by Jesus' and John's work, and the outcomes of their work.

Luke 15:2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." 

Luke 19:5-7 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 

Luke 7:37-50 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell



you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”⁴⁸ And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

^o Or to

In being described as “a sinner” (vv. 37, 39), the woman was probably a prostitute. Jesus not only showed that he was comfortable associating with – even being touched by (v. 39) – a repentant prostitute, but was prepared to publicly speak up for her (vv. 40-50; cf. [John 8:3-9](#) ↑).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ

See also:

- [God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ](#), p. 214
- [b\) The Significance of Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ](#), p. 781
- [b\) God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit](#), p. 837

Subsections

- [God works in all eras through Jesus Christ, impacting all things everywhere](#)
- [God enacts his will in or through Jesus Christ](#)
- [God fulfills his promises through Jesus Christ . . .](#)
- [. . . Key promises of God have been centered on Jesus Christ](#)
- [God saves people through Jesus Christ](#)
- [God reconciles people to himself through Jesus Christ](#)
- [God gave the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ](#)
- [God works in and through his people, through Jesus Christ](#)

God works in all eras through Jesus Christ, impacting all things everywhere

See also:

- [Gal 1:3-4](#) ↓; [Eph 1:9-10](#) ↓; [Eph 3:10-11](#) ↓

Note that the verses in this subsection are ordered according to the chronological order of their subject matter. As such the ordering of some could be varied as they make reference to more than one era or time period.

Heb 1:2 ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

This verse speaks of God working through Jesus Christ in saying that God made the world through Jesus Christ and spoke to us through him during his mission (“in these last days”). Additionally the clause “whom he appointed the heir of all things” could be interpreted to point to God further impacting all things through Jesus Christ. It may well have largely in view the future consummation of Jesus Christ’s lordship when he will reign with all things as his and in submission to him.

Col 1:19-20 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Col 2:15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities^p and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.^q

^p Probably demonic rulers and authorities

^q Or in it (that is, the cross)

Opinions differ over whether this is talking of God or of Jesus Christ, defeating the forces of evil through Christ’s death. If it is God, then it illustrates that God works in – or at least impacts on – the spiritual world through Jesus Christ. For further comment see [Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil](#), p. 605.

Jude 1:25 ... to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

The things listed by Jude are ascribed to God – or proclaimed to be God’s – throughout the past, present and future. With the clause “through Jesus Christ our Lord”, Jude probably means they are God’s through Jesus Christ; alternatively he may be speaking of such acclamation being offered to God through Christ (cf. [NlrV](#)). If the former is the case, God’s accomplishing of his purposes through Jesus Christ – which have and will bring glory to God – would appear to be in view.



Rev 1:1a *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants^r the things that must soon take place.* ☞

^r Greek *bondservants*

Rev 5:1-7 *Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.* ²And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” ⁶And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ☞

Opinions differ on the likely contents of the scroll. Quite possibly it contains God's will for the world for the remainder of this age and the subsequent events leading into eternity, including judgment (cf. [Rom 2:16](#) ↓) and the bequeathing of the inheritance of the saints. As such it would include the events portrayed in the remaining chapters of Revelation. The Lamb which was slain (vv. 6, 9) is Jesus Christ. The fact that he is the only one worthy to open it probably signifies that he will execute it, bringing God's plans for the world to fulfillment. As such the passage speaks of God working through Jesus Christ.

Acts 3:19-21 Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and *that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,* ²¹*whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.* ☞

Quite possibly this is implying that God will restore “all things” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT) through Jesus Christ.

Rom 2:16 *... on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.* ☞

God enacts his will in or through Jesus Christ

Note that the other subsections in this chapter section similarly illustrate that God enacts his will in or through Jesus Christ, even though they may not make specific reference to God's will or purpose.

Bear in mind that the teaching in this and the previous subsection is not necessarily indicating that God works or enacts his will exclusively through Jesus Christ. The Bible also speaks of God working through the Holy Spirit and through his people – although this does not mean that Jesus Christ is not also involved in such work (cf. [God works in and through his people, through Jesus Christ](#), p. 535).

Isa 53:10-11 *Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;^s when his soul makes^t an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.* ¹¹*Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see^u and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.* ☞

^s Or *he has made him sick*

^t Or *when you make his soul*

^u Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *he shall see light*

It was God's will to “to crush him ... put him to grief” (v. 10a), in order to make him an offering for sin (v. 10b) so that he would make many righteous, bearing their sins for them (v. 11b). Thus through the Messiah the will of God would come to fruition – “prosper in his hand” (v. 10b).

John 6:40 *For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* ☞

Gal 1:3-4 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,* ⁴*who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ...* ☞

Eph 1:5 *... he predestined us^v for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ...* ☞

^v Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

Eph 1:9-10 *... making known^w to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ* ¹⁰*as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.* ☞

^w Or *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known ...*

The clause “he set forth in Christ” (v. 9) indicates that God planned to bring his will into effect “through Christ” (NCV™) or “by means of Christ” (GNT).

Eph 3:8-11 *To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,* ⁹*and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^x*



*God who created all things,*¹⁰ *so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*¹¹ *This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ...* 

x Or by

God's "eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ" (v. 11) appears to be speaking primarily of the Gentiles being made "fellow heirs [with Jews], members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus" (v. 6). Possibly it also points to his purpose that Paul had spoken of earlier in 1:9-10 above. Note that this also speaks of God fulfilling his will through the church, although with it playing a somewhat more passive role.

God fulfills his promises through Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- [Acts 2:33](#) ↓
- [c\) Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus](#), p. 494

2Cor 1:20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. 

All God's promises are confirmed in Jesus Christ; they are "fulfilled in him" (NLT).

Luke 1:68-75 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people⁶⁹ and *has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,*⁷⁰ *as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,*⁷¹ *that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;*⁷² *to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,*⁷³ *the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us*⁷⁴ *that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,*⁷⁵ *in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.* 

This speaks of promises of God, promises that encompassed the salvation and associated blessings spoken of in the rest of the passage. Jesus Christ is the "horn of salvation" (v. 69) "raised up" or sent by God in order to fulfill these promises.

Acts 2:38-39 And Peter said to them, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*³⁹ *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.*" 

The "promise" (v. 39) is that of the Holy Spirit (cf. AMP), to be given to those who have their sins forgiven through the name of Jesus Christ. Thus these verses can be construed to indicate that this promise of God is largely fulfilled through Jesus Christ (cf. [Gal 3:14, 22](#) ↓) – or at least that this promise has been made possible because of Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished.

Acts 3:21 ... [Jesus] *whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.* 

As indicated earlier, this suggests that God will fulfill through Jesus Christ his promise (spoken through the prophets) to restore everything.

Acts 13:32-33 And we bring you the good news that *what God promised to the fathers,*³³ *this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."* 

For comment, see the comments on: [Acts 13:27-33](#) under *For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .*, p. 492; and [500](#) under *Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' resurrection*, p. 500.

Rom 15:8 For I tell you that *Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ...* 

Christ's ministry to the Jews was in order to confirm God's promises to the patriarchs, particularly the promise that they would be a blessing to all nations. The prime blessing that would come by them would be salvation through the Messiah.

Gal 3:14, 22 ... *so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit^y through faith.*  ... ²²*But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.* 

^y Greek *receive the promise of the Spirit*

In v. 14, "the blessing of Abraham" refers to justification by faith (cf. vv. 6-11). In v. 22, "the promise" most likely also refers to this righteousness or justification by faith and the associated promise of the Spirit (v. 14b) – possibly along with other concepts related to "the promise", particularly salvation and life. These promises are fulfilled essentially through Jesus Christ, with those who have faith in him receiving them (vv. 14b, 22b).



Heb 9:15 Therefore *he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*^z



^z The Greek word means both *covenant* and *will*; also verses 16, 17

The “promised eternal inheritance” – fulfilled through the work of Jesus Christ – may refer specifically to “eternal redemption” (v. 12).

... Key promises of God have been centered on Jesus Christ

The references in the previous subsection largely tell of God making promises and then fulfilling them through Jesus Christ, whereas in this subsection the references tell of promises of God that in themselves speak of the Messiah or Jesus Christ (and so have been or will be fulfilled through Jesus Christ).

Acts 2:29-33 Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that *God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,* ³¹*he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* ³²*This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.* ³³*Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.*

In vv. 30-31, Peter asserts that David had spoken (cf. vv. 35-38) of the Christ being resurrected to assume the Davidic throne, as the descendant whom God had promised David would be placed on his throne. In vv. 32-33, Peter implies that God's resurrection of Jesus Christ and his exaltation of Christ to his right hand (pointing to Christ's enthronement) show Christ to be the one that God had spoken of. (Additionally, note that v. 33 speaks of God fulfilling through Christ his promise of the Holy Spirit.)

Acts 13:23 Of this man's offspring *God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.*

Rom 1:1-3 Paul, a servant^a of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for *the gospel of God,* ²*which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,* ³*concerning his Son, who was descended from David^b according to the flesh ...*

^a Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

^b Or *who came from the offspring of David*

Eph 3:6 This mystery is^c that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and *partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus* through the gospel.

^c The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

What the “promise” refers to is not specified but probably relates to an aspect of salvation, centered on and achieved through Jesus Christ. Possibly it may encompass – or at least be applicable to – all that is promised to those who are “in” Jesus Christ.

2Tim 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to *the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, ...*

✚ **God made promises to Christ which are inherited by all who belong to him:**

Gal 3:16, 19, 29 Now *the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.* It does not say, “*And to offsprings,*” referring to many, but referring to one, “*And to your offspring,*” who is Christ. ... ¹⁹Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until *the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made,* and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. ... ²⁹*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

The promises referred to were made to Abraham and to his “offspring”, Christ (v. 16), the one through whom they would be fulfilled. Due to believers' association with Christ – “the offspring ... to whom the promise had been made” (v. 19a) – believers are likewise Abraham's spiritual offspring and so heirs of the promises made to him (v. 29). Note that it is debatable as to exactly what promise/s are referred to. Possibilities include: righteousness by faith (cf. vv. 6-11, 14, 22-24; Rom 4); and various promises made to Abraham (e.g. Gen. 13:15) or applications thereof.

God saves people through Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Rom 5:8-10](#) ↓
- [God sent Jesus to take away sins . . .](#), p. 509
- [. . . God sent Jesus to save the world](#), p. 509
- [God provides salvation through Jesus Christ](#), p. 608
- [God provides life through Jesus Christ](#), p. 611
- [c\) Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ](#), p. 616



- *People are saved by God's grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 648
- *Eternal life is a gift from God, through Jesus Christ*, p. 650
- *God saves his people through the Holy Spirit*, p. 837
- *God's salvation through Jesus Christ and the associated blessings . . .*, p. 1281

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world,^d that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ☞

^d Or *For this is how God loved the world*

Acts 5:31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ☞

Jesus Christ is God's "Savior", through whom God forgives and saves Israel – and all peoples.

Rom 3:22b-25a For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. ☞

Rom 7:24-25a Wretched man that I am! *Who will deliver me from this body of death?* ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ☞

In v. 25a Paul answers the question he poses in v. 24, indicating that God will save him through Jesus Christ (cf. GNT, NCV).

1Cor 15:56-57 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ☞

The "victory" is victory over death and sin.

1Thes 4:14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, *through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* ☞

1Pet 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* ☞

Through Jesus Christ's resurrection, God has brought believers into a "living hope" (v. 3b) – encompassing the

hope of their own resurrection and an inheritance (v. 4). As such the passage speaks of God effecting through Jesus Christ the salvation to be consummated in "the last time" (v. 5).

1Jn 4:9-10 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that *God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.* ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that *he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* ☞

God reconciles people to himself through Jesus Christ

Rom 5:8-11 ... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. ☞

God "through" Jesus Christ: saves us from his own wrath (v. 9b), justifying us by Christ's death (v. 9a); reconciles us to him (vv. 10-11); and brings our salvation to completion (v. 10b).

2Cor 5:18-21 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, *in Christ God was reconciling^e the world to himself*, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, *be reconciled to God.* ²¹*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* ☞

^e Or *God was in Christ, reconciling*

The phrase "become the righteousness of God" (v. 21b) means either: to be made "right with God" (NCV™, NLT) or to "share the righteousness of God" (GNT). In any case, the two alternatives are connected to each other – and are aspects of the aforementioned reconciliation that God has provided through Jesus Christ.

Col 1:19-22 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and *through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.* ²¹And you, who once were alienated and hostile in



mind, doing evil deeds, ²²*he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ...*

At the start of v. 22, "he" could refer to God or Christ. At the end of v. 22, "him" refers to God.

God gave the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit is from God*, p. 143

Note that this topic has at times been highly controversial in church history. As such some scholars would disagree with or wish to qualify the above subheading.

Titus 3:5-6 ... he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of *the Holy Spirit*, ⁶*whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ...*

John 15:26 But when *the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father*, he will bear witness about me.

Although this does not expressly say that God sent the Holy Spirit ("the Helper") through Jesus Christ, it clearly implies this. This is also the case in Luke 24:49 and Acts 2:33 immediately below. The subsequent verses speak of Jesus giving the Holy Spirit, reflecting that the Holy Spirit does not come "directly" from God.

Luke 24:49 And *behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you*. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Acts 2:33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and *having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.*

John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, *the Helper* will not come to you. But if I go, *I will send him to you.*

John 20:22 And *when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus said this prior to his ascension. It is usually understood as anticipating the forthcoming sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-4), though some commentators see it is a partial or limited bestowal of the Spirit.

John 1:33 I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is *he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.*'

Here John the Baptist speaks of Jesus bestowing the Holy Spirit on believers – as initially realized at Pentecost.

‡ **God sent the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name:**

John 14:26 But the Helper, *the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name*, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Jesus said God would send the Holy Spirit in his name – "in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf" (AMP; cf. CEV, NLT).

God works in and through his people, through Jesus Christ

See also:

- *b) God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit*, p. 837
- *God works through his people by the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 839
- *. . . God speaks through his people by the Holy Spirit*, p. 840

2Cor 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with *the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*. ⁵*For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.*^f

^f Or *For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ*

Phil 4:19 And *my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

Paul speaks of the magnitude of God's provision as being in accordance with or reflective of God's incredible riches emanating in and through Jesus Christ. Note that the phrase "in glory" may be referring to: the glory of his riches ("glorious riches" NIV, NLT); or God's glory, which encompasses his riches.

Heb 13:21 ... [May God] equip you with everything good that you may do his will, *working in us^g that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ*, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

^g Some manuscripts *you*



The first part of the verse suggests that "working in us that which is pleasing in his sight" is speaking at least as much of the work he does through us (impacting others) as of that which he does in us (impacting our own spiritual lives).

Rom 1:4b-5 *Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ...* 

God commissioned Paul through Jesus Christ for the task of spreading the gospel. The mention of receiving "grace" is most likely referring to God's grace shown to Paul in choosing him for this task (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT), but it could also involve the grace which God bestowed on Paul in equipping him for the task. Whichever is the case, the "grace" was received through Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:29-30 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants^h to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you *stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.* 

^h Greek *bondservants*

As shown later in Acts, God answered this prayer – healing and performing miraculous signs and wonders. God did this largely through the apostles and other believers – "through the authority *and* by the power of" (AMP) the name of Jesus, as this prayer intimates.

‡ **God's love is expressed to his people through Jesus Christ:**

Rom 8:39 ... nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from *the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* 

This may be meaning that God's love has been and continues to be expressed to believers in or "through" (GNT) Christ. However, it could simply have primarily in view the consummate expression of this love manifested in what Jesus Christ has already done in his mission.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Jesus Christ's Mission

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II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection

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I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ

God enabled Jesus Christ to carry out his mission, empowering and directing him. Consequently what Jesus did and said showed that he had been sent and empowered by God. For without God no one could possibly have the extraordinary authority, power and knowledge that Jesus had.

a) Jesus Christ's Authority from God

See also:

- *b) Jesus Christ's Power from God*, p. 542
- *d) Jesus Christ as Lord of All*, p. 684

Subsections

- God granted Jesus sovereign authority
- Jesus had the authority to forgive sins
- Jesus' teaching had great authority
- Jesus had the authority to state what was required for eternal life
- Jesus had the authority to state what was required to enter God's kingdom

God granted Jesus sovereign authority

See also:

- *God has given Jesus Christ authority and power over all things*, p. 687

Matt 11:27 *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* 

Jesus is saying that all things had been "handed over" to him by God. In effect God had given him "authority over everything" (NLT).

Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them

in^a the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."



^a Or *into*

As Jesus made this statement after his resurrection, there is some discussion as to what extent he had this authority beforehand. Matthew 11:27 above, John 17:2, 3:35 and 13:3 below suggest that he did have such authority beforehand. Possibly this was an extension of the realm of his authority.

John 17:2 ... since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 

This is either speaking of: authority over all people, by which Jesus could give eternal life as well as do other things; or more particularly authority to give eternal life, i.e. the second part of the verse may be qualifying the first part. Arguably at least, the first alternative is more likely.

John 3:35 *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.* 

John 13:3 *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ...* 

John 5:27 *And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.* 

Here Jesus is speaking of the authority God has given him as "the Son of Man". This title – particularly in this context – is probably a reference to the "one like a son of man" in Daniel 7:13-14 below, who was given dominion over all peoples.

John 10:17-18 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. *I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.* 

This indicates that Jesus had authority over death. The final statement may refer to God granting him this authority, in light of the preceding statement. For further comment see *Jesus obeyed God*, p. 555.

John 16:23 In that day you will ask nothing of me. *Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.* 

In Jewish thought, a person's name represented or embodied their whole person – including their authority, along with their nature and purpose. To make requests "in Jesus' name" therefore involves a claim on his authority. So with the promise that "whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he



will give it to you", this verse points to the sovereignty of Jesus' authority.

Matt 12:6 *I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.* 

Here Jesus is speaking of himself or possibly the kingdom of God – the two are interrelated in any case. Jesus may well have meant that he had authority higher than that of the temple and the regulations associated with it and the Sabbath (cf. vv. 1-8). Another possible implication was that as the center and focus for worship of God, the temple had been superseded by the coming of God's kingdom with its King, Jesus himself (cf. [John 2:19-22](#) ↓), and what he would accomplish in allowing people to approach God directly. Both possibilities point to Jesus' supreme authority.

John 2:13-22 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. 

Jesus' authority to clear the temple of those using it to make money is illustrative of his sovereign authority. The Jews questioned Jesus' authority to take such imposing action in the temple – "prove your authority to do all this" (v. 18, NIV). Some commentators consider that they also had in view his reference to the temple as "my Father's house" (v. 16) as being a messianic allusion and were essentially questioning what appeared to them at least to be a claim to be the Messiah. Jesus Christ gave his death and resurrection (vv. 19, 21) as proof that he had the authority to take such action and – if his Messiah-ship was in question – that he was the Messiah. Thus when he died and rose again his disciples believed him (v. 22).

✦ The sovereign authority given by God to "one like a son of man":

Dan 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came *one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.* ¹⁴And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. 

This is understood to be messianic and thus to be speaking of Jesus Christ. Its complete fulfillment, with all people worshiping him, will come at the end of the age.

Jesus had the authority to forgive sins

Matt 9:2-8 And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And *when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."* ³And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." ⁴But Jesus, knowing^b their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ⁶But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home."⁷And he rose and went home. ⁸When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men. 

^b Some manuscripts *perceiving*

Jesus' question in v. 5 makes the point that forgiving sins is, like healing a paralytic, humanly impossible. So although his claim to be able to forgive sins could not be directly verified, by proving he could do the latter (vv. 7-8) Jesus gave his claim credence. Note that the parallel passage in Mark adds to the remark of the teachers of the law: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7b) This correctly indicates that forgiveness of sins could only be done with God's authority.

Luke 7:47-49 Therefore *I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much.* But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among^c themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 

^c Or *to*

Col 3:13 ... bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as *the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* 



This is probably speaking generally of Jesus Christ forgiving sins rather than in particular to him doing so during his mission. It has been included here as it further illustrates that he has such authority.

✦ **Jesus had the authority to state what could and could not be forgiven:**

Matt 12:31 Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

For comment, see the comment on **Matt 12:24, 31-32** – under *Do not blaspheme God*, p. 1244.

Jesus' teaching had great authority

See also:

- *Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God*, p. 566
- *Jesus' teaching was amazing and powerful – leading people to believe in him . . .*, p. 568

Mark 1:21-27 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²²And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

In v. 27 the people appear to be saying that Jesus' teaching had great authority and that this authority was confirmed and demonstrated by Jesus' power to authoritatively give orders to evil spirits.

Matt 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-35, 38-39, 43-44 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother^d will be liable to judgment; whoever insults^e his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell^f of fire. ... ²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed

adultery with her in his heart. ... ³¹"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³²But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. ³³Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' ³⁴But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ... ³⁸"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ... ⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ...

^d Some manuscripts insert *without cause*

^e Greek says *Raca* to (a term of abuse)

^f Greek *Gehenna*; also verses 29, 30

Six times Jesus quotes the OT law. Each time he interprets the law and even develops it. He does so in a manner that does not undermine the law (cf. vv. 18-20), but nevertheless is indicative of his authority being comparable with or even greater than that of the law itself. Note that regarding "hate your enemy" (v. 43), the OT law never says to do this. This suggests that with his use of "you have heard" (vv. 21, 27, 33, 38, 43), Jesus is addressing not simply the OT law itself, but misinterpretations and misapplications of it.

Matt 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The great authority of Jesus' teaching is reflected by its permanence, verifiable by its standing nearly two thousand years later.

Luke 4:18-21 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

In v. 21 Jesus lays claim to being the one anointed by God to preach and proclaim the messianic messages (vv. 18-19), indicative of the divine authority of his teaching.

John 6:47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.



Jesus used the clause "Truly, truly, I say to you" numerous times in his teaching (cf. [John 5:24](#) ↕; [Mark 10:29](#) ↕). By it Jesus asserts his authority – or at least his capacity – to state truth.

Mark 7:14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: ... 📖

This exemplifies the authoritative tone or nature of Jesus' teaching, with him asserting the necessity for everyone to listen to him (cf. [Mark 9:7](#) ↓) and understand his teaching.

Mark 9:7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son;# listen to him." 📖

Or my Son, my (or the) Beloved

The fact that God commanded people to listen to Jesus emphatically underlines Jesus' great authority in his teaching.

‡ Jesus' silencing of the leaders who queried his authority:

Matt 21:23-27 And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. 📖

The phrase "these things" (vv. 23, 27) quite possibly encompasses his teaching in the temple (v. 23), but also his past clearing of the temple of buyers and sellers and his performing miracles there (cf. vv. 12-15; [John 2:14-18](#)). Jesus' reply (v. 25a) implies that both John's and his authority came from heaven; it also foiled his opponents.

Jesus had the authority to state what was required for eternal life

Note that Jesus is the speaker in each of the verses listed in this and the following subsection.

John 3:16, 36 For God so loved the world,^h that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 📖 ... ³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. 📖

^h Or For this is how God loved the world

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. 📖

John 12:25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 📖

Jesus states that those who live for the benefit of themselves and their own lives will ultimately lose it, whereas those who are prepared to forsake living for themselves and their own lives (for the sake of God's kingdom) will be granted eternal life. Similarly in [Mark 8:35](#) Jesus says, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

‡ Jesus' stated that those who give up much for him and the gospel, will receive eternal life:

Mark 10:29-30 Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. 📖

Jesus had the authority to state what was required to enter God's kingdom

Matt 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 📖

The "righteousness" of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law was a self-righteousness, rather than godly righteousness.

Matt 7:21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 📖

Matt 18:3 ... and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 📖

Here Jesus speaks of the humility, trust and receptiveness of little children, which are required to believe Jesus' message and enter God's kingdom.



John 3:3, 5 *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born againⁱ he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

☞ ... ⁵*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* ☞

ⁱ Or *from above*; the Greek is purposely ambiguous and can mean both *again* and *from above*; also verse 7

For comment, see the comment on [John 3:3-8](#) – under . . . *They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God's word*, p. 857.

Matt 21:28-32 *"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.* ☞

Here Jesus is teaching that to enter God's kingdom one must do what God wants (vv. 28-29, 31; [Matt 7:21](#) ↑), rather than merely profess an intention to do so (v. 30). Doing what God wants involves believing his message (v. 32), as a number of the tax collectors and the prostitutes had done (vv. 31-32) in contrast to the chief priests and elders.

✦ **Jesus had the authority to make statements about who would enter God's kingdom:**

Matt 8:11-12 *I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹²while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* ☞

Here Jesus asserts that many of the Gentiles would enter God's kingdom, while many of the Jews would be thrown out. Note that in 21:31 above, Jesus similarly makes a statement about who were entering God's kingdom, declaring that the believing tax collectors and prostitutes were entering the kingdom as opposed to the chief priests and elders.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Christ's Power from God

See also:

- *a) Jesus Christ's Miracles*, p. 559

Subsections

- God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission
- The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did
- Jesus did many miraculous deeds with God's power . . .
- . . . God would do for Jesus whatever he asked
- Jesus' deeds led people to glorify God
- Jesus' deeds validated his claims about himself and God
- Jesus' deeds led many people to believe in him

God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission

See also:

- [Acts 10:38](#) ↓
- *Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 490

The descending of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus Christ at his baptism (cf. [Matt 3:16-17](#) ↓; [John 1:32-33](#) ↓) is generally understood to be God's anointing of Jesus Christ for his mission (cf. [Luke 4:18](#) ↓) – mirroring the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon some OT leaders at the commencement of their ministries (cf. *The Holy Spirit empowers God's people to do God's work*, p. 849). As such, through the Holy Spirit God empowered Jesus in his mission and Jesus performed many miraculous deeds with God's power.

Matt 3:16-17 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,^j and *he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;* ¹⁷*and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,^k with whom I am well pleased."* ☞

^j Some manuscripts omit *to him*

^k Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

Verse 17 points to the fact that God sent the Holy Spirit, bestowing the Spirit on Jesus. Note that "like a dove" (v. 16b; cf. [John 1:32](#) ↓) may simply be referring to how the Holy Spirit descended, but it is understood by many to refer to the Spirit's form or appearance. A dove symbolized purity and gentleness, and this may be the connotation here.



John 1:32-34 And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but *he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'* ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Note that John points out two significant implications of the Holy Spirit coming down and remaining on Jesus: he is the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (v. 33); and he "is the Son of God" (v. 34). With the latter, John may also have had in mind God's declaration at Jesus' baptism (cf. **Matt 3:17** ↑).

Matt 12:18 Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. *I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.*

Matthew speaks of this messianic prophecy as having been fulfilled in Jesus. Being anointed with the Spirit, the Messiah would proclaim justice to the nations. Note that Jesus did this in announcing God's gospel of righteousness and the "judgment" (GNT) for those who do not respond. The justice Christ implements on his return may well also be in view.

Luke 4:17-19, 21 And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸"*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*" ... ²¹And he began to say to them, "*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*"

As noted earlier in this chapter, Jesus claimed that the prophecy of one who would be anointed by God with the Holy Spirit to carry out God's messianic work (vv. 18-19) was fulfilled in himself.

Isa 11:2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

The Messiah is in view as the one upon whom the Holy Spirit would rest. The verse implies that the listed traits of the Spirit would characterize – i.e. be given to (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV) – the Messiah in his anointment with the Spirit. Such traits would be critical for his ministry.

Isa 48:16b And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.

A number of commentators consider this to be speaking of the Messiah being sent, although it could simply be referring

to Isaiah himself. The rendering and the context suggest that God sent his Spirit with the one in question to aid him in his work.

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did

See also:

- **Matt 12:18** ↑; **Luke 4:17-19, 21** ↑; **Isa 11:2** ↑

Matt 12:28 But if *it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons*, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Luke 4:1-2, 14 And *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit*, returned from the Jordan and *was led by the Spirit in the wilderness* ²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. ... ¹⁴And *Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee*, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

In saying that Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" (v. 1a) and "led by the Spirit" (v. 1b), Luke appears to point to the Spirit's empowerment (cf. v. 14) and guidance of Jesus in facing his time of testing in the desert (v. 2).

John 3:34 For *he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.*

Note that the last clause probably means that God gave to Jesus Christ the Spirit without any limit (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), rather than meaning that God gives the Holy Spirit without limit whenever he gives the Spirit to someone.

Acts 1:2 ... until the day when he was taken up, *after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit* to the apostles whom he had chosen.

Acts 10:38 ... how *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil*, for God was with him.

Presumably the power spoken of was due to the Holy Spirit, the power being given in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. This verse also appears to correlate Jesus having the Holy Spirit with God's presence being with him.

1Tim 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He¹ was manifested in the flesh, *vindicated^m by the Spirit,ⁿ* seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

¹ Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*



^m Or *justified*

ⁿ Or *vindicated in spirit*

The Holy Spirit vindicated Jesus' claims about himself by enabling him to perform miracles and by his resurrection (cf. Rom 1:4). Note that there is some doubt as to whether "Spirit" is here referring to the Holy Spirit. As indicated in the alternative rendering given in the text note, it possibly should be translated "spirit" (NCV™, NRSV), thus appearing to refer to Jesus' own spirit.

Heb 9:14 ... how much more will the blood of *Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God*, purify our^o conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 

^o Some manuscripts *your*

The verse appears to be speaking of either: the Holy Spirit indwelling and strengthening Christ, empowering him to make the offering of himself (cf. NLT); or Christ offering himself through the Holy Spirit to God, the Holy Spirit being in some sense the "means" through which Christ offered himself to God.

‡ **Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit":**

Luke 10:21 In that same hour *he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit* and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."^p 

^p Or *for so it pleased you well*

The clause in view may be meaning that Jesus rejoiced by the Holy Spirit (cf. GNT text note). The clause points to the Holy Spirit invigorating and strengthening Jesus in his mission.

Jesus did many miraculous deeds with God's power . . .

See also:

- [Acts 10:38](#) 
- *Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people*, p. 559

Luke 5:17 On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And *the power of the Lord was with him to heal*.^q 

^q Some manuscripts *was present to heal them*

Luke 11:20 But if *it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons*, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 

The phrase "the finger of God" is a reference to God's power – and possibly the Holy Spirit (cf. [Matt 12:28](#) 

John 10:25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. *The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me*, ... 

Jesus performed his miracles in the name of his Father (v. 25) – i.e. by the "power" (AMP) or "authority" (CEV, GNT) of God.

Luke 9:42-43 While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But *Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father*. ⁴³*And all were astonished at the majesty of God*. But while *they were all marveling at everything he was doing*, Jesus^r said to his disciples, ... 

^r Greek *he*

Verse 43a shows that the people understood that Jesus' miraculous deeds were done with God's power.

John 3:2 This man came to Jesus^s by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for *no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him*."


^s Greek *him*

John 9:31-33 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³²*Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind*. ³³*If this man were not from God, he could do nothing*. 

Particularly in light of v. 31, v. 33 points to God's power enabling Jesus to do unheard-of miracles (v. 32).

John 20:30 Now *Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book*; ... 

God and his power are not mentioned in this and the following verses (21:25). These verses have been included here as they attest to Jesus doing a great number of miraculous deeds.

John 21:25 *Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*.




... God would do for Jesus whatever he asked

Matt 26:53 *Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?* 

John 11:21-22, 41-44 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."  ... ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." 

The phrase "always hear me" (v. 42) implies that God always answered Jesus' requests (cf. CEV), as Martha stated (v. 22) and as exemplified in the raising of Lazarus (vv. 43-44).

Ps 2:8 *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.* 

This promise of God is understood to be messianic – both applicable to Jesus in his first coming and to be consummately fulfilled on his return.

Jesus' deeds led people to glorify God

The fact that the people praised God for all the miracles that they saw Jesus perform, suggests that they understood his power to perform the miracles ultimately came from God.

Matt 15:30-31 And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and *he healed them*, ³¹so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. *And they glorified the God of Israel.* 

Luke 5:24-26 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—*he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."* ²⁵And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today." 

Luke 7:14-16 Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And *he said*, "Young man, I say to you, arise." ¹⁵And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus^t gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" 

^t Greek *he*

Note that the final statement (v. 16b), like the people's praise of God (v. 16a), also points to God being the source of Jesus power.

Luke 13:12-13 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "*Woman, you are freed from your disability.*" ¹³And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. 

Luke 17:11-15 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers,^u who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ... 

^u Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Luke 18:42-43 And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. 

Luke 19:37 As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ... 

✦ Jesus' deeds led people to rejoice:

Luke 13:17 As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and *all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.* 

Jesus' deeds validated his claims about himself and God

See also:

- [Luke 5:24-26](#) 
- [Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ](#), p. 503



John 5:36 But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For *the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.* 

Jesus' "work" appears to refer primarily to his miracles.

John 9:13-16, 32-33 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees again *asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."* ¹⁶*Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."* But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.  ... ³²*Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.* ³³*If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.* 

The question in v. 16b implies that the speakers did consider that Jesus was "from God" (v. 16a).

John 10:36-38 ... *do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?* ³⁷*If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;* ³⁸*but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.* 

In vv. 37-38, Jesus claimed that the miracles validated his claim of being the Christ (v. 36a; cf. vv. 24-25a), God's Son (v. 36b) – and showed that God was in him and he in God (v. 38b).

John 14:11 Believe me that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.* 

John 20:30-31 *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;* ³¹*but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* 

The phrase "these are written" (v. 31) refers to the miraculous signs that John did record.

Acts 2:22 Men of Israel, hear these words: *Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—* 

In saying that Jesus was attested to by God, Peter most likely had primary in view Jesus' claims about himself – most of which related to God.

John 6:26-27 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because *you saw signs*, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For *on him God the Father has set his seal.*" 

God's "seal" (v. 27) is thought by a number of commentators to refer to God's authentication of Jesus as the one who can give spiritual "food that endures to eternal life" (v. 27) by enabling him to perform miraculous signs (v. 26). These signs included providing physical food for thousands of people (cf. vv. 10-14), paralleling the fact that he can give spiritual food for eternal life.

Jesus' deeds led many people to believe in him

Matt 14:25-33 And in the fourth watch of the night *he came to them, walking on the sea.* ²⁶But when *the disciples saw him walking on the sea*, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." ²⁸And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind,^v he was afraid, and *beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."* ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³²And when they got into the boat, *the wind ceased.* ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." 

^v Some manuscripts *strong wind*

Verse 32 may well be implying that Jesus also caused the wind to die down. Verse 33 indicates that the preceding events (vv. 25-32) reinforced the disciples' belief in Jesus.

John 2:6-11 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.^w ⁷Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. ⁹When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), *the master of the feast called the bridegroom* ¹⁰and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹*This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.* 



^w Greek *two or three measures* (*metrētas*); a *metrētēs* was about 10 gallons or 35 liters

John 2:23 *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.* 📖

Note that the subsequent verses (cf. vv. 24-25) indicate that the belief of many of these people (v. 23) was somewhat superficial (cf. [John 4:48](#) ↓).

John 4:48-53 *So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."⁴⁹ The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.⁵¹ As he was going down, his servants^x met him and told him that his son was recovering.⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour^y the fever left him."⁵³ The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. 📖*

^x Greek *bondservants*

^y That is, at 1 P.M.

Note that in v. 48 Jesus is criticizing the attitude of refusing to believe in him unless one saw miracles.

John 6:14-15 *When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. 📖*

The "Prophet" is quite possibly a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15-19, where Moses speaks of God raising up a prophet like him – which many understand to be a messianic prophecy. This and the people's associated intention to make Jesus king (v. 15) suggests strongly that they did have in mind that Jesus was the Messiah. Their belief was due largely to his miraculous sign of feeding thousands of people with only five small barley loaves and two small fish (cf. vv. 9-13).

John 7:31 *Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?" 📖*

John 9:30-38 *The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes."³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."³⁴ They answered*

him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him *he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"^z*³⁶ He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you."³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. 📖

^z Some manuscripts *the Son of God*

John 11:14-15, 41-45 *Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ... 📖*

In v. 41 Jesus thanks God prior to God performing through him the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead (vv. 43-44). He does this publicly so that the miracle would be recognized as demonstrating that God had sent him (v. 42), leading people to believe in him (vv. 14-15, 45; cf. [John 12:9-11](#) ↓).

John 12:9-11 *When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus^a was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well,¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. 📖*

^a Greek *he*

‡ **Despite the evidence of Jesus' miracles, some did not believe in him:**

John 15:24 *If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 📖*

Despite seeing the evidence of Jesus' deeds, many of the leaders of the Jews persisted in hating him (cf. [John 12:9-11](#) ↑) – and by implication hating his Father whom he represented. Thus they refused to believe in Jesus. Such hardness of heart in the face of the privilege of witnessing such deeds rendered them most guilty of sin.



Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God

See also:

- *Jesus Christ has superlative knowledge and wisdom*, p. 101
- *Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God*, p. 566

Jesus Christ's surpassing knowledge and his related trait of profound wisdom were key aspects of his teaching ministry. As can be seen in some of the verses in this section, these capabilities were also important in other areas of his life and mission.

Subsections

- Jesus saw and heard things from God
- Jesus knew everything
- Jesus knew everything about all people . . .
- . . . Jesus even knew people's thoughts and intentions
- Jesus knew about future events
- Jesus was also filled with wisdom . . .
- . . . Nobody could match Jesus' wisdom
- Note: Jesus knew God

Jesus saw and heard things from God

God showed and told many – even countless – things exclusively to Jesus. As such Jesus was taught by God (cf. John 8:28 ↓; Isa 50:4 ↓).

John 3:31b-34 He who comes from heaven is above all. ³²*He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony.* ³³Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. ³⁴*For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.* ☞

Jesus testified to what he had "seen and heard" (v. 32) from God (v. 33; cf. vv. 26, 28, 38, 40a ↓). As such Jesus spoke "the words of God" (v. 34).

John 5:19-20 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he*

sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father^b does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰*For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.* ☞

^b Greek *he*

God shows and in effect teaches Jesus all he does. One of the implications of this passage may be that Jesus did only the things that he had been shown by God. For further comment see *Jesus only did works of God, and God worked through him*, p. 554.

John 8:26, 28, 38, 40a I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and *I declare to the world what I have heard from him.*" ☞ ... ²⁸So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but *speak just as the Father taught me.*" ☞ ... ³⁸*I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.*" ☞ ... ⁴⁰but now you seek to kill *me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.* ☞

By "what I have seen with my Father" (v. 38) Jesus may have been speaking of what God had "shown" him (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) when he was with God, but it may more specifically be referring to what he had seen of the Father himself. Both possibilities reflect that God taught Jesus, as stated in v. 28 and quite apparent in vv. 26, 40a.

John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants,^c for the servant^d does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for *all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.* ☞

^c Greek *bondservants*

^d Greek *bondservant*; also verse 20

As with other instances in this subsection, in referring to what he had "heard" from God, Jesus appears to be speaking of what he had "learned" (AMP, NIV) from God.

John 17:6-8 I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that *everything that you have given me is from you.* ⁸*For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.* ☞

In v. 7 Jesus may be meaning that that everything he has comes from God. His statement may well primarily have in view the subsequently mentioned "words" that God gave him to speak (v. 8a) and so probably also the associated knowledge. As such this illustrates that Jesus uniquely heard



things from God. Alternatively, Jesus statement in v. 7 could primarily have in view those whom God had given him (v. 6).

Isa 50:4 *The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.* 

The words of this prophecy are attributed to the Messiah. As such it speaks of God teaching the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

✦ Jesus had great knowledge without having studied:

John 7:15 *The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning,^e when he has never studied?"* 

^e Or *this man knows his letters*

That Jesus had great knowledge without having studied reflects the fact that his knowledge was inherent, from God.

Jesus knew everything

Jesus' complete knowledge would appear to have been due to both: God's teaching of him (as per the previous subsection); and, perhaps debatably, God enabling him to know or perceive all things about people and everything else (capabilities that are seen in the following subsections).

John 16:30 *Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.* 

Note that the second part of the verse arguably suggests that Jesus' knowledge of all things was due to God and/or his relationship with him.

John 21:17b *"Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."* Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." 

John 4:25-26 *The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."* ²⁶Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." 

One implication of Jesus' reply was that as the Messiah he could tell or teach all things, which is indicative of the fact that he knew all things.

Matt 21:1-2 *Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me."* 

This appears to illustrate Jesus Christ's knowledge of everything, although there is the possibility that he may have known of the animals being there by some other means.

John 21:6 *He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.* 

This shows either Jesus' complete knowledge or his power over nature, depending on whether he simply knew that the fish were there or had caused them to be there.

Jesus knew everything about all people . . .

John 2:24-25 *But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.* 

John 5:42 [Jesus:] *But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.* 

Mark 10:21-22 *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²²Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.* 

Jesus knew that the man's great wealth was hindering his commitment to God, as v. 22 affirms.

John 1:47-48 *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."* 

Jesus knew Nathanael (v. 47) and had seen him while he was a long way away, far out of sight (v. 48). Nathanael possibly had been even in another town, his hometown being Bethsaida (cf. v. 44).

John 4:17-18, 29 *The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."  ... ²⁹[The woman, telling others of Jesus:] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" *

John 13:10 *Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet,^f but is completely clean. And you^s are clean, but not every one of you."* 

^f Some manuscripts omit *except for his feet*



‡ The Greek words for *you* in this verse are plural

In v. 10b "clean" is used in a spiritual sense, paralleling the physical sense in which it is used earlier in the verse. The verse illustrates that Jesus knew people's spiritual state – which in turn illustrates that Jesus knew everything about all people.

... Jesus even knew people's thoughts and intentions

See also:

- [John 2:25](#) ↑
- [John 13:11](#) ↓

Matt 12:25 *Knowing their thoughts*, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. 📖

Luke 5:22 When *Jesus perceived their thoughts*, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? 📖

Luke 9:46-47 An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷But *Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts*, took a child and put him by his side ... 📖

Matt 22:18 But *Jesus, aware of their malice*, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 📖

John 6:15 *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king*, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. 📖

Most likely Jesus was aware of the plan through his supernatural knowledge, although he simply may have heard about it. The same can be said of his knowledge of the plot to kill him in Matthew 12:14-15 below.

Matt 12:14-15a But the Pharisees went out and *conspired against him, how to destroy him*. ¹⁵*Jesus, aware of this*, withdrew from there. 📖

Jesus knew about future events

Matt 20:18-19 "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. *And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death* ¹⁹*and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.*" 📖

Mark 13:2-8, 14, 18-27 And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? *There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.*" ³And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴"*Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?*" ⁵And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁶*Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray.* ⁷*And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet.* ⁸*For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.* 📖 ... ¹⁴"*But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be* (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 📖 ... ¹⁸Pray that it may not happen in winter. ¹⁹*For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.* ²⁰*And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.* ²¹And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. ²²*For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.* ²³But be on guard; *I have told you all things beforehand.* ²⁴"*But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,* ²⁵*and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.* ²⁶*And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.* ²⁷*And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.* 📖

Here Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 and events of the end times, leading up to his return. Note that the "the abomination that causes desolation" (v. 14) is an expression taken from Daniel's prophecies (cf. Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It had had an earlier fulfillment in Antiochus Euphianes' pagan sacrifice on the temple's altar in 167 B.C. Many think that here Mark may have in view the desecration and destruction of the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70, with possibly a final fulfillment being perpetrated by the antichrist of the end times.

Mark 14:27-30 And *Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'* ²⁸*But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.*" ²⁹Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." ³⁰And *Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this*



very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." 

John 13:11, 18-19 For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."  ... ¹⁸I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But *the Scripture will be fulfilled*,^h *'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'* ¹⁹I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. 

^h Greek *But in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled*

Note that in regard to his full knowledge of his betrayal, 6:64b says, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him."

John 14:28-29 You heard me say to you, *'I am going away, and I will come to you.'* If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because *I am going to the Father*, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. 

For comment on what Jesus is speaking of here, see **John 14:28-29** – under *Jesus Christ's words and knowledge* [give reason to believe in him], p. 1044.

John 16:2, 4a *They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.*  ... ⁴*But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.* 

John 18:4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" 

John 18:31-32 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." *The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death."* ³²*This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.* 

Verse 32 most likely has in view Jesus earlier speaking of being "lifted up" in his death (cf. John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33). The Jews maneuvered Pilate into executing Jesus, which involved the Roman form of execution (crucifixion) rather than the Jewish form (stoning). Thus Jesus' words were fulfilled and so showed that he knew about the circumstances of his death ahead of time.

John 21:18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but *when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.* 

Here Jesus tells of the kind of death that Peter would suffer.

✦ However, apparently Jesus did not know the day of his second coming:

Matt 24:36 But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,ⁱ but the Father only. 

ⁱ Some manuscripts omit *nor the Son*

Bear in mind that the text note casts some doubt on the assertion that Jesus did not know the day of his second coming.

Jesus was also filled with wisdom . . .

Luke 2:40, 46-47, 52 And the child [Jesus] grew and became strong, *filled with wisdom*. And the favor of God was upon him.  ... ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And *all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.*  ... ⁵²And *Jesus increased in wisdom* and in stature^j and in favor with God and man. 

^j Or years

Matt 12:42 The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for *she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.* 

The "something" is either Jesus himself – "someone" (cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NLT) – or possibly the kingdom of God – the two are interrelated in any case. As such, one implication of this is that Jesus' wisdom was greater even than that of Solomon.

Matt 13:54 ... and coming to his hometown *he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?"* 

Isa 11:1-2 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ²And *the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.* 



In having the Holy Spirit, the Messiah would have or have access to the Spirit's wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge (as well as the Spirit's might).

Isa 52:13 Behold, *my servant shall act wisely*;^k he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. 

^k Or *shall prosper*

As with 11:1-2 above, this is a messianic prophecy, fulfilled in Jesus.

... Nobody could match Jesus' wisdom

Matt 21:23-27 And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, *"By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"* ²⁴Jesus answered them, *"I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?"* And they discussed it among themselves, saying, *"If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet."* ²⁷So they answered Jesus, *"We do not know."* And he said to them, *"Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."* 

Profoundly, Jesus in effect answers his opponents' questions while foiling their attempt to trap him. His reply (vv. 24-25) implies that his authority, like John's, was from heaven – rather than from men or of his own making.

Matt 22:23-46 The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, ²⁴saying, *"Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.' ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother. ²⁶So too the second and third, down to the seventh. ²⁷After them all, the woman died. ²⁸In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her."* ²⁹But Jesus answered them, *"You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ³¹And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³²'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."* ³³And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching. ³⁴But when the Pharisees heard

that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

³⁵And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

³⁶"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

³⁷And he said to him, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

³⁸*This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, ⁴²saying, *"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"* They said to him, *"The son of David."* ⁴³He said to them, *"How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, ⁴⁴'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'? ⁴⁵If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?"* ⁴⁶And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions. 

Jesus' reply in vv. 37-40 soundly answered the Pharisee's question (v. 36), as shown not only by its content but by their lack of response. Jesus' counter questions (v. 42) appear to have been designed to show that he was more than capable of matching their best efforts, as well as teaching that the Messiah was more than just a descendant of David.

Luke 14:1-6 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. ²And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. ³And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"* ⁴But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. ⁵And he said to them, *"Which of you, having a son¹ or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?"* ⁶And they could not reply to these things. 

¹ Some manuscripts *a donkey*

Jesus was being carefully watched by the religious leaders (v. 1) largely so as to catch him out (cf. [Luke 20:20](#) ↓). But again, although Jesus' action presented them with the kind of opportunity they were looking for, they could not counter his wisdom (vv. 4a, 6).

Luke 20:19-26 The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. ²⁰So they watched him and sent *spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said,* so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. ²¹So they asked him, *"Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality,^m but truly teach the way of God. ²²Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?"* ²³But he perceived their craftiness, and



said to them, ²⁴“Show me a denarius.ⁿ Whose likeness and inscription does it have?” They said, “Caesar’s.” ²⁵He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²⁶And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent. 

^m Greek *and do not receive a face*

ⁿ A denarius was a day’s wage for a laborer

The spies’ question (v. 22) was a trap. If Jesus answered in the affirmative he would lose credibility in the eyes of the people, as it would have been seen as being compliant and subservient to their hated Roman rulers. Whereas if he answered in the negative he would have probably earned the wrath of the Romans, to whom the Jewish leaders would have reported him (v. 20). His renowned reply silenced and daunted his adversaries.

John 8:3-9 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 

✦ **Jesus’ capacity to judge rightly:**

John 8:16 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father^o who sent me. 

^o Some manuscripts *he*

Jesus Christ states that his evaluations are right – reflective of his great wisdom – because God stands with him in making any such judgments.

Note: Jesus knew God

See also:

- *Jesus came to enable us to know God*, p. 511

Matt 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and *no one knows the Father except the Son* and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 

Jesus actually knew God as – unlike others – Jesus had prime, firsthand knowledge of and interaction with God.

John 7:28-29 So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. ²⁹*I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.*” 

John 8:55 But you have not known him. *I know him.* If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but *I do know him* and I keep his word. 

John 10:14-15 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and *I know the Father*; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 

John 17:25 O righteous Father, *even though the world does not know you, I know you*, and these know that you have sent me. 

✦ **Jesus had seen God:**

John 6:46 ... *not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Jesus Christ's Direction from God

See also:

- *d) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ*, p. 530

Subsections

- God was with Jesus
- Jesus only did works of God, and God worked through him
- Jesus obeyed God
- Jesus carried out God’s will, doing the work God had given him . . .
- . . . Jesus sought to do God’s will as opposed to his own will
- Jesus spoke what God wanted him to say
- Note: In doing God’s will, Jesus brought glory to God . . .
- . . . and Jesus was glorified by God



God was with Jesus

See also:

- [John 14:10](#) ↴; [John 10:38](#) ↴
- [Jesus Christ and the Father are one – each is in the other](#), p. 119

Acts 10:38 ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for *God was with him*. 

John 3:2 This man came to Jesus^p by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for *no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him*.” 

^p Greek *him*

John 8:29 And *he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone*, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him. 

John 16:32 Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet *I am not alone, for the Father is with me*. 

Isa 42:6 I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; *I will take you by the hand and keep you*; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ... 

This points to God being with his messianic servant – strengthening and upholding him.

Jesus only did works of God, and God worked through him

See also:

- [Acts 10:38](#) ↗; [John 3:2](#) ↗
- [a\) Jesus Christ's Miracles](#), p. 559

These verses indicate that (as shown in the previous subsection) God was with or in Jesus (John 10:38; 14:10) and that being in Jesus, God worked through Jesus (John 5:17; 9:1-3, 6-7; 10:32a; 14:10; Acts 2:22; Heb 1:1-2). In accordance with this, the verses further indicate that Jesus did nothing on his own (John 5:19, 30; 8:16, 28) but only works of God (John 5:19-21, 30; 8:28; 10:37). As such, these things show that: Jesus acted in accordance with God; Jesus acted on God's authority; and Jesus did not act independently of God and even acted in dependence on him.

See also the comments on the extracts from John 10 and John 5 below.

John 5:16-21, 30 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷But *Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”* ¹⁸This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. ¹⁹So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father^q does, that the Son does likewise.* ²⁰*For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.* ²¹*For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.*  ... ³⁰*“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.* 

^q Greek *he*

In the light of the three assertions in v. 19 (cf. v. 30), v. 17 suggests that the Father was at his work in Jesus' work. Moreover, v. 20 arguably implies that God does all things through him – even the greater things of the Father's work such as giving life (v. 21). In saying that he “can do nothing of his own accord” (v. 19; cf. v. 30; [John 8:28](#) ↴), Jesus may be acknowledging his dependency on and empowerment by the Father – and/or that such is his exceedingly close relationship with the Father, he cannot act independently. Either way the passage reflects that Jesus' activity is directed or at least initiated by the Father (cf. BKC).

John 8:16, 28 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for *it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father^r who sent me.*  ... ²⁸So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that *I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.* 

^r Some manuscripts *he*

In v. 16, Jesus Christ states that his evaluations are right because God stands with him in making any such judgments. “I do nothing on my own authority” (v. 28) implies that Jesus only did works of God. And “speak just as the Father taught me” (cf. [John 14:10](#) ↴; [Heb 1:1-2](#) ↴) illustrates that God worked through him.

John 9:1-3, 6-7 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents,



but *that the works of God might be displayed in him.* ¶ ...
⁶*Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud*⁷*and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.* ¶

Jesus' healing of the blind man (vv. 6-7) was an instance of "the works of God" (v. 3) – illustrative of God working through Jesus.

John 10:32, 37-38 Jesus answered them, "*I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?*" ¶ ...³⁷*If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;*³⁸*but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.*" ¶

Jesus' oneness with God was such that God was in him, and he in God (v. 38). In this relationship Jesus did many great miracles from God (v. 32a), with God working through him. As such, Jesus could say that he did "the works of my Father" (v. 37).

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? *The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.* ¶

What Jesus spoke came from the Father, who dwelt in Jesus and worked through him.

Acts 2:22 Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with *mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him* in your midst, as you yourselves know— ¶

Heb 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²*but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* ¶

As reflected in John 8:28 and 14:10 above, a key aspect of the work God did through Jesus was speaking his word.

Jesus obeyed God

John 14:31 ... but *I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.* ¶

John 15:10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as *I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.* ¶

Rom 5:19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by *the one man's obedience* the many will be made righteous. ¶

As with the other verses in this subsection, this is speaking of Jesus Christ's obedience to God.

Phil 2:8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by *becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* ¶

Heb 5:8 Although he was a son, *he learned obedience* through what he suffered. ¶

In saying that Jesus "learned obedience", the author was not indicating that at any time Jesus was disobedient. The author may have had in view that before Jesus had experienced suffering he was still to learn consummate obedience, involving obedience to the most demanding commands and in the most trying circumstances. This of course Jesus did do.

John 10:17-18 *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.* ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. *This charge I have received from my Father.* ¶

The last sentence is generally understood to indicate that Jesus had been commanded to lay down his life by God – which obediently he was willing to do (vv. 17-18a). It may also allude to the fact that God had given him the authority to do this, as stated in the preceding sentence.

John 8:29, 55 And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for *I always do the things that are pleasing to him.*" ¶ ...⁵⁵But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and *I keep his word.* ¶

Jesus' claim to always do what pleases God (v. 29) is affirmed elsewhere by God saying of him: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." God said this of Jesus both at his baptism (cf. Matt 3:17) and later at his transfiguration (cf. Matt 17:5).

Heb 3:1b-2 Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ²*who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.* ¶

^s Greek *his*; also verses 5, 6

Isa 50:5-6 *The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.* ⁶I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. ¶



This OT prophecy of the messianic servant reflects Jesus' obedience to God in that he was responsive to God's word (v. 5), to the point of being prepared to endure great suffering (v. 6).

Jesus carried out God's will, doing the work God had given him . . .

John 4:34 *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."*

In speaking of doing God's will as his "food", Jesus indicated that it was his prime source of "nourishment" (AMP, NLT). Doing God's work was in a sense what sustained him in his mission and was his highest priority.

John 5:36b *For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.*

John 17:4 *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.*

John 18:11 *So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"*

Jesus was determined to take the path which would lead to the cross, which he knew was part of the work that God had given him to do.

John 19:30 *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

"It is finished" signifies that Jesus had successfully completed the work he had come to do – he had fully carried out God's will.

Gal 1:3-4 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ...*

Heb 10:7 *Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'*

In quoting from Psalm 40, the writer sees the fulfillment of these words in Jesus Christ's mission and work.

Matt 3:13-17 *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.*

¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,^t and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,^u with whom I am well pleased."

^t Some manuscripts omit *to him*

^u Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

The expression "to fulfill all righteousness" (v. 15) means to "do everything that is right" (NLT), in effect to "do all that God requires" (GNT, cf. CEV, NCV). In saying this, Jesus implied that it was God's will that he should undergo baptism, with which he was determined to comply. The fact that it was God's will is reflected in vv. 16-17.

. . . Jesus sought to do God's will as opposed to his own will

John 6:38 *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*

Matt 26:39 *And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

John 5:30 *I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.*

John 12:27 *Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.*

Jesus put God's will for his coming to the world ahead of his own wellbeing (cf. **Matt 26:39** ↑).

Rom 15:3 *For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."*

Commentators generally agree that the quotation is used to illustrate that Christ sought to please God rather than himself, but they offer a variety of interpretations as to precisely what Paul is implying by it.

Jesus spoke what God wanted him to say

See also:

- **John 7:16** ↓
- *Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God* + ref., p. 566



John 12:49-50 For *I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.*⁵⁰And I know that his commandment is eternal life. *What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.* 

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? *The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.* 

John 8:28 So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that *I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.* 

In the latter part of the sentence Jesus appears to indicate that he would speak only what God had instructed him to say (GNT).

Heb 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,²but *in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son*, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 

In saying that God spoke to us by Jesus, the writer points to the fact that Jesus spoke what God wanted him to say. Note that the phrase “spoken to us by his Son” probably refers not just to what Jesus said but to the revelation of his mission as a whole.

Deut 18:18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And *I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.* 

This is generally understood to be a messianic prophecy (cf. Acts 3:22-23).

✦ God enabled Jesus to know what to say:

Isa 50:4 *The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.* Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. 

Note: In doing God's will, Jesus brought glory to God . . .

See also:

- [John 11:4](#) ; [John 13:31-32](#) ; [John 17:1, 4](#) 

Jesus brought honor and glory to God by doing God's work and carrying out his will, making God's glorious will and awesome power obvious to all. Jesus accomplished God's will

largely through his teaching, deeds and willing sacrifice. (Note the further references to Jesus bringing glory to God in the following subsection, cross-referenced above.)

John 7:16, 18 So Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.  ...¹⁸The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who *seeks the glory of him who sent him* is true, and in him there is no falsehood. 

Jesus taught and spoke what God had sent him to, bringing glory to God by faithfully delivering his wonderful and profound words – which furthered God's glorious plan and purposes – and by acknowledging these words to be God's words (v. 16).

John 8:49-50 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but *I honor my Father*, and you dishonor me.⁵⁰Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. 

In saying, “I honor my Father,” (v. 49) Jesus may primarily have in view his claims or teachings about himself (cf. vv. 12-47), as the one sent from God (cf. vv. 26, 29, 42). With such claims, as with his deeds, he was not seeking glory for himself (v. 50a) but rather he honored and glorified God – in line with God's desire (v. 50b) – for in enlightening people about his own identity and purpose he was revealing God's glorious will.

John 11:38-44 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.³⁹Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.”⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “*Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?*”⁴¹*So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.*⁴²*I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”*⁴³*When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”*⁴⁴*The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth.* Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” 

Jesus' raising of Lazarus was for God's glory (v. 4  – displaying God's glory (v. 40). In vv. 41-42 Jesus publicly acknowledged that it would be God's power at work in what he was about to do (vv. 43-44), thus ensuring that God would receive glory through it.



John 12:27-28 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But *for this purpose I have come to this hour.* ²⁸*Father, glorify your name.*” Then a voice came from heaven: “*I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.*” 📖

In v. 28b God indicates that he had glorified his name through Jesus – notably through Jesus’ ministry of speaking God’s words and performing wonderful deeds with God’s power. God then says that he would glorify his name again – as Jesus had asked (v. 28a). God would do so through Jesus, in his forthcoming death, resurrection and exaltation.

Matt 9:5-8 For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk?’ ⁶But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” — *he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.”* ⁷*And he rose and went home.* ⁸When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and *they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.* 📖

Isa 49:3 And he said to me, “*You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*”^v 📖

^v Or *I will display my beauty*

“Israel” is used here to refer to the Messiah. God would be glorified in the Messiah, by what God would accomplish through the Messiah as he carried out God’s will.

... and Jesus was glorified by God

In doing God’s glorious will, Jesus not only glorified God but he himself was glorified by God, with God implementing his glorious will through him. In particular, God glorified Jesus by: providing him with his amazing teaching; enabling him to perform powerful deeds; raising him from the dead; and exalting him.

John 8:54 Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. *It is my Father who glorifies me,* of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’”^w 📖

^w Some manuscripts *your God*

John 11:4 But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. *It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.*” 📖

Jesus’ raising of Lazarus from death would display God’s glory (cf. vv. 38-44 ↑) and also result in Jesus being glorified, as the means of God’s resurrection power. One important reason for this was so that Jesus’ claims about himself – in regard to being sent by God – would be further validated.

John 13:31-32 When he had gone out, Jesus said, “*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*” ³²*If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.* 📖

Here Jesus’ death, resurrection and exaltation appear to be in view. God would be glorified in these events as they would show his wonderful plan, righteousness and love in providing salvation. In conjunction with this, Jesus would also be glorified in these events as: they would show him to be the Son of God; by them he would be renowned as the means of God’s glorious salvation; and in his exaltation God would grant him great glory and authority.

John 17:1-5 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; *glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,* ²*since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.* ³*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* ⁴*I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.* ⁵*And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.* 📖

“Glorify your Son” (v. 1b) is most likely a request that God would enable Jesus to endure the cross, raise him to life and exalt him to his former glory (cf. v. 5). By God doing all of this for him, God would glorify Jesus. Also, by doing such great things for Jesus and providing eternal life through him (v. 2), God’s greatness would be apparent and thus he would be glorified by or through Jesus (v. 1b). Note that in v. 4 Jesus appears to have his imminent death in view, as well as all that he had already accomplished.

✦ **Jesus received honor and glory from God, when God spoke of him from heaven:**

2Pet 1:17 For when *he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory,* “*This is my beloved Son,^x with whom I am well pleased,*” ... 📖

^x Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

The reference appears to be to what God spoke at Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35), for which Peter was present. God’s identical words at Jesus’ baptism (Matt 3:17; Luke 3:22) could also be in view. Note that John 12:28 in the previous subsection contains another instance of God speaking audibly from heaven, in authenticating Jesus as being of God (cf. John 12:29-30).

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection

The life Jesus Christ lived has been unparalleled in word and deed. It culminated in his sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection by God. How we respond to the NT's testimony to these events and their significance, will determine our eternal destiny.

a) Jesus Christ's Miracles

See also:

- *Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ*, p. 503
- *b) Jesus Christ's Power from God*, p. 542
- *Jesus was a prophet . . .*, p. 564

The earlier section *b) Jesus Christ's Power from God*, p. 542, also spoke of Jesus' miraculous deeds, in referring to God as the source of Jesus' power. The focus of this section is on Jesus' use of his power in his ministry, which was largely in performing miracles that brought people deliverance from some form of bondage or difficulty. In performing these miracles Jesus demonstrated power over all other forces.

Subsections

- Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people
- Jesus delivered people from demons and Satan – demonstrating power over evil
- Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders
- Jesus even raised the dead
- Jesus exercised control over nature, in rescuing and helping people
- Note: Jesus initially did not want his deeds – nor his identity – to be widely known . . .
- . . . but still large crowds came to him from all around

Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people

See also:

- [Luke 4:36](#) ↴; [Luke 11:14](#) ↴
- *Jesus did many miraculous deeds with God's power . . .*, p. 544
- *Jesus' teaching was amazing and powerful – leading people to believe in him . . .*, p. 568

Matt 9:32-33 As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. ³³And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." 📖

Matt 12:22-23 Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" 📖

Note that "the Son of David" is a messianic title.

Mark 5:35, 41-42 While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" 📖 ... ⁴¹Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. 📖

Mark 6:48a, 51 And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night^a he came to them, walking on the sea. 📖 ... ⁵¹And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ... 📖

^a That is, between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M.

Mark 7:37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak." 📖

Luke 5:4-9 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying,



"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ...

Note that in v. 8, Peter was so awestruck by Jesus' display of power, that in trepidation he acknowledged Jesus' power and holiness – and his own unworthiness before Jesus.

Luke 9:42-43 While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³And all were astonished at the majesty of God. But while they were all marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus^b said to his disciples, ...

^b Greek *he*

Luke 5:24-26 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." ²⁵And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."

✦ Jesus' teaching also astonished people:

Matt 13:54 ... and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?"

Jesus delivered people from demons and Satan – demonstrating power over evil

See also:

- [Matt 9:32-33](#) ↑; [Matt 12:22-23](#) ↑; [Luke 9:42-43](#) ↑
- [Matt 4:24](#) ↓
- [Demons both fear and have to submit to God and Jesus Christ](#), p. 195
- [Jesus came to destroy Satan's power and work](#), p. 512
- [Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil](#), p. 605

Matt 8:16 That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.

Luke 4:36 And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!"

Luke 13:10-13, 16 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹And there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." ¹³And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ... ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

Luke 11:14, 21-22 Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. ... ²¹[Jesus:] When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; ²²but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

In v. 22 Jesus refers to his own overpowering of Satan – breaking Satan's stranglehold on Satan's earthly domain – a truth demonstrated by Jesus driving out demons (v. 14).

Luke 10:17-19 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" ¹⁸And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you."

This illustrates that Jesus had power over Satan – "the enemy" (v. 19) – and demons. Note that Jesus may be speaking metaphorically in v. 18; but even if this is the case, it clearly implies that the disciples' success in exercising the authority he gave over demons was a sign that Satan's power had been broken.

Acts 10:38 ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

✦ Satan had "no hold on" Jesus:

John 14:30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ...

A number of commentators think that Jesus had his sinlessness in view here, i.e. that Satan had no "claim" or power over him because he had never sinned.



Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders

See also:

- [Matt 11:4-5](#) ↴
- [Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people](#), p. 559
- [Have faith that God and Jesus Christ will do what you ask](#), p. 1094

Matt 4:23-24 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and *healing every disease and every affliction among the people*. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.

Matt 8:2-3 And behold, a leper^c came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” ³And Jesus^d stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

^c Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

^d Greek *he*

Matt 8:14-15 And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him.

Matt 15:30 And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, ...

Mark 6:56 And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

Luke 6:19 And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

John 5:5, 8-9a One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ... ⁸Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” ⁹And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Mark 8:25 Then Jesus^e laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

^e Greek *he*

John 9:1, 6-7, 32 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ... ⁶Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. ... [The man:] ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind.

Jesus even raised the dead

Matt 11:4-5 And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers^f are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.

^f Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Luke 7:14-15 Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” ¹⁵And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus^g gave him to his mother.

^g Greek *he*

Luke 8:53-55 And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴But taking her by the hand he called, saying, “Child, arise.” ⁵⁵And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat.

John 11:39, 43-44 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” ... ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

John 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

This may primarily be referring to Jesus’ granting of spiritual, eternal life. But his raising of the physically dead, particularly that of all at the end of the age, appears to also be encompassed.



Jesus exercised control over nature, in rescuing and helping people

See also:

- *God has given Jesus Christ authority and power over all things*, p. 687

Note that the two previous subsections also show Jesus' power over what can be considered aspects of nature.

Mark 4:37-41 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Mark 6:47-51 And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night^h he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, ⁴⁹but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, ⁵⁰for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." ⁵¹And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ...

^h That is, between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M.

In addition to Jesus being able to walk on water, v. 51 suggests that it was because of him that the wind died down.

Matt 17:27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel.ⁱ Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.

ⁱ Greek *stater*, a silver coin worth four drachmas or approximately one shekel

Presumably Peter followed Jesus' direction and found a coin in the fish's mouth. As with Luke 5:4-9 below, arguably this could be showing Jesus' complete knowledge rather than his power over nature, but more likely the latter or both are evidenced in the two references.

Luke 5:4-7 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."⁵And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and

took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

John 2:1-3, 6-10 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. ³When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ... ⁶Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.^j ⁷Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. ⁹When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."

^j Greek *two or three measures (metrētās)*; a *metrētēs* was about 10 gallons or 35 liters

John 6:9-14 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" ¹⁰Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. ¹¹Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." ¹³So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

‡ Jesus caused an unproductive fig tree to immediately wither:

Matt 21:18-19 In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once.

Jesus did not make a habit of killing trees, but in part at least he did this to emphatically make a crucial point to his disciples (cf. vv. 21-22).



Note: Jesus initially did not want his deeds – nor his identity – to be widely known . . .

Apparently Jesus initially did not want his deeds and identity as the Messiah to be widely known because he was wary about the publicity hindering his mission. It would bring overwhelming crowds and false expectations with political complications, all of which would stifle his work (cf. [Mark 1:45](#) ↓).

[Matt 9:29-30](#) Then *he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you."*³⁰*And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one knows about it."* 

[Mark 1:41-45](#) Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; *be clean.*" ⁴²*And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.* ⁴³*And Jesus^k sternly charged him and sent him away at once,* ⁴⁴*and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them."* ⁴⁵*But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.* 

^k Greek *he*; also verse 45

[Mark 5:41-43](#) *Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."* ⁴²*And immediately the girl got up and began walking* (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³*And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.* 

[Mark 7:35-36](#) *And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.* ³⁶*And Jesus^l charged them to tell no one.* But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 

^l Greek *he*

[Matt 12:15-16](#) Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and *he healed them all* ¹⁶*and ordered them not to make him known.* 

Note that in this and the following couple of references it is Jesus' identity in particular that he instructs people not to reveal.

[Matt 16:20](#) Then *he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.* 

[Mark 3:11-12](#) And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, *they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."* ¹²*And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.* 

. . . but still large crowds came to him from all around

See also:

▪ [Mark 1:45](#) ↑

[Matt 13:2](#) And *great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach.* 

[Matt 14:14, 21](#) *When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.*  ... ²¹*And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.* 

[Mark 1:37](#) ... and they found him and *said to him, "Everyone is looking for you."* 

[Mark 2:2, 4](#) And *many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door.* And he was preaching the word to them.  ... ⁴*And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.* 

[Mark 3:7-10, 20](#) Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and *a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea* ⁸*and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him.* ⁹*And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him,* ¹⁰*for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him.*  ... ²⁰*Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat.* 

[Mark 6:54-55](#) And when they got out of the boat, *the people immediately recognized him* ⁵⁵*and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was.* 

[Mark 10:1](#) And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and *crowds gathered to him again.* And again, as was his custom, he taught them. 



Luke 6:17-18a And he came down with them and *stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon,* ¹⁸who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.

Large crowds came to hear Jesus (cf. [Luke 21:38](#) ↓), as well as because of his deeds.

Luke 8:4, 19 And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ... ¹⁹Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but *they could not reach him because of the crowd.*

Luke 21:37-38 And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. ³⁸And *early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.*

✦ **Jesus commanded the disciples who were with him not to tell anyone about his transfiguration:**

Matt 17:9 And as they were coming down the mountain, *Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."*

Jesus' transfiguration was indicative of his messiahship. Telling others about it would have been in effect telling them that Jesus was the Messiah or Christ. Once he had been raised from the dead – with the purpose of his coming being accomplished and basically unequivocal – it would be appropriate and in deed necessary to tell others.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Christ's Teaching

See also:

- [Jesus' teaching had great authority](#), p. 540
- [Jesus spoke what God wanted him to say](#), p. 556

Subsections

- [Jesus was a prophet . . .](#)
- [. . . As a prophet, Jesus taught and preached to the people](#)
- [Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God](#)

- [Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God](#)
- [Jesus' teaching is the truth . . .](#)
- [. . . Jesus himself is identified with truth](#)
- [Jesus' teaching was amazing and powerful – leading people to believe in him . . .](#)
- [. . . However, many others did not believe Jesus](#)
- [Note: Jesus' use of parables and figurative speech](#)

Jesus was a prophet . . .

See also:

- [Jesus knew about future events](#), p. 550

As a prophet Jesus was a representative and spokesperson of God, speaking and acting on God's behalf. His speaking role as a prophet included: teaching, admonishing and prophesying (cf. [Jesus knew about future events](#), p. 550). He further displayed powers of a great prophet in other aspects of his knowledge (cf. [Luke 7:39-40](#) ↓; [John 4:17-19](#) ↓) and by his deeds (cf. [Luke 24:19](#) ↓; [Luke 7:14-16](#) ↓; [John 6:14](#) ↓; [John 9:17](#) ↓).

Luke 24:19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning *Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, . . .*

Luke 13:33 Nevertheless, *I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.*

Note that in the latter part of the verse Jesus refers to the fact that numerous prophets had been killed in Jerusalem (cf. v. 34), the capital and heart of the nation, representative of the nation as a whole.

Matt 21:10-11, 46 And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹And the crowds said, "*This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.*" ... ⁴⁶And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because *they held him to be a prophet.*

The people's assertions that Jesus was a prophet (cf. [Mark 6:15](#) ↓; [John 6:14](#) ↓; [Luke 7:14-16](#) ↓) supported the claims of Jesus (cf. [Luke 13:33](#) ↑) and his followers (cf. [Luke 24:19](#) ↑).

Mark 6:15 But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "*He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.*"

Luke 7:14-16 Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "*Young man, I say to you,*



arise.”¹⁵ *And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus^m gave him to his mother.* ¹⁶ *Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!”* and “God has visited his people!”

^m Greek *he*

Luke 7:39-40 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, *he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.”* ⁴⁰ *And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”* And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

Verse 40 and the subsequent verses (cf. vv. 41-47) showed that Jesus not only knew what kind of woman the lady in question was, but also Simon’s thoughts – demonstrating that Jesus was indeed a prophet.

John 4:17-19 *The woman answered him, “I have no husband.”* Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸ *for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.*” ¹⁹ *The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.*”

John 6:14 *When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”*

In speaking of Jesus as “the Prophet” the people are probably referring to Deuteronomy 18:15-19, where Moses speaks of God raising up a prophet like him (cf. [Acts 3:22](#) ↓).

John 9:17 So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since *he has opened your eyes?*” He said, “He is a prophet.”

Acts 3:22 Moses said, *‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.* You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.

Here Peter clearly has Jesus Christ in view (cf. vv. 13-26).

Matt 24:1-4 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² *But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”* ³ *As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”* ⁴ *And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray.*”

Jesus makes a prophesy in v. 2 and then in v. 4 he begins a detailed prophesy of the fall of Jerusalem and events of the

end times (cf. vv. 4-35). These and other prophecies made by Jesus – indicative of him being a prophet – are mentioned in [Jesus knew about future events](#), p. 550.

... As a prophet, Jesus taught and preached to the people

Mark 6:34 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And *he began to teach them many things.*

Luke 19:47a *And he was teaching daily in the temple.*

Matt 11:1 *When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.*

Mark 1:38 And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”

Note that “came out” appears to refer to coming to the world.

Luke 4:44 *And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*ⁿ

ⁿ Some manuscripts *Galilee*

John 8:2 Early in the morning he came again to the temple. *All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.*

Luke 24:27 *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Luke 7:22 And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers^o are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, *the poor have good news preached to them.*”

^o *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Matt 19:16 And behold, *a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”*

Matt 23:8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for *you have one teacher*, and you are all brothers.^p

^p Or *brothers and sisters*



John 13:13-14 *You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.* ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.



Similarly in Matthew 23:10 Jesus says to his disciples: "...you have one Teacher, the Christ."

✦ Jesus spoke and taught openly:

John 18:20 *Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret."*

Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God

See also:

- *c) The Kingdom of God*, p. 677
- *Jesus had the authority to state what was required to enter God's kingdom*, p. 541
- *The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission*, p. 677

The kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) was the most prominent theme in Jesus' teaching.

Luke 4:43 ... but he said to them, *"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."*

Matt 4:17, 23 From that time *Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* ... ²³And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and *proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom* and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Luke 8:1a Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, *proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.*

Luke 9:11 When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and *spoke to them of the kingdom of God* and cured those who had need of healing.

Acts 1:3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and *speaking about the kingdom of God.*

Even after his resurrection Jesus continued to speak about the kingdom of God.

Matt 13:24 *He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ..."*

The kingdom of God was the subject of a number of Jesus' parables, this verse beginning a group of them (cf. vv. 24-52). Other parables are similarly introduced as illustrating what the kingdom of God is like (cf. 13:24; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1; Mark 4:26, 30).

✦ Jesus also sent his disciples out to preach the kingdom of God:

Luke 9:1-2 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ²and *he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God* and to heal.

Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God

See also:

- **John 8:40** ↴
- *Note: Jesus Christ is the Word of God*, p. 300
- *God's word was spoken by Jesus Christ*, p. 304
- *Jesus spoke what God wanted him to say*, p. 556

John 7:14-17 About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning,^a when he has never studied?" ¹⁶So *Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.* ¹⁷*If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.*

^a Or *this man knows his letters*

^r Greek *his*

Verse 17 indicates that doing what one knows of God's will, leads to the realization that Jesus' teaching does come from God; obedience leads to spiritual discernment.

John 14:10b, 24b *The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.* ... ²⁴ ... *And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.*

John 8:26, 28 I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and *I declare to the world what I have heard from him.* ... ²⁸So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know



that I am he, and that *I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.* 

John 3:31b-34 He who comes from heaven is above all. ³²*He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony.* ³³*Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.* ³⁴*For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.* 

Jesus “bears witness to what he has seen and heard” from God (v. 32; cf. **John 8:26, 28 ↑**), in essence teaching that had come from God. In believing Jesus’ testimony, one confirms or acknowledges that God is truthful as he is the one from whom it originated (v. 33).

Isa 50:4 *The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.* Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. 

God would give the Messiah “words of wisdom” (NLT) to know what to say during his mission, here in particular what to say to strengthen the weary.

Isa 49:2 *He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.* 

This appears to speak of God enabling the Messiah to speak powerful words in his teaching.

Psa 45:2 You are the most handsome of the sons of men; *grace is poured upon your lips;* therefore God has blessed you forever. 

With Psalm 45 being seen by many as messianic, the middle clause quite possibly alludes to God’s influence on what the Messiah would speak.

‡ **Jesus made known to his disciples everything he had learned from God:**

John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants,^s for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for *all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.* 

^s Greek *bondservants*

^t Greek *bondservant*; also verse 20

Jesus’ teaching is the truth . . .

See also:

▪ **John 3:31b-34 ↑**

▪ **Eph 4:21 ↓**

John 5:19, 24-25 So Jesus said to them, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father^u does, that the Son does likewise.*  ... ²⁴*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.* ²⁵*Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.* 

^u Greek *he*

In the ESV, Jesus is recorded using the expression “Truly, truly, I say to you” a total of 72 times. Almost all these instances refer to his teaching, asserting it to be the truth – as is the case with the three occurrences here.

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” 

John 8:40, 45-46 ... but now you seek to kill *me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.* This is not what Abraham did.  ... ⁴⁵*But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.* ⁴⁶*Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?* 

John 18:37 Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. *For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.*” 

Matt 22:16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “*Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.*” 

^v Greek *for you do not look at people’s faces*

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 

God’s grace and a fuller revelation of truth came through Jesus Christ and his mission (cf. **v. 14 ↓**), including in his teaching.



Luke 7:35 Yet *wisdom is justified by all her children*. 

Here Jesus most likely is meaning that his and John's wisdom or teaching is "shown to be true" (GNT; cf. AMP) "by the lives of those who follow it" (NLT, cf. CEV, GNT).

... Jesus himself is identified with truth

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*." 

Jesus did not just simply teach the truth, he is "the truth" – the embodiment of truth. (cf. BBC)

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, *full of grace and truth*. 

As with v. 17 in the previous subsection, this probably is primarily speaking of grace and truth being imparted through Jesus Christ (and so is quite pertinent to the previous subsection). But the wording also closely associates Jesus' person with the truth, indicative of the fact that in Jesus was the manifestation of truth (cf. [John 14:6 ↑](#)).

Eph 4:21 ... assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as *the truth is in Jesus*, ... 

The phrase "the truth is in Jesus" is probably inclusive of but not necessarily primarily referring to Jesus' teaching. It appears to point to what the Ephesians had "heard about him and learned about him" (CEV).

✦ Jesus is true:

John 7:18 The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but *the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood*. 

Jesus' teaching was amazing and powerful – leading people to believe in him ...

See also:

- [Matt 13:54 ↓](#); [John 12:42 ↓](#)
- *Jesus' teaching had great authority*, p. 540

Matt 7:28-29 And when Jesus finished these sayings, *the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹for he was teaching them as one who had authority*, and not as their scribes. 

Matt 22:33 And when the crowd heard it, *they were astonished at his teaching*. 

Mark 11:18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because *all the crowd was astonished at his teaching*. 

Luke 19:48 ... but they did not find anything they could do, for *all the people were hanging on his words*. 

Luke 24:19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet *mighty in deed and word* before God and all the people, ... 

Luke 24:32 They said to each other, "*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?*" 

John 7:45-46 The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" ⁴⁶*The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!"* 

Mark 12:37 David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?" *And the great throng heard him gladly*. 

The fact that the crowd listened to Jesus "gladly" points to his teaching being outstanding.

John 8:30 *As he was saying these things, many believed in him*. 

John 4:41-42 And *many more believed because of his word*. ⁴²*They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."* 

John 16:30 *Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God*. 

Note that "you ... do not need anyone to question you" may be implying that Jesus' teaching was so clear and emphatic – with him no longer speaking figuratively (cf. v. 29) – that there was no need for any questions. Additionally or alternatively, they possibly had in mind that he answered their questions before they could be asked (cf. NCV).

... However, many others did not believe Jesus

Matt 13:54-58 ... and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not all his sisters with us? Where



then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷*And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household."* ⁵⁸*And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* 

Matt 26:63-65 But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵*Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.* 

John 3:32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. 

John the Baptist appears to be implying that largely people did not accept Jesus' message (cf. NLT).

John 5:38 ... and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. 

John 6:36, 60, 64-66 But I said to you that *you have seen me and yet do not believe.*  ... ⁶⁰*When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"*  ... [Jesus:] ⁶⁴*But there are some of you who do not believe.*" (For Jesus knew from the beginning *who those were who did not believe*, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." ⁶⁶*After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.* 

John 7:5, 12 For *not even his brothers believed in him.*  ... ¹²And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," *others said, "No, he is leading the people astray."* 

John 7:47-48 *The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived?"* ⁴⁸*Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him?* 

John 8:37, 45-46 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because *my word finds no place in you.*  ... ⁴⁵*But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.* ⁴⁶*Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?* 

John 10:24-26 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵Jesus answered them, "*I told you, and*

you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶*but you do not believe* because you are not part of my flock. 

This indicates that those who do not believe, do not belong to Jesus Christ – not being of his "flock".

John 12:37-42 Though he had done so many signs before them, *they still did not believe in him,* ³⁸*so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"* ³⁹*Therefore they could not believe.* For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰*"He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."* ⁴¹*Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.* ⁴²Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ... 

In vv. 39-41 John indicates that Isaiah's words about God judicially closing people's minds to God's message were fulfilled in Jesus with his message (cf. [Matt 13:3a, 10-16](#) ).

✦ Unlike some skeptics claimed, Jesus' words were not those of a demon or a mad man:

John 10:20-21 Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?" ²¹*Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"* 

Note: Jesus' use of parables and figurative speech

A parable is a simple story used to illustrate a spiritual truth. Jesus frequently used parables in his teaching. In illustrating rather than "spelling out" spiritual truth, Jesus' parables encouraged his listeners to think hard about what he said, encouraging spiritual discernment and hunger – readying them to be able to accept more direct teaching and also more difficult concepts. In conjunction with this, Jesus' parables often had underlying meanings hidden from all but those who sincerely sought the truth and were prepared to carefully consider what he said. (See also the comment below on [Matthew 13:3a, 10-16](#).) In addition, by using parables Jesus made it more difficult for his enemies to use anything he said against him.

Matt 13:3a, 10-16 *And he told them many things in parables*  ... ¹⁰Then the disciples came and said to him, "*Why do you speak to them in parables?"* ¹¹*And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.* ¹²*For to the one who has,*



more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ¹⁵For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' ¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 📖

Mark 4:24-25 ↓ and Luke 8:18 introduce the statement in v. 12 with "Pay attention to what you hear ..." and "Take care then how you hear ...". Along with the context, these introductions suggest that the statement in v. 12 is implying that those who are receptive to spiritual truths (cf. v. 16) will receive more, while those who are not (cf. vv. 14-15) will lose what little they have. (See also Mark 4:21-25 below and comment.) Verse 13 then indicates that Jesus used parables in part to conceal spiritual truth – or at least certain teachings – from those who were not receptive to it. As such, his use of parables was instrumental in the spiritual dullness of those who had in themselves – in conjunction with God's judgment (cf. **John 12:37-42** ↑) – become hardened to spiritual truth (vv. 14-15).

Mark 4:33-34 *With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.* 📖

Note that the parallel passage in Matthew adds that Jesus' use of parables was a fulfillment of prophecy: 'This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."' (Matt 13:35)

John 10:2, 6 *But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 📖 ... ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.* 📖

The reasons for Jesus' use of figurative speech would appear to be the same as for his use of parables.

John 16:25 *I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.* 📖

Here Jesus is probably meaning that after his resurrection he would speak plainly about God. Perhaps the reason was that through his death and resurrection the disciples would gain a greater maturity, a better perspective and a clearer

understanding. As such they would better be able to accept certain concepts. Some commentators consider that enlightenment through the coming Holy Spirit is in view.

✦ **The veiled meaning in Jesus' teaching was to be disclosed to those who listened carefully:**

Mark 4:21-25 And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? ²²For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. ²³If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." ²⁴And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. ²⁵For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." 📖

Commentators differ in their interpretation of this. But the lamp (v. 21) may well refer to Jesus' teaching given through parables (cf. vv. 1-20), the meaning of which is intended to be disclosed (v. 22) to those who are willing to listen closely (vv. 23-25).

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death

See also:

- *Like all humans, Jesus experienced difficult times – including temptation, p. 522*

Subsections

- Jesus was rejected
- Jesus was despised
- Jesus faced intense opposition, with efforts to kill him
- Jesus' betrayal and arrest
- The unjust condemnation of Jesus – who was innocent of any charge
- The horrific suffering and death of Jesus
- The events following Jesus' death and his burial
- Jesus' suffering and death (and resurrection) were planned . . .



- . . . It was God's will that Jesus die – for everyone
- Jesus suffered and died willingly

Jesus was rejected

See also:

- [Isa 53:3](#) ↓
- . . . *However, many others did not believe Jesus*, p. 568
- *But the Jews largely rejected Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 630
- *The Jews' negative response to Jesus Christ brought God's judgment*, p. 631

Jesus was rejected by the Jewish people as a whole, but in particular by the Jewish religious leaders.

Luke 17:25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

Matt 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;*"^w this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"

^w Greek *the head of the corner*

The Jews refused to believe that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of this key "stone" being rejected (v. 7; cf. [Acts 4:11](#) ↓, [1Pet 2:4](#), [7](#) ↓). Jesus was in fact the "cornerstone" who would complete God's plan of salvation for humankind – and be the most significant part of God's people.

Acts 4:11 *This Jesus^x is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.*^y

^x Greek *This one*

^y Greek *the head of the corner*

1Pet 2:4, 7 As you come to *him, a living stone rejected by men* but in the sight of God chosen and precious, . . . ⁷So the honor is for you who believe, but *for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"*^z . . .

^z Greek *the head of the corner*

John 1:11 He came to his own,^a and *his own people^b did not receive him.*

^a Greek *to his own things*; that is, to his own domain, or to his own people

^b *People* is implied in Greek

John 5:43 I have come in my Father's name, and *you do not receive me.* If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

Matt 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! *How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!*

The people's unwillingness to respond to Jesus' longing to "gather" them demonstrates their rejection of him. The following references also show ways in which Jesus was rejected.

Matt 13:57 *And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household."*

Similarly John 4:44 says, "For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown."

Luke 2:34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and *for a sign that is opposed . . .*"

Simeon was speaking of Jesus, when he was an infant.

John 9:16 *Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."* But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

Jesus was despised

Isa 53:3 *He was despised and rejected^c by men; a man of sorrows,^d and acquainted with^e grief;^f and as one from whom men hide their faces^g he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

^c Or *forsaken*

^d Or *pains*; also verse 4

^e Or *and knowing*

^f Or *sickness*; also verse 4

^g Or *as one who hides his face from us*

This is from the fourth of the four servant songs in Isaiah (52:13-53:12). The passage as a whole depicts the sufferings of the messianic Servant and the resulting atonement for God's people – a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus. A number of references from the passage are included in the remainder of this chapter.



Matt 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."^h 📖

^h Some manuscripts *children* (compare Luke 7:35)

John 8:48, 52-53 *The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"* 📖 ...
⁵²*The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'* ⁵³*Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"* 📖

Regarding the use of "Samaritan" as a slur (v. 48), the Samaritans were a mixed race, in part descendant from the Israelite tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel. Many of the Jews despised the Samaritans, contemptuous of them as a people and of their religious practices. Regarding the charge that Jesus was demon-possessed (vv. 48, 52), in Matthew 9:34 the Pharisees similarly link Jesus with demons, and Satan: 'But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons.'"

John 9:24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. *We know that this man is a sinner.*" 📖

John 15:18, 24-25 *If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* 📖 ... ²⁴*If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.* ²⁵*But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: "They hated me without a cause."* 📖

In conjunction with being despised, Jesus was hated by many.

John 7:7 *The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.* 📖

✦ **At one time Jesus' family even thought he was out of his mind:**

Mark 3:21 *And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."* 📖

Jesus faced intense opposition, with efforts to kill him

Matt 21:45-46 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, *they perceived that he was speaking about them.* ⁴⁶*And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.* 📖

Note that v. 45 speaks of how the Jewish leaders' intense opposition was aroused in part by parables and teachings of Jesus that were condemnatory of them (cf. vv. 33-34).

Matt 26:3-4 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴*and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.* 📖

Mark 11:18 *And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.* 📖

Luke 4:28-30 *When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.* ²⁹*And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.* ³⁰*But passing through their midst, he went away.* 📖

The people were incensed by Jesus' prior admonishment of them (cf. vv. 23-27).

Luke 11:53-54 As he went away from there, *the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things,* ⁵⁴*lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.* 📖

John 5:16-18 *And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.* ¹⁷*But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."* ¹⁸*This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.* 📖

John 7:1, 19, 25 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because *the Jewsⁱ were seeking to kill him.* 📖 ... [Jesus:] ¹⁹*Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?"* 📖 ... ²⁵*Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?"* 📖

ⁱ Or Judeans



John 8:37, 40 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ...⁴⁰but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.

John 10:30-33, 38-39 I and the Father are one.”³¹The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³²Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” ³³The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” ... [Jesus:]³⁸but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”³⁹Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

John 11:48-53 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰Nor do you understand that *it is better for you that one man should die* for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”⁵¹He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,⁵²and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

Acts 4:26-27 *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed*¹—²⁷for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ...

¹ Or Christ

Verse 26 is part of a quotation from a messianic psalm (Psalm 2), spoken of in v. 27 as being fulfilled in the conspiracy against Jesus.

Heb 12:3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

‡ Herod’s attempt to kill Jesus as an infant:

Matt 2:7-8, 11-13, 16 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and

search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” ...¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. ¹³Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ...¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Herod had been alarmed by the wise men’s claim that a child had been born who would be king of the Jews (cf. vv. 1-3). Seeing Jesus as a threat, he tried to kill him.

Jesus’ betrayal and arrest

Luke 22:3-6 Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

Matt 26:45-50 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on.^k See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.”⁴⁹And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him. ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.”¹ Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.

^k Or Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?

¹ Or Friend, why are you here?

In his account Luke records Jesus’ poignant question of Judas: “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48b)

John 18:2-13 Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³So Judas,



having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." ^mJudas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶When Jesusⁿ said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." ⁹This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." ¹⁰Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant^o and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" ¹²So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. ¹³First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 

^m Greek *I am*; also verses 6, 8

ⁿ Greek *he*

^o Greek *bondservant*; twice in this verse

For comment on v. 6, see the comment on [John 18:3-11](#) – under *Jesus showed great strength of character, being courageous and composed*, p. 528.

† Judas's remorse and suicide:

Matt 27:3-5 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus^p was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." ⁵And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. 

^p Greek *he*

The unjust condemnation of Jesus – who was innocent of any charge

See also:

- [Matt 27:4](#) 
- [Jesus Christ himself testified to being the Son of God – which is why he was crucified](#), p. 117

Mark 14:53, 55-56, 61-64 And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together.  ... ⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole

Council^q were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. ⁵⁶For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree.  ... ⁶¹But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" ⁶²And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." ⁶³And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? ⁶⁴You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. 

^q Greek *Sanhedrin*

Matt 27:1-2, 17-26 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. ²And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.  ... ¹⁷So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. ¹⁹Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." ²⁰Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²²Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" ²⁴So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood;^r see to it yourselves." ²⁵And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged^s Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. 

^r Some manuscripts *this righteous blood, or this righteous man's blood*

^s A Roman judicial penalty, consisting of a severe beating with a multi-lashed whip containing imbedded pieces of bone and metal

Luke 23:4, 13-15, 20-24 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."  ... ¹³Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And *after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him.* ¹⁵Neither did Herod, for he sent him back



to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him.  ...²⁰Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, ²¹but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!"²²A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him."²³But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. 

Luke 23:41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but *this man has done nothing wrong.* 

This is spoken by one of the criminals crucified with Jesus.

Acts 8:33 In his humiliation *justice was denied him.* Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. 

Acts 13:28 And though *they found in him no guilt worthy of death,* they asked Pilate to have him executed. 

The horrific suffering and death of Jesus

Matt 26:67-68 Then *they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him,* ⁶⁸saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?" 

Matt 27:26-31 Then he [Pilate] released for them Barabbas, and *having scourged^t Jesus,* delivered him to be crucified. ²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters,^u and *they gathered the whole battalion^v before him.* ²⁸And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"³⁰And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. 

^t A Roman judicial penalty, consisting of a severe beating with a multi-lashed whip containing imbedded pieces of bone and metal

^u Greek *the praetorium*

^v Greek *cohort*; a tenth of a Roman legion, usually about 600 men

Matt 27:32-38 As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. ³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), ³⁴they offered him wine to drink,

mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. ³⁷And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."³⁸Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. 

Note that it is generally thought that Jesus refused the drink offered to him (v. 34) so as to remain fully conscious, enduring the full ordeal by which he would pay for the sins of the world.

Matt 27:39-44 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads⁴⁰and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."⁴¹So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴²"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"⁴⁴And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. 

Matt 27:45-46, 50 Now from the sixth hour^w there was darkness over all the land^x until the ninth hour.^y ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"  ... ⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 

^w That is, noon

^x Or earth

^y That is, 3 P.M.

No reason is given for the cause or significance of the darkness (v. 45). It was unlikely the result of an eclipse; Luke 23:45 simply adds "the sun's light failed." It would appear to have been a divine act, indicative of the gravity of what had taken place. In v. 46, Jesus' cry (cf. [Luke 23:46 ↓](#); [John 19:30 ↓](#)) suggests that the intimate relationship between himself and God had in some way or sense been impaired.

Luke 23:33-34, 46 And when they came to the place that is called *The Skull,* there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."^z And they cast lots to divide his garments.  ... ⁴⁶Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. 

^z Some manuscripts omit the sentence *And Jesus . . . what they do*



John 19:28-30 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.³⁰ *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.* 

Having the sour wine fulfilled Psalm 69:21. The use of a branch of the hyssop plant (v. 29b) may point to the use of hyssop in the celebration of the Passover (cf. Ex 12:22), underlining the parallel of Jesus' death with that of a Passover lamb.

Isa 52:14 As many were astonished at you— *his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind*— 

Isa 53:7-8 *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*⁸ *By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?* 

The Hebrew rendered "he was cut off" (v. 8b) indicates a violent death.

✦ Jesus' care of his mother while on the cross:

John 19:25-27 ... but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.²⁶ *When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"*²⁷ *Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.* 

The events following Jesus' death and his burial

Matt 27:51-54 *And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.*⁵² *The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,*⁵³ *and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.*⁵⁴ *When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son^a of God!"* 

^a Or a son

To enter the Most Holy Place of God's presence the high priest – the only one permitted to do so – went through a

curtain. The tearing of the curtain of the temple in two from top to bottom (v. 51) symbolically announced that there was no longer any barrier to people directly entering into God's presence; no longer was this privilege confined to just the high priest. For comment on the holy people being raised to life (vv. 52-53), see **Matt 27:52-53** – under *Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection*, p. 604.

Matt 27:57-61 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.⁵⁸ *He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him.*⁵⁹ *And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud*⁶⁰ *and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.*⁶¹ *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.* 

✦ The securing of Jesus' tomb:

Matt 27:62-66 *The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate*⁶³ *and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.'*⁶⁴ *Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first."*⁶⁵ *Pilate said to them, "You have a guard^b of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can."*⁶⁶ *So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.* 

^b Or Take a guard

Such security measures ensured no one could underhandedly take Jesus' body from the tomb. Certainly the Roman guards would not have complied with any such plan, as its removal would quite probably have cost them their lives.

Jesus' suffering and death (and resurrection) were planned . . .

See also:

- *The OT also says he would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted*, p. 488
- *For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .*, p. 492
- *Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' death . . .*, p. 497



- ... *Further OT Scriptures fulfilled or reflected in Jesus' death*, p. 499
- *Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' resurrection*, p. 500

Matt 12:40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will *the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* 📖

Note that the phrase "three days and three nights" is commonly understood to be referring somewhat figuratively to three days or parts thereof.

Matt 20:17-19 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, *he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, ¹⁸"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."* 📖

Matt 26:2, 18, 45 "You know that after two days *the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.*" 📖 ... ¹⁸He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, '*The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.*'" 📖 ... ⁴⁵Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on.^c *See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.* 📖

^c Or *Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?*

In v. 45, "is betrayed" has the sense "is about to be betrayed" (cf. Nlrv).

Luke 18:31-33 And *taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³²For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. ³³And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."* 📖

John 7:30 So they were seeking to arrest him, but *no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.* 📖

The timing and circumstances of Jesus' death were part of God's plan and could not be hastened. Note that similarly 8:20b says, "... no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come."

John 12:23, 27, 32-33 And *Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.* 📖 ... ²⁷"Now is my soul troubled. *And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?* *But for this purpose I have come to this hour.* 📖 ... ³²And

I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³*He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.* 📖

In v. 23 Jesus appears to be referring to his death, resurrection and exaltation. Verses 32-33 indicate that the manner of his death was foreordained.

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when *Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father*, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 📖

John 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, *he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ...* 📖

1Tim 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man^d *Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.* 📖

^d *men* and *man* render the same Greek word that is translated *people* in verses 1 and 4

The "testimony" refers to Jesus Christ's sacrifice for sins, given at the proper time, presumably the time God had set.

1Pet 1:10-11 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹*inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.* 📖

... It was God's will that Jesus die – for everyone

See also:

- *God is love – as epitomized in him giving his only Son, to save us*, p. 74
- *Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' death . . .*, p. 497
- ... *Further OT Scriptures fulfilled or reflected in Jesus' death*, p. 499

John 11:50-52 Nor do you understand that *it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.*" ⁵¹*He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.* 📖



God prophesied Jesus' death and its effect through Caiaphas – who “did not say this of his own accord” (v. 51) – indicative of it being God's will.

Acts 2:23 ... *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* 

Acts 3:15, 17-18 ... and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.  ... ¹⁷“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. 

Acts 4:27-28 ... for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 

Rom 3:25a ... [Jesus Christ] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. 

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 

Gal 1:3-4 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ... 

Col 1:19-20 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. 

As well as referring to God's fullness dwelling in Christ, “God was pleased to ...” (v. 19) appears to also refer to what follows, indicating that it likewise was of God's will (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV, NRSV).

Heb 2:9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 

1Pet 1:18-20 ... knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰He was foreknown before the foundation of the world

but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ... 

“He was foreknown” (v. 20) suggests that Christ was chosen and destined (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) by God to bring redemption through his death (v. 19).

✦ OT prophecy indicates that it was God's will that the Messiah should die:

Isa 53:4, 10 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.  ... ¹⁰Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;^e when his soul makes^f an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 

^e Or he has made him sick

^f Or when you make his soul

Further such prophecies are listed in *The OT also says he would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted*, p. 488. Note that here the LORD's will (v. 10) was not just to crush him and cause him to suffer, but also to resurrect him (by which he would see his spiritual “offspring” – those who would believe him) and have him live on forever (“prolong his days”).

Jesus suffered and died willingly

See also:

- [Gal 1:3-4](#) 
- *Because he had willingly suffered death, God exalted and glorified Jesus Christ*, p. 584
- *Jesus Christ died for our sins . . .*, p. 589
- *. . . He offered himself to God, as a sacrifice for our sins*, p. 589
- *Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them*, p. 819

Matt 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 

The fact that Jesus explained his suffering and death beforehand suggests that he would undergo it willingly.

Luke 22:20-22 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” ²¹But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²²For the Son of Man goes



as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" 

^g Some manuscripts omit, in whole or in part, verses 19b-20 (which is given . . . in my blood)

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. 

John 10:11, 14-15, 17-18 I am the good shepherd. *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*  ... ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.  ... ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. 

John 18:11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?" 

Heb 10:5-10 Consequently, when Christ^h came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" ⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 

^h Greek he

The quotation from Psalm 40:6-8 is applied in such a way as to indicate that Jesus Christ willingly came to offer himself as a sacrifice for sin in accordance with God's will (v. 10).

Isa 50:6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. 

This and 53:12 below are messianic verses which portray the Messiah's willingness to suffer and die in line with God's will.

Isa 53:12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,ⁱ and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,^j because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. 

ⁱ Or with the great

^j Or with the numerous

✚ Jesus willingly endured the shame of a death on a cross:

Heb 12:2 ... looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

Subsections

- God raised Jesus from the dead, by his power . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit is linked to Jesus' resurrection
- Jesus' body was not found in his tomb
- Jesus was raised in a bodily form
- Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection
- Jesus was taken up to God in heaven
- Because he had willingly suffered death, God exalted and glorified Jesus Christ

God raised Jesus from the dead, by his power . . .

Acts 2:24, 32 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.  ... ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 

Regarding the reason why it was not possible for death to hold Jesus Christ (v. 24b), Peter's thought may be that: as God's justice had been satisfied by Jesus' death, it was neither necessary nor permissible under God's justice for him to remain there; and/or it was not possible for him who has life in himself to be kept by death.



Rom 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as *Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father*, we too might walk in newness of life. 

The "glory of the Father" in part points to God's "glorious power" (GNT, NLT; cf. NCV).

1Cor 6:14 And *God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power*. 

2Cor 13:4 For *he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God*. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. 

Eph 1:19-20 ... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to *the working of his great might* ²⁰*that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead* and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ... 

Col 2:12 ... having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in *the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead*. 

Acts 13:32-37 And we bring you the good news that *what God promised to the fathers*, ³³*this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."* ³⁴*And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David."* ³⁵*Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption."* ³⁶*For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,* ³⁷*but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.* 

The quotation in v. 33 in its original context is a reference to a Davidic king's coronation, in which the king entered into a unique relationship with God – reflective of God's promise to David regarding one of his sons (cf. 2Sam 7:14). Most likely Paul is implying that it has been ultimately fulfilled in God's resurrection of Jesus Christ, in which God begot or gave life to Jesus Christ and subsequently exalted him as Lord of all. Having stated his case that Jesus Christ is the promised savior in who the messianic writings of the OT had been fulfilled (cf. vv. 23-33), in v. 34 Paul contends that God had to have raised Jesus for him to be given the messianic blessings promised to David. In vv. 35-37 Paul adds further evidence to his argument.

Heb 13:20 Now *may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus*, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ... 

For comment, see 668 – under *Jesus Christ's blood ratified the new covenant*, p. 667.

... The Holy Spirit is linked to Jesus' resurrection

Rom 1:3-4 ... concerning his Son, who was descended from David^k according to the flesh ⁴*and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead*, Jesus Christ our Lord, ... 

^k Or *who came from the offspring of David*

This appears to indicate either that the Holy Spirit played a critical role in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. NLT), or that the Holy Spirit powerfully showed that Jesus Christ's resurrection demonstrated that he was the Son of God.

1Tim 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He^l was manifested in the flesh, *vindicated^m by the Spirit,ⁿ* seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. 

^l Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^m Or *justified*

ⁿ Or *vindicated in spirit*

The Holy Spirit vindicated Jesus' claims about himself by enabling him to perform miracles and in particular by his resurrection.

1Pet 3:18-19 For Christ also suffered^o once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but *made alive in the spirit*, ¹⁹*in which^p he went and proclaimed^q to the spirits in prison*, ... 

^o Some manuscripts *died*

^p Or *the Spirit, in whom*

^q Or *preached*

In v. 18, some translations use "Spirit" (NIV®, NKJV, NLT) rather than "spirit", which would make this passage relevant to this subsection.

✦ **Jesus himself had spoken of taking up his life after laying it down:**

John 10:17-18 For this reason the Father loves me, because *I lay down my life that I may take it up again*. ¹⁸*No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again*. This charge I have received from my Father. 



Jesus had also spoken of raising his own body in 2:18-22 (cf. *Jesus Was Raised in a Bodily Form* below). See also Acts 2:24 and comment in the previous subsection.

Jesus' body was not found in his tomb

Matt 28:1-7 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶*He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he^r lay.* ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." 

^r Some manuscripts *the Lord*

Luke 24:1-7 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ²And *they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.* ⁴While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "*Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but has risen.* Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." 

Luke 24:22-24 Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. *They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.* 

Note that the final clause probably refers to the disciples in question not seeing the resurrected Jesus – though like v. 23a it could be speaking of them not seeing his body in the tomb (cf. Nlrv, NLT).

John 20:1-12 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ²*So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the*

one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and *reached the tomb first.* ⁵*And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.* ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and *went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.* ⁸*Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;* ⁹for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to their homes. ¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept *she stooped to look into the tomb.* ¹²*And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.* 

^s Greek *his*

✦ Jesus was raised on the third day:

1Cor 15:4 ... that he was buried, that *he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,* ... 

Matthew 28:1-7, Luke 24:1-7 and John 20:1-9 above likewise indicate that Jesus had risen by the morning of the Sunday (cf. Mark 16:1-7) – i.e. on the third day following his death on the previous Friday morning. The phrase "in accordance with the Scriptures" appears to refer to him being "raised on the third day" rather than just to him simply being raised. As such it may well have Hosea 6:2 in view, seeing Jesus as fulfilling what is said there of Israel: "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him." Jesus reference to Jonah in Matthew 12:40 may also be in view: "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Jesus was raised in a bodily form

See also:

- Matt 28:9 ; John 20:17 ; John 20:27 ; Acts 10:40-41 
- *On Jesus Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ,* p. 734

John 2:18-22 So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹*Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* ²⁰The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹*But he was*



speaking about the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. 

In speaking here of the resurrection of his body, Jesus appears to indicate that it would be raised in bodily form. Note that the "Scripture" (v. 22b) refers in particular to OT prophecies which speak of the Messiah's death and resurrection (cf. *The OT also says he would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted*, p. 488, and *Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' death . . .*, p. 497; . . . *Further OT Scriptures fulfilled or reflected in Jesus' death*, p. 499).

Luke 24:36-43 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" ³⁷But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish,^t ⁴³and he took it and ate before them. 

^t Some manuscripts add *and some honeycomb*

The fact that Jesus had "flesh and bones" (v. 39), ate food (vv. 42-43; cf. [Acts 1:4](#) ; [Acts 10:41](#) ) and had nail marks in his hands and a hole in side (cf. [John 20:24-29](#) ), shows that he had been raised in the body in which he had been crucified.

Acts 2:31 ... he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that *he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* 

This at least suggests that Jesus was raised in bodily form.

Col 2:9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ... 

The term "bodily" denotes a "bodily form" (AMP, NASB, NIV). Opinions differ over whether this is referring only to Jesus' time on earth or also to after his resurrection and ascension. If the latter is the case in, then this verse supports the assertion that Jesus Christ was raised in a bodily form.

✦ **Following his resurrection Jesus did not have normal physical limitations:**

John 20:19, 26 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, *the doors being locked* where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, *Jesus came and stood among them* and said to them, "Peace be with you."  ... ²⁶Eight days later, his

disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. *Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them* and said, "Peace be with you." 

Luke 24:31 in the following subsection also shows that Jesus not have normal physical limitations. For it says that on one occasion when Jesus had been with two of his followers "he vanished from their sight".

Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection

See also:

▪ [Luke 24:36-43](#) 

Matt 28:8-10 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹And *behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.* ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." 

Mark 16:9, 12, 14 Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.  ... ¹²After these things he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country.  ... ¹⁴Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. 

Note that "he appeared in another form" (v. 12) seems to be intended to contrast to how he appeared to Mary Magdalene (v. 9). As such it may simply be speaking of him appearing as a traveler rather than as a gardener.

Luke 24:13-16, 28-32 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles^u from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing together, *Jesus himself drew near and went with them.* ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.  ... ²⁸So they drew near to the village to which they were going. *He acted as if he were going farther,* ²⁹*but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.* ³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn



within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" 

^u Greek sixty stadia; a stadion was about 607 feet or 185 meters

John 20:14-18 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic,^v "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her. 

^v Or Hebrew

John 20:19-20, 24-29 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.  ... ²⁴Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin,^w was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." ²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." 

^w Greek Didymus

John 21:12-14 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. 

Acts 1:3-4 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴And while staying^x with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ... 

^x Or eating

Note that vv. 6-8 record what might be a further, separate conversation between Jesus and his followers.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 

Acts 10:40-41 ... but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 

It is not stated why God chose only certain people to see Jesus Christ, rather than have him be seen by all the people. The reason may well largely concern faith. The NT only records Jesus being seen by those who had already believed. Since the time of Abraham, God's plan of bringing righteousness and salvation has involved a requirement of faith in him and what he says. Allowing Jesus to be seen by all the people would have significantly lessened a need or place for faith.

Acts 13:30-31 But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. 

1Cor 15:4-8 ... that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 

Note that in v. 8 Paul is referring to Jesus Christ's post-ascension appearance to him on the road to Damascus.

Jesus was taken up to God in heaven

See also:

- *Jesus Christ is the high priest of God's people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary*, p. 671
- *Following his death and resurrection, God exalted Jesus Christ to his right hand . . .*, p. 685



John 7:33-34 Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and *then I am going to him who sent me.* ³⁴*You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.*"

John 16:28 I came from the Father and have come into the world, and *now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.*

Luke 24:50-51 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹*While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.*

Acts 1:2 ... until *the day when he was taken up*, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

Acts 1:9-11 And when he had said these things, *as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* ¹⁰*And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,* ¹¹*and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*

Heb 9:24 For *Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God* on our behalf.

Rev 12:5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but *her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ...*

The woman most likely symbolizes either the messianic community, Israel or believing Jews. The "male child" is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The second statement is often understood by commentators to refer to Jesus Christ's ascension.

Eph 4:8, 10 Therefore it says, "When *he ascended on high* he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." ... ¹⁰*He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.*)

Jewish thought understood there to be different heavens. Apparently Paul is asserting that in conjunction with Jesus Christ being taken into God's presence in heaven itself, Christ ascended higher and is supreme over all other "heavens" (v. 10). Note that the clause "fill all things" (v. 10) appears to speak of Jesus Christ not only being throughout the whole universe, but also being supreme throughout it.

✦ **Jesus Christ will remain in heaven until God's appointed time:**

Acts 3:20-21 ... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, *Jesus,* ²¹*whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke* by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Because he had willingly suffered death, God exalted and glorified Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Following his death and resurrection, God exalted Jesus Christ to his right hand . . .*, p. 685
- *. . . and God made Jesus Christ Lord of all*, p. 686

Phil 2:8-11 And being found in human form, *he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* ⁹*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,* ¹⁰*so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹*and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Verses 10-11 speak of all people in the future acknowledging Jesus Christ's status, which itself is a current reality.

Heb 1:9 *You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.*

A number of commentators consider this to be referring to Christ's exaltation after his life of "righteousness", which of course included his obedience unto death.

Heb 2:9 *But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Heb 12:2 ... looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The "joy that was set before him" points to the glory that would be his for enduring the cross, notably being seated at God's right hand – the place of honor and power above all others.



1Pet 1:11, 21 ... inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when *he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories*.  ... ²¹who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 

Rev 5:9, 11-12 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,  ... ¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” 

Presumably the reason as to why Jesus Christ, the “Lamb” who was slain, was worthy to receive the glory and accompanying wonderful blessings (v. 12), was the same as to why he was deemed worthy to open the scroll (v. 5a) – i.e. he suffered death so as to purchase people for God from all nations (v. 5b).

Luke 24:26 *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?* 

Isa 52:13-15 Behold, my servant shall act wisely;^y *he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted*. ¹⁴*As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—* ¹⁵*so shall he sprinkle^z many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.* 

^y Or *shall prosper*

^z Or *startle*

The meaning of “sprinkle” (v. 15) is not altogether clear. Most likely it either means “cleanse” (NLT text note, cf. CEV) or “startle” (ESV text note, NLT, NRSV, cf. NCV). Regarding the remainder of v. 15, such would be or will be the exaltation of

the messianic servant that kings will be “speechless with amazement” (GNT) when they see his exaltation, and understand who he is and what he has accomplished. Possibly Christ’s return is in view here.

Isa 53:12 *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,^a and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,^b because he poured out his soul to death* and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. 

^a Or *with the great*

^b Or *with the numerous*

The segments “a portion with the many” or “with the great” (text note) and “divide the spoil with the strong”, appear to allude to a victorious commander dividing up the spoils of battle. They speak of the messianic servant being given “the honors of one who is mighty and great” (NLT, cf. GNT).

1Tim 3:16b He^c was manifested in the flesh, vindicated^d by the Spirit,^e seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, *taken up in glory*. 

^c Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^d Or *justified*

^e Or *vindicated in spirit*

† **As well as in his subsequent exaltation, Jesus Christ was glorified in his death and resurrection:**

John 13:31-32 When he had gone out, Jesus said, “*Now is the Son of Man glorified*, and God is glorified in him. ³²*If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.* 

Here Jesus’ death, resurrection and exaltation appear to all be in view. Possibly the glory associated with what Jesus accomplished in his death and resurrection is primarily in view in v. 31, with his subsequent glorification on his ascension then being spoken of in v. 32.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Salvation through Jesus Christ

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II. Salvation for the World

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I. Salvation from Sin

See also:

- 9. *The Problem of Sin*, p. 359
- *God sent Jesus to take away sins . . .*, p. 509
- *. . . God sent Jesus to save the world*, p. 509

The teachings in this section are at the absolute heart of the NT and the gospel message. It is critical for anyone trying to comprehend the Christian faith to soundly understand them.

a) Jesus Christ's Death as an Offering for Sin

Subsections

- God provided Jesus Christ as an offering for sin
- Jesus Christ died for our sins . . .
- . . . He offered himself to God, as a sacrifice for our sins
- Jesus Christ is the "Lamb" who was sacrificed
- Jesus Christ was an unblemished offering – being without sin
- In his death, Jesus Christ bore our sins

God provided Jesus Christ as an offering for sin

See also:

- Gal 1:4 ↴

Isa 53:10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;^a when his soul makes^b an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 

^a Or *he has made him sick*

^b Or *when you make his soul*

Note that this verse is from Isaiah 52:13-53:12, which prophesies the sufferings of the Messiah and the resulting atonement for sin. As such it was comprehensively fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is quoted in the NT more than any other OT passage and a number of verses from it have been included in this chapter (cf. [Isa 53:5](#), [8](#) ↴).

John 1:29, 36 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*"  ... ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "*Behold, the Lamb of God!*" 

The title "the Lamb of God" refers to Jesus being a sin offering, with "of God" implying that he was an offering provided by God.

Rom 3:24-25 ... and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in *Christ Jesus*, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 

In the NT "propitiation" means to turn away or appease the wrath of God against sinners in their guilt. In light of the phrase "by his blood" and of other translations, it would appear that Paul has in view God sending Jesus as an offering for our sin (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV, NLT, NRSV) in order to justifiably avert his wrath. A similar comment can be made re 1 John 4:10 below. Note that the second sentence shows that God's justice requires that sins be punished – with the implication that sins committed under the old covenant were not satisfactorily punished or dealt with, and could not remain as such.

Rom 8:3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. *By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,*^c he condemned sin in the flesh, ... 

^c Or *and as a sin offering*

The alternative rendering in the text note speaks of Jesus being sent "as a sin offering" (cf. AMP, CEV, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT), as the ESV text itself suggests.

2Cor 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 

The verse speaks of Jesus being a perfect offering for sin (cf. NLT), with Jesus himself having had "no sin".

Heb 10:9-10 ... then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 

This indicates that it was God's will that Jesus Christ be sacrificed, to make people holy.

1Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 



Jesus Christ died for our sins . . .

Isa 53:5, 8 But *he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.* ... ⁸By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, *stricken for the transgression of my people?*

Rom 4:24b-25 It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead *Jesus our Lord,* ²⁵*who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*

1Cor 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that *Christ died for our sins* in accordance with the Scriptures, ...

Gal 1:4 ... *who gave himself for our sins* to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ...

1Pet 3:18 For *Christ also suffered*^d *once for sins*, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ...

^d Some manuscripts *died*

. . . He offered himself to God, as a sacrifice for our sins

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as *Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Heb 9:14 ... how much more will the blood of *Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God,* purify our^e conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

^e Some manuscripts *your*

Heb 7:27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since *he did this once for all when he offered up himself.*

Heb 9:26b-28 But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages *to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* ²⁷And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸*so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal*

with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Note that the phrase “the end of the ages” (v. 26b) may be speaking of “when all ages of time are nearing the end” (GNT; cf. CEV). However, some commentators think that the end of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the Messianic Age is in view.

Jesus Christ is the “Lamb” who was sacrificed

See also:

- **1Pet 1:19**

References to Jesus as a “Lamb” allude to him being an offering. Possibly the title alludes to the imagery of the suffering Messiah in Isaiah 53:7 below, which in turn may well be based on the use of a lamb in some sin offerings (e.g. Lev 4:32; 5:6). Alternatively, the Passover lamb (cf. **1Cor 5:7** ; **Mark 14:12**), which was integral to the Israelite’s redemption from Egypt, may primarily be in view. Thus such references speak of Jesus Christ as a sin offering and/or as an offering to pay for redemption. Both meanings are very relevant.

1Cor 5:7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For *Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

Rev 5:6, 12 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders *I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain,* with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ... ¹²saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is *the Lamb who was slain,* to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

These verses are from a passage describing a vision of Jesus Christ. Although the vision shows Jesus Christ as being very much alive, it speaks of him as appearing to have been slain (v. 6) and even as “the Lamb who was slain” (v. 12; cf. **Rev 13:8**).

Rev 13:8 ... and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of *the Lamb who was slain.*

Rev 7:14 I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white *in the blood of the Lamb.*



The phrase “the blood of the Lamb” (cf. [Rev 12:11](#) ↓) speaks of Jesus Christ as the “Lamb” who was sacrificed.

Rev 12:11 And they have conquered him *by the blood of the Lamb* and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

For comment, see the comment on [Rev 12:11](#) – under *Note: Further points about the significance of the shedding of Jesus Christ’s blood*, p. 595.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; *like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*

John 1:29, 36 The next day *he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* ... ³⁶*and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”*

‡ The sacrifice of the Passover lamb:

Mark 14:12 And on *the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb*, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?”

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a seven-day feast to commemorate the Israelites’ release and deliverance from Egypt. The sacrificial Passover lamb was a critical part of the feast, in remembrance of the sparing of the Israelites’ firstborn amidst the killing of the Egyptians’ firstborn, which led to the Israelites’ deliverance. For in delivering them (cf. Ex 12), God had commanded the Israelites to slaughter a lamb and put some of the blood on the doorframes of their houses; they were then to eat the meat with unleavened bread, in readiness to hastily leave Egypt. The houses so marked were “passed over” and their firstborn spared. The NT (cf. [1Cor 5:7](#) ↑) suggests a parallel between the sacrifice of the Passover lamb of the feast, associated with the Israelite’s deliverance from Egypt (along with the sparing of their firstborn), and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ during the time of the feast, with the resultant deliverance from sin.

Jesus Christ was an unblemished offering – being without sin

See also:

- [Animals brought as offerings were to be without any blemish](#), p. 389

Just as offerings or sacrifices in the OT had to be perfect (i.e. without defect) in order to be acceptable sacrifices to atone

for sin, so it was essential that Christ be perfect in a moral sense (i.e. sinless) in order for him to be a sacrifice for sin.

Heb 9:14 ... how much more will the blood of *Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God*, purify our^f conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

^f Some manuscripts *your*

1Pet 1:18-19 ... knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with *the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*

2Cor 5:21 For our sake *he made him to be sin who knew no sin*, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1Pet 3:18 For *Christ also suffered^g once for sins, the righteous* for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ...

^g Some manuscripts *died*

Christ died as “the righteous” one – perfect, without sin.

John 8:46 *Which one of you convicts me of sin?* If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but *one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

1Pet 2:22 *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*

1Jn 3:5 You know that he appeared to take away sins, and *in him there is no sin.*

In his death, Jesus Christ bore our sins

See also:

- [Note: Procedures for the Day of Atonement, involving the high priest entering the Most Holy Place](#), p. 392

In his death Jesus Christ effectively took our sins from us and bore them and their consequences himself. As such his death signified the eradication of the sins that he bore. In this Jesus Christ paralleled and fulfilled the role of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement (cf. comment on [Isa 53:6](#) below; and the above cross reference). Note that having no sin of his own



(as discussed in the previous subsection) was critical to Jesus Christ being eligible to bear the sins of others.

1Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* 📖

Isa 53:4-6, 11-12 *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 📖 ... ¹¹Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see^h and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and *he shall bear their iniquities.* ¹²Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,ⁱ and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,^j because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet *he bore the sin of many*, and makes intercession for the transgressors. 📖*

^h Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *he shall see light*

ⁱ Or *with the great*

^j Or *with the numerous*

Verses 4-5 in part speak of the Messiah taking the punishment for our sins upon himself, the effect of taking our sins upon himself (vv. 6, 11-12). The phrase “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (v. 6) appears to allude to the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16) placing his hands on the scapegoat and confessing Israel’s sins, symbolically placing these sins on it.

Heb 9:28 *... so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.* 📖

This indicates that when Christ first appeared, in his sacrifice he bore the sin of many.

✦ **God made Jesus Christ to “be sin”:**

2Cor 5:21 For our sake *he made him to be sin* who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 📖

God made Jesus Christ – the only one to have not sinned – to “be sin”. This expression appears to allude or point to Jesus taking our sin upon himself – and with sin, the punishment accorded it.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Christ’s Death and Atonement for Sin

Biblical atonement is where God in his grace accepts an offering or sacrifice of a living being (i.e. its life) as a substitute for the life of a sinner – the person’s life otherwise being required for their sin. As such, God accepts the sacrifice as payment for the person’s sin. The result is that sin is taken away – and so the sinner is forgiven, pronounced righteous and reconciled to God. In conjunction with this, God’s wrath – provoked by sin – is appeased. (These concepts are all spoken of in the following subsections, in regard to Jesus Christ.)

In the OT, people who had sinned brought an animal as an offering of a life, for the priests to sacrifice on their behalf to make atonement for them. Jesus Christ’s offering or sacrifice of himself has a number of striking parallels with this OT practice. Furthermore, his death in fact fulfilled this requirement of the OT law once and for all, making such offerings no longer necessary (cf. *With Jesus Christ’s once and for all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sin*, p. 654). The atonement made by Jesus Christ’s death is central to the Christian faith.

Subsections

- Jesus Christ died for us
- Jesus Christ’s sacrifice of himself for us means that our sins can be forgiven . . .
- . . . and that we can therefore be justified and righteous before God
- So through Jesus Christ’s death we can be reconciled to God . . .
- . . . and through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God
- Thus, Jesus Christ saves people from God’s wrath
- Note: Further points about the significance of the shedding of Jesus Christ’s blood



Jesus Christ died for us

See also:

- [Matt 26:28](#) ↴
- [Jesus Christ gave himself as a ransom for us, to redeem us from sin](#), p. 596
- [... Jesus Christ died for all people](#), p. 618
- [Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them](#), p. 819

Jesus Christ died for us, in place of us, as a substitute for our lives. As such, in giving himself as an offering to God for our sin, he gave his life so that we would not have to forfeit our own lives eternally for our sin and suffer eternal “death”. Instead we can have eternal life, life which extends beyond physical death. Note that because he is the Son of God, Jesus Christ's life is worth infinitely more than our lives, and so his death was an adequate sacrifice for any number of people.

Rom 5:6-8 For while we were still weak, at the right time *Christ died for the ungodly*. ⁷For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. 📖

Gal 2:20b And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in *the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*. 📖

Eph 5:2, 25 And walk in love, as *Christ loved us and gave himself up for us*, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 📖
... ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*, ... 📖

Titus 2:13-14 ... waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior *Jesus Christ*, ¹⁴*who gave himself for us* to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. 📖

Heb 2:9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of *the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone*. 📖

1Pet 3:18 For *Christ also suffered*^k *once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous*, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ... 📖

^k Some manuscripts *died*

1Jn 3:16 By this we know love, that *he laid down his life for us*, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 📖

✦ **Jesus Christ bore the law's curse for us:**

Gal 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us*—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— 📖

The law imposes on people a curse for sinning and breaking the law – meaning that they are doomed (cf. AMP). But Jesus Christ redeemed us from this curse as he removed it from us and took it upon himself – “put himself under that curse” (NCV™) – meaning that he was doomed to die, instead of us.

Jesus Christ's sacrifice of himself for us means that our sins can be forgiven . . .

See also:

- [God's people are primarily made holy through Jesus Christ's sacrifice](#), p. 861
- [We are forgiven of our sins and purified](#) [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1049

Isa 53:5 But *he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities*; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and *with his stripes we are healed*. 📖

By Jesus Christ's “stripes we are healed” – forgiven and so cured of the blemishes of our sin.

Matt 26:28 ... for *this is my blood of the^l covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*. 📖

^l Some manuscripts insert *new*

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption *through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses*, according to the riches of his grace, ... 📖

Col 2:13-14 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, *God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses*, ¹⁴*by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross*. ... 📖

In v. 14, “the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands” appears to portray a record of our sins with the corresponding “legal demands” of the law which we have broken. These have been forgiven through Christ's death on “the cross”.

Heb 9:22, 26b-28 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins*. 📖 ... ²⁶ ... But as it is, *he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for man



to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸so *Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many*, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. 

Note that v. 22 underlines the need for Jesus Christ to have died, shedding his blood, in order for our sins to be forgiven.

1Jn 2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because *your sins are forgiven for his name's sake*. 

The reference to sins being forgiven “for his name’s sake” appears to be speaking of sins being forgiven “on account of his name” (NIV®, NRSV). For “his name” encompasses all Christ has himself accomplished – here notably the forgiveness of sins through his death and resurrection.

John 1:29 The next day *he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!* 

John speaks of Jesus as the offering that God would give to take away the sin of the world.

... and that we can therefore be justified and righteous before God

See also:

- [Col 1:22](#) 
- [We are granted righteousness and justified before God](#) [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1050

Isa 53:11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see^m and be satisfied; *by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities*. 

^mMasoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *he shall see light*

In addition to the rendering in the text note, another plausible meaning of “by his knowledge” is: “because of what he has experienced” (NLT). Essentially the second part of the verse means that: in his death the Messiah would bear the iniquities or sins of many, and so by his death he would justify them.

Rom 4:24b-25 *Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification*. 

In raising Jesus Christ to life, God showed his acceptance of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for sin, for which he was “delivered up for our trespasses”. Thus those who accept his sacrifice as being on their behalf, no longer have their sins counted against them and so are justified.

Rom 5:9 Since, therefore, *we have now been justified by his blood*, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 

Rom 5:15-19 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and *the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many*. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but *the free gift following many trespasses brought justification*. ¹⁷For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and *the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ*. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespassⁿ led to condemnation for all men, so *one act of righteousness^o leads to justification and life for all men*. ¹⁹For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so *by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous*. 

ⁿ Or *the trespass of one*

^o Or *the act of righteousness of one*

In vv. 15-16 “the gift”, evoked by grace, primarily refers to “the free gift of righteousness” (v. 17) which by God’s grace comes through Jesus Christ, with his sacrifice. Christ’s sacrifice is clearly in view with the expressions “one act of righteousness” (v. 18) and “the one man’s obedience” (v. 19) – and probably also with “the grace of that one man Jesus Christ” (v. 15). The phrase “made righteous” (v. 19) speaks of being deemed righteous and “put right with God” (GNT, cf. NCV, NLT) – rather than referring to a morally righteous character.

2Cor 5:21 *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*. 

The phrase “become the righteousness of God” means either to: be made “right with God” (NCV™, NLT) or “share the righteousness of God” (GNT). Arguably each of these alternatives is inclusive of the other.

1Cor 1:30 And because of him^p you are in *Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ...* 

^p Greek *And from him*

Jesus Christ’s offering is not specifically referred to here and in 6:11 below. But it is understood to be that by which we gain “righteousness” – our status of being right before God (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT) – and by which we are “justified” (1Cor 6:11 ).



1Cor 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, *you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ* and by the Spirit of our God.

See the comment on **1Jn 2:12** in the previous subsection. Note also that this indicates that the Holy Spirit plays a role in one's justification.

✦ Forgiveness of sins brings salvation:

Luke 1:77 ... to give knowledge of *salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins*, ...

So through Jesus Christ's death we can be reconciled to God . . .

In dying to remove sin – that which causes people to be estranged from God – Jesus Christ has opened the way for people to be reconciled with God.

Rom 5:10-11 For if *while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son*, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through *our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation*.

2Cor 5:18-19 All this is from *God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself* and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in *Christ God was reconciling^a the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them*, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

^a Or *God was in Christ, reconciling*

Eph 2:16 ... and *might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross*, thereby killing the hostility.

The phrase "us both" refers to Jews and Gentiles, who are now both part of Jesus Christ's spiritual body – the "one body". This association with Christ means that both groups can be reconciled to God through what Christ accomplished in his death on the cross.

Col 1:19-22 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and *through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross*. ²¹And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²*he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him*, ...

The phrase "all things" (v. 20) is usually taken to refer to all things in creation, particularly in light of vv. 16-17, but some limit it to "all beings" (CEV). Jesus' death signified the reconciliation of "all things" to God – a reconciliation which

will be consummated at the end of the age, but one which is a current reality for believers (v. 22).

1Pet 3:18 *For Christ also suffered^r once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh* but made alive in the spirit, ...

^r Some manuscripts *died*

... and through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God

See also:

▪ **Col 1:20**

Isa 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; *upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace*, and with his stripes we are healed.

Acts 10:36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of *peace through Jesus Christ* (he is Lord of all), ...

Rom 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, *we^s have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*.

^s Some manuscripts *let us*

Eph 2:17 *And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near*.

Note that here Paul may be referring to Jesus Christ making peace between Gentiles and Jews, rather than to Christ making peace with God on their behalf. However, even if the former is the case, such peace between them was only made possible by Christ's work in making peace between them and God, i.e. reconciling both of them to God (v. 16a).

✦ A prophecy of Jesus Christ leading us into peace:

Luke 1:78-79 ... because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby *the sunrise shall visit us^t from on high⁷⁹* to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to *guide our feet into the way of peace*.

^t Or *when the sunrise shall dawn upon us*; some manuscripts *since the sunrise has visited us*

The reference to the "sunrise" visiting is likely to the coming of the Messiah, who would bring the light of God's salvation. Here peace appears to refer primarily to peace with God – or at least to be inclusive of it.



Thus, Jesus Christ saves people from God's wrath

Rom 5:9 *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* 

1Thes 1:10 ... and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.* 

1Thes 5:9 *For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ...* 

Rom 3:25 ... [Jesus Christ] whom *God put forward as a propitiation by his blood*, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 

As noted earlier, the use of "propitiation" speaks of the wrath of God against guilty sinners being turned away or quenched. Jesus' blood "propitiated" or turned away God's wrath by satisfying God's justice, making a way for people to be forgiven without compromising God's justice and holiness. Bear in mind that "propitiation" is closely associated with atonement. Where "propitiation" is used in this and the following verses, some other translations make reference to Jesus' sacrifice making "atonement" (AMP, NIV, NRSV).

Heb 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, *to make propitiation for the sins of the people.* 

1Jn 2:2 *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* 

1Jn 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and *sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* 

✦ God's wrath remains on those who do not obey Christ:

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; *whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.* 

Note: Further points about the significance of the shedding of Jesus Christ's blood

See also:

- *c) Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin*, p. 596
- *Jesus Christ's blood ratified the new covenant*, p. 667

References to the shedding of Jesus Christ's blood speak of Jesus Christ's death, as in the preceding subsections. Note that the next chapter section is included in the above cross references. It contains numerous references to Jesus Christ's blood, speaking of its significance in relation to matters concerning redemption.

John 6:53-56 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* ⁵⁴*Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* ⁵⁵*For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.* ⁵⁶*Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.* 

In speaking metaphorically of drinking his blood – and eating his flesh – Jesus is referring to believing in him and depending on his death for eternal life (vv. 53-54). One key reason as to why this is so, is that in so doing we remain spiritually interlocked with him (v. 56), the one who is "the life" (John 1:25; 14:6; 1Jn 1:2).

Eph 2:12-13 ... remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* 

As commented earlier on v. 17, "brought near" (v. 13) may well be talking of being brought near to God, as a number of other translations stipulate. But alternatively it may be referring to being brought near to Israel – as the people of God – and "the covenants of promise". Certainly the passage as a whole demonstrates that the Gentiles have been accepted into God's people through the shedding of Jesus Christ's blood.

Heb 9:12, 14 ... *he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*  ... ¹⁴*how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^u conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* 

^u Some manuscripts *your*

Verse 12 alludes to the High Priest needing to sprinkle blood from sacrifices when he entered the Most Holy Place in the earthly tabernacle in order to make atonement. By the shedding of his blood Jesus Christ similarly entered God's presence – but once and for all, having by his blood obtained eternal redemption. This points to Jesus Christ's ongoing role as high priest for God's people, in which he is always in God's presence to act on their behalf. In v. 14, the meaning of "dead works" is debatable. But the verse does clearly indicate that



the shedding of Jesus Christ's blood enables believers to "serve the living God!"

Heb 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers,^v since *we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,*²⁰ *by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,*²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* 

^v Or *brothers and sisters*

Not only did Jesus Christ himself enter God's presence through the shedding of his blood (cf. **Heb 9:12** ↑), through this all God's people can. Verse 20 draws a parallel between the curtain in the temple and Christ's body. Just as the way into God's presence in the temple was through the curtain which cordoned off the Most Holy Place, so the death of Christ's physical body has provided a way into God's presence for all of God's people. In v. 22 "sprinkled" is speaking of being sprinkled with "the blood of Jesus" (v. 19) – alluding to OT rituals signifying cleansing by the sprinkling of the blood of animal sacrifices.

Heb 13:12 *So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.* 

1Jn 5:6-8 *This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.* 

The "water" and "blood" are usually taken as references to Jesus' baptism and death (NLT, CEV text note, NCV text note). In refuting a heresy, John uses them as evidence that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was the truly human person who was baptized and who died. Thus the shedding of Jesus Christ's blood testifies to his humanity.

Rev 12:11 *And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.* 

This appears to be saying that the believers in question overcame Satan by their belief in and testimony to Jesus Christ's death and its significance. Such an implication is applicable to all believers in their conflict with Satan.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin

See also:

- *God redeemed the Israelites out of Egypt to take them as his own . . .*, p. 327
- *. . . The Passover and God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt*, p. 327

In the OT, references to God redeeming his people generally speak of God saving them or setting them free from oppression. In the NT, references to redemption more specifically involve the concept of setting people free by the payment of a ransom, a payment of comparable value. This reflected the use in NT times of "redeem" to denote the freeing of a slave by a payment. The NT applies such terms to Jesus Christ redeeming or freeing believers from enslavement to sin by giving his life as a ransom.

In regard to atonement – the theme of the preceding section – redemption (the act of redeeming) can be considered an aspect of or another way of describing atonement from sin. In one sense it is a complementary concept.

Subsections

- *Jesus Christ gave himself as a ransom for us, to redeem us from sin*
- *God's people have been bought by Jesus Christ's death . . .*
- *. . . They have been freed from sin and are now slaves to God – and Jesus Christ*
- *Jesus Christ's death sets us free from sin's control . . .*
- *. . . and Jesus Christ's death cleanses us from sin*
- *Note: Jesus Christ's death redeems people from the law and its consequences*

Jesus Christ gave himself as a ransom for us, to redeem us from sin

Matt 20:28 *... even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* 

1Tim 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man^w *Christ Jesus,*⁶ *who gave himself as a ransom for all,* which is the testimony given at the proper time. 

^w *men* and *man* render the same Greek word that is translated *people* in verses 1 and 4



1Pet 1:18-19 ... knowing that *you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ*, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.



The phrase “the futile ways” refers either to: the sinful, pointless way of life of non-Jews (cf. v. 14) – in which case it would be very pertinent to this subsection; or the Jewish way of life under the old covenant.

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and *by your blood you ransomed people* for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ...

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses*, according to the riches of his grace, ...

This indicates that the redemption provided by Jesus Christ’s death encompasses being forgiven for sins.

Heb 9:11-12, 15 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^x then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but *by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.* ... ¹⁵Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since *a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*^y



^x Some manuscripts *good things to come*

^y The Greek word means both *covenant* and *will*; also verses 16, 17

Verse 15 makes reference in particular to sins committed while the first covenant was still in force.

Rev 14:4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. *These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb*, ...

This may not expressly refer to being redeemed from sin, but the use of “redeemed” appears to at least allude to it.

‡ **The psalmist’s confidence that God would redeem his people from their sins:**

Ps 130:7-8 O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and *with him is plentiful redemption.* ⁸*And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

Although the psalmist is unlikely to have been intentionally referring to the Messiah, this hope or prophecy of God fully redeeming his people from their sins was ultimately fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

God’s people have been bought by Jesus Christ’s death . . .

See also:

- *God’s people belong to him*, p. 765

An implication of believers being redeemed from sin by Jesus Christ’s death is that they have been bought by God and Jesus Christ – to whom they are now slaves (as the following subsection indicates).

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for *the church of God,^z which he obtained with his own blood.*^a

^z Some manuscripts *of the Lord*

^a Or *with the blood of his Own*

God’s “own blood” refers to that of his own Son, which thus in a sense is his own. The rendering in the second text note suggests more strongly that Jesus Christ and his blood are in view. With “his own blood” he obtained or “purchased” (NASB, NKJV, NLT cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NIV) his church.

1Cor 6:19b-20 *You are not your own,* ²⁰*for you were bought with a price.* So glorify God in your body.

Believers have been bought by God – the one whom they should honor (v. 20b) – at the price of the death of his Son. Note that shortly afterwards Paul again remarks, “You were bought with a price” (7:23a).

2Pet 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying *the Master who bought them*, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

Rev 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and *by your blood you ransomed people for God* from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰*and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.*”

In ransoming people for God, Jesus Christ effectively “bought people for God” (NCV™; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV). A similar point can be made in 14:4 below re the reference to Christ redeeming people.



Rev 14:4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. *These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, ...* 

... They have been freed from sin and are now slaves to God – and Jesus Christ

See also:

- *We are God's and Jesus Christ's servants*, p. 1396
- *Instead of living as a slave to sin, live as a slave to God and righteousness . . .*, p. 1864

Rom 6:17-18, 22 But thanks be to God, that *you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed*, ¹⁸*and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*  ... ²²*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.* 

Titus 2:13-14 ... waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior *Jesus Christ*, ¹⁴*who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* 

Jesus Christ has freed us from sin – redeeming us from wickedness and purifying us. Thus we now are his – “his own possession” – as servants or slaves who are zealous in doing good works.

1Cor 7:22 For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called *is a slave of Christ.* 

Note that Paul is explaining that slaves should not be troubled by their lack of freedom (cf. v. 21) because as believers they are free in a more significant sense – free from sin and Satan's bondage. By the same token, those who are free people (like all believers) are slaves of Christ.

Eph 6:6, 9 ... not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but *as servants^b of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*,  ... ⁹*Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master^c and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.* 

^b Or slaves; Greek *bondservants*

^c Greek *Lord*

As reflected in the text note on v. 6, the Greek for “servants of Christ” is often rendered as “slaves of Christ” (CEV, GNT, NASB, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

1Pet 2:16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but *living as servants^d of God.* 

^d Greek *bondservants*

The phrase “servants of God” has a similar sense to “servants of Christ” above in Ephesians 6:6, indicative of being “God's slaves” (NASB; cf. GNT, NLT).

‡ **The Holy Spirit is a mark of God's ownership, guaranteeing our inheritance until the consummation of our redemption:**

Eph 1:13-14 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, *were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit*, ¹⁴*who is the guarantee^e of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,^f to the praise of his glory.* 

^e Or *down payment*

^f Or *until God redeems his possession*

Most other modern translations support the alternative rendering in the ESV text note – “until God redeems his possession”. As such, this verse reflects that the Holy Spirit in each of God's people is his mark of ownership (v. 13), signifying that they belong to God, i.e. that they are God's “possession” (v. 14).

Jesus Christ's death sets us free from sin's control . . .

See also:

- *“In” Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .*, p. 783

Sin exercises control over people, whereby people live sinful lives, in a sense bound and led by sin. However Jesus Christ's death sets believers free from sin's control; sin no longer dominates their lives.

Titus 2:13-14 ... waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior *Jesus Christ*, ¹⁴*who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* 

The phrase “all lawlessness” suggests “every kind of sin” (NLT). Jesus Christ's death redeems or frees us from bondage to all sin.



Rom 6:6-7, 10-11, 14, 17-18 We know that *our old self^g was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* ⁷*For one who has died has been set free^h from sin.* ... ¹⁰*For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.* ¹¹*So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.* ... ¹⁴*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.* ... ¹⁷*But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,* ¹⁸*and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*

^g Greek *man*

^h Greek *has been justified*

This speaks of believers being freed from sin through Jesus Christ's death in terms of our union with him, in which we participate in his death in a spiritual sense and consequently die to sin. In v. 6, "the body of sin" is a figurative term referring to the "sinful self" (GNT, cf. NCV). Verse 10a appears to be indicating that because Christ died, sin now "has no power over him" (GNT; cf. v. 10b). One implication of this is that Christ has defeated the power of sin (cf. NCV, NLT). This also means that those who are "in Christ" similarly have died to sin (v. 11). In v. 14, "sin will have no dominion over you" is stating that sin will no longer have mastery over us and/or is an exhortation to the readers to not let sin rule them.

Rom 7:23-25 ... but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and *making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.* ²⁴*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* ²⁵*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.*

The term "body of death" (v. 24) may refer primarily to the sinful nature which brings death. Alternatively the whole person may be in view – including the physical body – which is so dominated by sin (v. 23). Through Jesus Christ and what he had accomplished in his death, God rescues believers from this state (v. 25), thus freeing them from being prisoners of sin.

Rom 8:2-3 For *the law of the Spirit of life has set youⁱ free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.* ³*For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^j he condemned sin in the flesh, ...*

ⁱ Some manuscripts *me*

^j Or *and as a sin offering*

The "law" (of the Spirit and that of sin and death, v. 2) quite possibly refers to power or authority. Thus v. 2 would be speaking of Jesus Christ setting people free from the power of sin. (For a fuller discussion of this matter, see *We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit*, p. 1073.) The final clause of v. 3 indicates that by Jesus Christ's death "God destroyed sin's control over us" (NLT).

1Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

Christ bore our sins, removing them from us and enabling us to no longer live under sin's control – to "stop living for sin" (NCV™) – but rather live dedicated to righteousness. In this sense we have been "healed".

Gal 3:22 *But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

The reference to "the Scripture" appears to primarily have the law in view. The "promise" most likely is that of righteousness or justification by faith – possibly along with other related concepts (cf. v. 14b). This is granted by faith in Jesus Christ and what he accomplished by his death. The implication is that correspondingly one is released from being a "imprisoned ... under sin".

John 8:31-36 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* ³³They answered him, *"We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"* ³⁴Jesus answered them, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave^k to sin.* ³⁵The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

^k Greek *bondservant*; also verse 35

In association with what Jesus' death accomplished, we are set free from slavery to sin through following Jesus' teaching and coming to know the truth.

Acts 13:38-39 *Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,³⁹ and by him everyone who believes is freed^l from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.*

^l Greek *justified*; twice in this verse

Note that here and in Revelation 1:5b below, freedom from the consequences of past sin may be more in view than freedom from sin's ongoing control over our actions.



Rev 1:5b To him who loves us and *has freed us from our sins by his blood* ... 

... and Jesus Christ's death cleanses us from sin

See also:

- [Titus 2:13-14](#) 
- [Spiritual defilement](#) . . . , p. 372
- . . . [Spiritual uncleanness](#), p. 372
- [God's people are primarily made holy through Jesus Christ's sacrifice](#), p. 861

Sin defiles us and makes us spiritually unclean – separating us from God who is holy, set apart from sin and such uncleanness. However, in conjunction with redeeming us and freeing us from sin, Jesus Christ's death purifies us from sin's defilement and the associated spiritually uncleanness. This allows us to be brought to God (as reflected in the following two subsections).

1Jn 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and *the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin*. 

The word translated “cleanses” has a continuous tense, implying ongoing purification rather than a single act of purification. (cf. NBC) Although Jesus Christ's sacrifice is the only sacrifice needed, the purification from sin that it provides needs to be claimed time and again.

Heb 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. *After making purification for sins*, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ... 

This has Jesus Christ's sacrificial death in view, as the means of providing purification for sins.

Heb 9:13-14 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify^m for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴*how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify ourⁿ conscience from dead works* to serve the living God. 

^m Or *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies*

ⁿ Some manuscripts *your*

The phrase “purify our conscience” may have at least partly in view purification from sin, through Christ's death. With one's conscience no longer having past sin to deal with, it has been purified from sin and the need to perform “dead

works” – quite possibly the ultimately useless rituals of the law – to attempt to address the defilement of sin.

1Pet 1:2 ...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to *Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood*: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 

The phrase “sprinkling by his blood” probably refers to purification from sin by Christ's blood (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Rev 7:14 I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. *They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*. 

Zec 3:3-5, 8-9 Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “*Remove the filthy garments from him.*” And to him he said, “*Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.*” ⁵And I said, “*Let them put a clean turban on his head.*” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.  ... ⁸Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. ⁹For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes,^o I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and *I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day*. 

^o Or *facets*

The “Branch” (v. 8) signifies the Messiah. The “stone” (v. 9) may signify the Messiah or his priestly/cleansing work, particularly with it having an inscription. For as such it may parallel the plate of gold on the high priest's turban, which was engraved with “Holy to the Lord” (cf. Ex 28:36-38). The promise to “remove the iniquity of this land in a single day” (v. 9) may well refer to Jesus' death on Good Friday, although the day of his return may instead be in view. Particularly if the former is the case, vv. 3-5 probably point to the cleansing and removal of sin affected by Christ's death. In v. 8a, “your friends” are Joshua's fellow-priests. They are “a sign” (v. 8b), “types of what is to come” (AMP), perhaps in that they prefigure Christ's priestly work.

‡ Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet:

John 13:5, 8-10 Then *he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet* and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.  ... ⁸Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” ⁹Simon Peter said to



him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “*The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet,^p but is completely clean. And you^q are clean, but not every one of you.*”

^p Some manuscripts omit *except for his feet*

^q The Greek words for *you* in this verse are plural

Particularly as his atoning death was drawing near, in washing and so cleaning his disciples’ feet, Jesus appears to symbolically portray the cleansing that his death would bring – and the need for people to partake of it. Verse 10a may possibly be implying that once one has been saved and completely cleansed of their past sins through Jesus Christ’s death, one then only needs regular confession and cleansing of any sin one may commit – the cleansing made viable by the application of Jesus Christ’s once and for all sacrifice (cf. 1Jn 1:7 ↑).

Note: Jesus Christ’s death redeems people from the law and its consequences

See also:

- *c) Release from the Law through Jesus Christ*, p. 651
- *“In” Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .*, p. 783

Rom 7:1, 4-6 Or do you not know, brothers^r—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that *the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?* ... ⁴Likewise, my brothers, *you also have died to the law through the body of Christ*, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now *we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive*, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.^s

^r Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 4

^s Greek of *the letter*

Verse 4a is saying that as “part of the body of Christ” (CEV, GNT), in Christ’s death believers died with him (cf. NLT) and so are dead to the law (v. 6a), the law only having authority over a person while they are alive (v. 1). Thus through Jesus Christ’s death “we are released from the law” – to serve by the Spirit. Note that the phrase “that which held us captive” (v. 6) is understood to be a reference to the law (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT), rather than the sinful nature (v. 5).

Rom 8:2 *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^t free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

^t Some manuscripts *me*

As noted earlier, the use of “law” here quite possibly refers to power or authority. However, it may instead refer to the OT law as “the law that brings sin and death” (NCV™). As such this would be speaking of Jesus Christ (and his death) redeeming people from the law and its consequences.

Gal 4:3-5 *In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles^u of the world.* ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, *God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,* ⁵*to redeem those who were under the law*, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

^u Or *elemental spirits*; also verse 9

One important aspect of the redemption provided by Jesus Christ, is that we have been redeemed from bondage to the Mosaic Law – which is the sense here of “to redeem those who were under law” (cf. CEV, NLT). As such, we are freed from the law’s regulations and rituals. Regarding the term “the elementary principles” (v. 3), the law may primarily be in view (cf. AMP) – which would fit comfortably with vv. 4-5 (and this subsection). But this interpretation is debatable, with the text note providing one other possibility. For further comment see *So through Jesus Christ believers have been released from the law*, p. 653.

Gal 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—*

The law imposes on us a curse as a consequence for sinning and breaking the law. But Jesus Christ redeemed us from this curse as he removed it from us and took it upon himself – “put himself under that curse” (NCV™) – by dying for us, in our place.

Gal 3:19, 22-25 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. ... ²²But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³Now *before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.* ²⁴So then, *the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.* ²⁵But now that faith has come, *we are no longer under a guardian, ...*

The law was only ever to be the authority over God’s people until Jesus Christ came (v. 19a), when faith in Jesus Christ’s death would supersede it as the way for God’s people to be



justified (v. 22). Now that this is the case, believers have been released from the law's supervision (v. 25), no longer "captive under the law" (v. 23; cf. vv. 24-25) nor by sin (v. 22a) which held sway under the law.

Gal 5:1 *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.* 📖

By his death, Jesus Christ has set God's people free from the burden of the yoke of the law.

Heb 2:14-15 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that *through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,*¹⁵ *and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.* 📖

By his death Jesus Christ has set us "free" (AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NRSV) from the fear of the primary consequence of the law and sin – death (v. 15), effectively foiling Satan and nullifying the power of death (v. 14).

1Pet 1:18-19 ... knowing that *you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,*¹⁹ *but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.* 📖

As noted earlier, "futile ways" may refer to the Jewish way of life under the old covenant and law, a way of life which was ultimately pointless and futile – useless for gaining salvation. As such, these two verses would be pertinent to this subsection.

✦ **The law gives sin its power – but God gives victory through Jesus Christ:**

1Cor 15:56-57 The sting of death is sin, and *the power of sin is the law.*⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 📖

The "victory" is victory over the otherwise inevitable products of the law – sin and death.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Salvation

See also:

- *"In" Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .*, p. 783
- *. . . This identification also has other implications – present and future*, p. 784
- *Jesus Christ's death and his ministry in his risen life* [reasons for assurance], p. 1057

Subsections

- Jesus Christ's resurrection has a key part in people being saved
- Jesus Christ's resurrection is linked to the forgiveness of sins and justification
- Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection
- Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil
- Note: Jesus Christ's resurrection affirmed significant things about him

Jesus Christ's resurrection has a key part in people being saved

See also:

- [Acts 5:30-31](#) ↓

1Pet 3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, *now saves you*, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, . . .* 📖

The "appeal to God for a good conscience" may be an appeal to God: to enable one to live before him with a clear conscience; and/or for forgiveness of past sins that leave one with a guilty conscience. Some other translations use "from" instead of "for", which opens up other possibilities – e.g. that Peter is speaking of a commitment to live in accordance with God's will as governed by "a good conscience". With any of these meanings, in making such an appeal in baptism we are saved by Christ's resurrection – the culmination of his saving work – with our baptism being an acknowledgement of this, signifying our faith in Christ's saving work.

Rom 5:9-10 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, *much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath*



of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* 

By Jesus Christ's death believers are presently justified and reconciled to God. Following on from this, through what Jesus Christ does for them in his life – him having been resurrected – they can be assured of salvation. But note that while the phrase "saved by his life" (v. 10) may well refer to Jesus Christ's present life and ministry for believers, some commentators interpret it as referring to believers being saved through their sharing in Christ's resurrected life in their union with him. These two concepts themselves are somewhat intertwined.

Rom 10:9 ... because, *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* 

The fact that God's raising of Jesus Christ is one of the key things we are to believe to be saved, implies that Christ's resurrection is critical to our salvation.

Acts 26:23 ... that the Christ must suffer and that, *by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.* 

Here "light" refers to the "light of salvation" (GNT). The verse suggests that without Jesus Christ's resurrection there would be no "light of salvation".

Rom 6:4-5, 8-11 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, *just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly *be united with him in a resurrection like his.*  ... ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, *we believe that we will also live with him.* ⁹*We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.* ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but *the life he lives he lives to God.* ¹¹*So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.* 

Believers have a "newness of life" (v. 4b), in effect a new life. This is: a spiritual life, identified with Jesus Christ's resurrection and life (vv. 4-8, 11); a life lived in union with Jesus Christ (vv. 5, 8, 11); a life free of the controlling power of sin (vv. 10-11); and a life lived for God (vv. 10-11). This new life is an integral part of salvation, even identifiable with it. Without Jesus Christ's resurrection this new life – and all these aspects of it – would not be a reality.

Jesus Christ's resurrection is linked to the forgiveness of sins and justification

Acts 5:30-31 *The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* 

Without Jesus Christ's resurrection he could not have subsequently been exalted as Savior (and Leader), which is here implied as being integral to God's people being given repentance and forgiveness.

Acts 13:37-39 ... but *he whom God raised up did not see corruption.* ³⁸*Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹and by him everyone who believes is freed^v from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.* 

^v Greek *justified*; twice in this verse

"Let it be known to you therefore" (v. 38a) appears to indicate that forgiveness of sins (v. 38b) and justification (v. 39, cf. text note) are based on or confirmed by Jesus Christ's resurrection (v. 37), it being affirmation that he was the promised Messiah (cf. vv. 30-36), who in his death would effect such outcomes.

Rom 4:25 ... who was delivered up for our trespasses and *raised for our justification.* 

The clause "raised for our justification" may well mean that Christ was raised to secure our justification. Alternatively, mirroring the earlier use of "for our", it may be saying that he was raised "because of our" (NASB) justification – which could infer that our justification had been secured by his death. In either case, this verse points to God showing his acceptance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for sin by raising him to life, thus signifying our justification. As such, God's resurrection of Jesus Christ validated or affirmed Christ's sacrifice as being acceptable for the sin of humankind.

1Cor 15:17 *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.* 

Without Jesus Christ's resurrection we would not be forgiven for our sins – nor justified; our faith would be useless. One reason put forward by commentators as to why this is the case is that in raising Jesus, God signified that he accepted Jesus Christ's sacrifice for sins (as per the above comment on Romans 4:25).

Rom 8:34 *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.^w* 

^w Or *Is it Christ Jesus who died . . . for us?*



Not being open to condemnation is of course a concept related to being forgiven and justified, not having any sin to be charged with. Jesus Christ's resurrection is a key factor in why believers can be confident of being free of condemnation – and of continuing to be free of it. For without his resurrection Jesus Christ would not be now "at the right hand of God, ... interceding for us". Jesus Christ's role as the appointed judge – the one who will condemn the guilty – may also be in view here. Both of these are critical factors, along with his death, as to why Christians are not open to condemnation.

Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection

See also:

- *As God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, God will also raise his people*, p. 733

Jesus Christ's resurrection was vital to our salvation in part at least due to it being essential for our own resurrection.

John 14:19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. *Because I live, you also will live.* 

A number of commentators understand the last statement to be primarily referring to – or at least encompassing – resurrection life; i.e. they take it to indicate that Jesus Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of believers. It could also be a reference to spiritual life, that believers share in now.

1Cor 15:18-23 *Then [if Christ has not been raised] those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.* ¹⁹If in Christ we have hope^x in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* ²¹*For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* ²²*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* ²³*But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* 

^x Or *we have hoped*

The "firstfruits" (vv. 20, 23) alludes to the firstfruits of the harvest which were offered to God. As well as preceding the rest of the harvest, they were seen as a confirmation that the rest would take place. Here the term is applied to Christ, as like the firstfruits of the harvest, his resurrection precedes and is an assurance of the resurrection of all believers. The concept is reflected in similar expressions elsewhere in the NT (cf. [Acts 26:23](#) ↓).

Phil 3:10-11 ... *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,* ¹¹*that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.* 

Here Paul speaks of the power of Jesus Christ's resurrection (v. 10a) as a significant factor in himself being able to be resurrected from the dead (v. 11).

1Thes 4:14 *For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* 

Jesus' resurrection is essential for God to raise and bring to himself "through Jesus" believers who have died. The verse also suggests that if we do not believe that Jesus rose from death, we have no reason to believe that God will raise others.

2Tim 1:10 ... and which now has been manifested through the appearing of *our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,* ... 

In part at least it was through Jesus Christ's resurrection that the power of death was abolished, producing life and immortality for believers.

1Pet 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴*to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,* ... 

Because of Jesus Christ's resurrection we have a "living hope" (v. 3) of an inheritance (v. 4) – which encompasses our own resurrection and eternal life.

Acts 26:23 ... that the Christ must suffer and that, *by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.* 

In saying that the Christ would be the "first" to rise from the dead, this points to the necessity of his resurrection for the resurrection of God's people – which will follow in due course. The verse also speaks of Christ's resurrection as being key to "the light of salvation" (GNT), which is inclusive of the resurrection of God's people.

Matt 27:52-53 *The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,* ⁵³*and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.* 

The resurrection of these saints after Jesus Christ's resurrection may have been to signify his victory over death



– for which his resurrection was paramount – and the firm hope of resurrection for God’s people.

‡ If Christ has not been raised, our witnessing and faith are useless:

1Cor 15:14-15, 17 *And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ... ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.* 📖

Note that in regard to the importance of Christ’s resurrection for our faith, it can similarly be inferred from 1 Peter 1:21 that it was because God raised Jesus (and glorified him) that we can have faith and hope in God – “[You saints] who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil

See also:

- *Jesus came to destroy Satan’s power and work*, p. 512

John 12:31-33 *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.* 📖

As vv. 32-33 indicate, v. 31 refers to Jesus’ imminent death, by which Satan would be defeated (v. 31b) – with Jesus’ death and resurrection nullifying Satan’s power over people through sin and death (cf. **Heb 2:14** ↓). The “judgment of this world” (v. 31a) possibly is primarily referring to the defeat of its “ruler”, Satan (cf. NLT), meaning that the world as his domain would correspondingly be overcome by Christ and condemned for its values and ways. Another possibility is that it refers to the world’s guilt in rejecting Jesus – shown ultimately in its impending crucifixion of him – and its consequent judgment, with the latter in a sense foreshadowed in Christ’s victory over it by his resurrection.

Heb 2:14 *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ...* 📖

The term “destroy” has the sense “break the power of” (NLT).

1Jn 3:8b *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* 📖

This largely has Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection in view as that by which he destroyed the devil’s work in seeking to bring destruction on humankind.

Rev 12:10 *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers^y has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”* 📖

^y Or brothers and sisters

Commentators differ on whether this refers to Jesus Christ’s victory over Satan by his death and resurrection – correlated with Satan’s defeat in heaven (cf. vv. 7-9); or to a final expulsion of Satan from heaven in the last days. The first interpretation would make the verse pertinent to this subsection.

John 16:33 *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* 📖

As Jesus said this in the hours prior to his death, it is quite possibly largely a reference to his death and subsequent resurrection – by which he triumphed over all that is evil in the world. Alternatively – or in conjunction with the above – he may have had his sinless life and/or his ministry in view, in which he prevailed over the ways of the world and evil powers.

Eph 4:8 *Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”* 📖

Here “captives” is most likely being applied to Christ’s evil spiritual enemies – whom he triumphed over in his death and resurrection, culminating in him ascending “on high” with them subject to him.

Col 2:15 *He disarmed the rulers and authorities^z and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.^a* 📖

^z Probably demonic rulers and authorities

^a Or in it (that is, the cross)

The reference here is probably to God (cf. AMP, NCV, NLT) triumphing over evil spiritual powers by Jesus Christ’s death, God being the one who orchestrated it. But note that some interpret this to be speaking of Jesus Christ as the one who triumphed over evil (cf. CEV, GNT)

Gen 3:15 *I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring^b and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.* 📖

^b Hebrew *seed*; so throughout Genesis

Generally this is seen as more than just a description of the enmity that would exist between humans and snakes. The



offspring of the woman is thought to represent human beings and God's people in particular, with the offspring of the serpent symbolizing those controlled by Satan, including demons. The prophecy in the second half of the verse is ultimately fulfilled in Christ's victory over Satan through his death and resurrection.

John 1:4-5 *In him was life,^c and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* 

^c Or *was not any thing made. That which has been made was life in him*

Here "darkness" may be referring to this world's sin and unbelief and/or spiritual powers of darkness. If it is inclusive of the latter, then the fact that the darkness did not overcome the light that Jesus brought is reflective of him triumphing over evil.

✦ **By his death Jesus Christ rescues people from evil:**

Gal 1:4 *... who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ...* 

Through dying for our sins, Jesus Christ delivers believers from the power of the present evil world system (cf. Gal 6:14). Colossians 1:13 similarly refers to God rescuing people from evil: "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness ..."

Note: Jesus Christ's resurrection affirmed significant things about him

See also:

- *For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .*, p. 492
- *Jesus Christ's death and resurrection* [give reason to believe in him], p. 1046

John 13:19 *I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.* 

It appears that "before it takes place" refers to Jesus' death – with the preceding events – and his resurrection. In addition to the importance of his death and resurrection themselves in showing who Jesus was, the fact that he predicted them also substantiated his claims. Note that while "I am he" (cf. 8:38) may be a reference to God's name, implying Jesus' oneness with God, more likely Jesus is meaning that he is the Messiah – the one for whom the Jews were waiting.

Acts 2:29-33 Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a

prophet, and knowing that *God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.* 

In vv. 30-31, Peter asserts that David had spoken (cf. vv. 35-38) of the Christ being resurrected to assume the Davidic throne, as the descendant whom God had promised David would be placed on his throne. In vv. 32-33, Peter implies that God's resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent exaltation of Jesus to his right hand (pointing to Jesus' enthronement) shows him to be the one – the Christ. Note that in v. 33 Peter may be speaking of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised, as evidence of Jesus' enthronement at God's right hand.

Acts 13:30-37 *But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³²And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you." ³⁴And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." ³⁵Therefore he says also in another psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption." ³⁶For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.* 

Similar to Peter in 2:29-33 above, here Paul asserts that God fulfilled OT promises regarding the Messiah by raising up Jesus Christ – thus confirming by his resurrection that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. The quotation in v. 33 in its original context is a reference to a Davidic king's coronation, in which the king entered into a unique relationship with God – reflective of God's promise to David regarding one of his sons (cf. 2Sam 7:14). Most likely Paul is implying that it has been ultimately fulfilled in God's resurrection of Jesus Christ, in which God in a sense begot or gave life to him and subsequently exalted him as Lord of all. Similarly the two quotations that follow it (vv. 34, 35) point to the promised blessings to David (cf. 2Sam 7) that would ultimately come to and through David's messianic descendant, the Christ. He would be the one who God would "not let... see corruption" (v. 35) – a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus Christ (v. 37).



Rom 1:4 ... and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ... 

Paul's argument here may be that to rise from the dead as Jesus Christ did could only be possible for the Son of God, the Messiah, in accordance with messianic prophecies (cf. Isa 52:13-15; 53:10-12). Alternatively Paul may be meaning that Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead validated his claims that he would rise from the dead, and thereby gave credence to his other claims, in particular here his claim to be the Son of God.

Rom 6:9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 

Christ is the "beginning" of a whole new order as he was the first to rise from among the dead to never die again. As the founder of this new creation he is first not only

chronologically but also in primacy, both of which are indicated by the term "the firstborn".

Acts 17:31 ... because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. 

In the second part of the verse, Paul may be meaning that by raising Jesus Christ, God validated Christ's claims that God would judge the world through him (cf. John 5:22-23a, 27). For in raising Christ, God firstly validated Christ's claim that he would rise from the dead and consequently gave credibility to all Christ's other claims.

✚ Jesus Christ's resurrection was necessary for him to be Lord of all:

Rom 14:9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Salvation for the World

Prior to Jesus Christ's mission, God dealt primarily with Israel, as his people. What Jesus Christ accomplished had momentous implications for all people – notably in making God's salvation, with eternal life, freely available to every person in the world. An associated outcome is that people from all nations can readily become one of God's own people.

a) The Savior of the World

Subsections

- God provides salvation through Jesus Christ
- Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world – in conjunction with God . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ realizes salvation and redemption
- We can only be saved through Jesus Christ
- Jesus Christ will bring believers' salvation to completion on his return

God provides salvation through Jesus Christ

See also:

- 1Jn 4:14 ↓; Acts 5:31 ↓; Acts 13:23 ↓
- *God sent Jesus to take away sins* . . . , p. 509
- . . . *God sent Jesus to save the world*, p. 509
- *God saves people through Jesus Christ*, p. 533
- *God has provided salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ* . . . , p. 617

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 

Rom 3:22b-25a For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. 

Rom 7:24-25a Wretched man that I am! *Who will deliver me from this body of death?* ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! 

In v. 25a Paul answers the question he poses in v. 24, indicating that God will save him through Jesus Christ (cf. GNT, NCV).

1Cor 15:56-57 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 

The "victory" is victory over death and sin. As such it is associated with salvation.

1Thes 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 

2Tim 1:8-9 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹who saved us and called us to^a a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^b ... 

^a Or with

^b Greek *before times eternal*

1Pet 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 

Through Jesus Christ's resurrection, God has brought believers into a "living hope" (v. 3) – encompassing their own resurrection and an inheritance (v. 4), aspects of the salvation to be consummated in "the last time" (v. 5).

Rom 5:8-11 ... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. 

God through Jesus Christ: saves us from his own wrath (v. 9b), justifying us by Christ's death (v. 9a); reconciles us to him (vv. 10-11); and brings our salvation to completion (v. 10b).



‡ Zechariah's prophecy that God would redeem and save his people through Jesus Christ:

Luke 1:68-79 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷²to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. ⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us ^c from on high ⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

^c Or when the sunrise shall dawn upon us; some manuscripts since the sunrise has visited us

The salvation spoken of here is inclusive of both spiritual salvation and salvation from the oppression of enemies (vv. 71, 74) – ultimately fulfilled by the final deliverance of God's people on Jesus Christ's return. The term "horn of salvation" (v. 69) refers to Jesus Christ. Verses 76-79 speak of God's salvation coming through Jesus Christ's mission in both John the Baptist's preparatory work (v. 77; cf. CEV, NCV, Nlrv, NLT) and Jesus himself (vv. 78-79).

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world – in conjunction with God . . .

See also:

- [John 3:17](#)
- [God is the Savior of his people . . .](#), p. 906

John 4:42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

1Jn 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

John 12:47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

References to Jesus Christ as "Savior" generally have in view him being the Savior of the world.

Acts 5:31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Jesus Christ's role as Savior in respect to Israel – as mentioned here and in 13:23 immediately below – is readily applicable to the world.

Acts 13:23 Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Phil 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ...

Titus 1:3-4 ... and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ⁴To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

God is our Savior (v. 3) in conjunction with Jesus Christ (v. 4), for God planned, initiated and oversaw Jesus Christ's saving work. Additionally, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, God brings the believer's salvation to fulfillment. Note that as well as in Titus 3:4 below, the phrase "God our Savior" is also used in the NT in 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; Titus 2:10; and Jude 1:25.

Titus 3:4-7 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Rev 7:10 ... and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

1Tim 4:10 For to this end we toil and strive,^d because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

^d Some manuscripts and suffer reproach



The description of God as “the Savior of all people” implies that his salvation is open to all people of the world, although it only comes to fruition for “those who believe”.

. . . Jesus Christ realizes salvation and redemption

See also:

- c) *Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin*, p. 596

2Tim 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain *the salvation that is in Christ Jesus* with eternal glory. 

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make *the founder of their salvation* perfect through suffering. 

Heb 5:9 And *being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him*, ... 

Heb 7:25 Consequently, *he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him*, since he always lives to make intercession for them. 

^e That is, completely; or *at all times*

Rom 3:23-24 ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, ... 

1Cor 1:30 And because of him^f you are in *Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption*, ... 

^f Greek *And from him*

Col 1:13-14 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of *his beloved Son*, ¹⁴*in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*. 

Heb 9:11-12 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,[‡] then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²*he entered once for all into the holy places*, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but *by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption*. 

[‡] Some manuscripts *good things to come*

By his own blood – his sacrificial death – Jesus Christ entered God's very presence in heaven as high priest, once and for all, to secure eternal redemption.

We can only be saved through Jesus Christ

Acts 4:12 And *there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*. 

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” 

The first statement is understood by some commentators to mean that: Jesus is the way to the Father because he is the truth and the life. The second statement emphatically states that he is the only way to God, one implication of which is that Jesus is the only source of salvation.

1Tim 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is *one mediator between God and men, the man^h Christ Jesus*, ⁶*who gave himself as a ransom for all*, which is the testimony given at the proper time. 

^h *men* and *man* render the same Greek word that is translated *people* in verses 1 and 4

As suggested by v. 6, the most significant part of Jesus Christ's exclusive role as the “one mediator” (v. 5) was giving himself as a ransom to mediate peace between God and humankind. Thus this portrays him as the sole provider of salvation.

John 6:68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ...” 

Peter acknowledged that the way to eternal life was found exclusively in Jesus' message; there was no one else to go to for it.

John 10:7-9 So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *I am the door of the sheep*. ⁸*All who came before me are thieves and robbers*, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹*I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture*. 

Verse 8 is probably referring to the numerous false Messiahs who had come previously and/or to the supposed spiritual leaders such as the Pharisees. In v. 9, Jesus claims to be the only “door” leading into salvation, through which one can find “pasture” – the provision of one's needs.

Acts 16:30-31 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, *what must I do to be saved?*” ³¹*And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”* 

Paul and Silas's reply to the question posed suggests that one can only be saved through Jesus Christ.

1Cor 3:11 *For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*. 



Jesus Christ alone is the foundation of the Christian faith and all it entails, including salvation.

✦ Life comes only through Jesus Christ:

1Jn 5:12 *Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.* 📖

The “bottom line” is that: those who have a right relationship with Jesus Christ have eternal, spiritual life; those who do not have this relationship with him, do not have life.

Jesus Christ will bring believers’ salvation to completion on his return

See also:

- ... and all his followers will be gathered to him, p. 703
- On Jesus Christ’s return his followers will be rewarded, p. 704

Luke 21:25-28 “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” 📖

Heb 9:28 ... so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. 📖

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. 📖

Verse 21 speaks of Jesus Christ, as “Savior” (v. 20), bringing the salvation of believers to fulfillment on his return).

1Thes 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 📖

The consummation of believers’ salvation is contrasted here with the alternative future of having to suffer God’s wrath.

2Tim 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 📖

✦ A further reference to the culmination of the salvation of believers:

Phil 1:28 ...and not frightened in anything by your opponents. *This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.* 📖

Note that the final phrase is speaking of either: the believers’ salvation being from God (cf. NCV); or the “sign” being from God, pointing to the believers’ fearlessness as coming from God.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Life through Jesus Christ

The “life” spoken of in the NT that Jesus Christ provides is often referred to as spiritual life. It involves being “alive to God” (Rom 6:11), with God’s Holy Spirit indwelling us, renewing and nourishing us. With this, we have a spiritual consciousness that enables us to live in communion with and in dependence on God, eternally. This spiritual life is only attainable through Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished.

Subsections

- God provides life through Jesus Christ
- Jesus Christ gives spiritual life
- Jesus Christ gives eternal life
- Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life as opposed to death
- Jesus Christ saves people from the power of death
- Note: The book of life

God provides life through Jesus Christ

See also:

- [John 6:33](#) ↴

John 3:16 For God so loved the world,ⁱ that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 📖

ⁱ Or For this is how God loved the world



John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

God's will – which he has determined and implemented – is that those believe in Jesus Christ will have eternal life.

John 17:2 ... since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Here Jesus Christ speaks of God granting him such authority so as to provide eternal life through him.

Rom 5:17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

For comment on "reign in life", see the comment on 614 – under *Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life as opposed to death*, p. 614.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1Jn 4:9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

1Jn 5:11-13, 20 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. ... ²⁰And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

The last statement of v. 20 could be referring to Jesus Christ, but more likely God. In either case, the verse as a whole supports the assertion that God provides life through Jesus Christ.

John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The "gift of God" probably refers to the "living water", although Jesus could be in view as the one through whom God has provided the "living water". The "living water" is spiritual water – signifying either that which gives spiritual life or spiritual life itself. If it is the former it may well primarily refer to Jesus' teaching, inclusive of his claims and substantiated by what he was to accomplish. Note that in

7:38-39 Jesus uses the term "living water" to refer to the Holy Spirit.

John 12:49-50 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.

God's "commandment" (v. 50) is usually understood here to refer to the commands that he gave Jesus to teach, rather than to his commanding Jesus what to say (v. 49). Either way these verses show that God has provided eternal life through Jesus Christ teaching what God told him to.

✦ God has enabled Jesus Christ to have life in himself:

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

This indicates that Jesus has intrinsic life. The implication in this context is that – like his Father – Jesus is "the source of life" (GNT) with "the power to give life" (CEV).

Jesus Christ gives spiritual life

See also:

- a) *God Makes His People Spiritually Alive*, p. 854

John 1:4 In him was life,^j and the life was the light of men.

^j Or was not any thing made. That which has been made was life in him

"In him was life" is possibly here referring primarily to physical life (cf. v. 3). However even if this is the case, it still is probably also alluding to spiritual or eternal life, as being brought by Jesus Christ.

John 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

John 6:33, 35 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ... ³⁵Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Here Jesus speaks of himself as the source of spiritual life. The phrases "shall not hunger" and "shall not thirst" speak of him satisfying one's spiritual needs, supplying what is needed for spiritual life.

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."



Those who follow Jesus do not live in falsehood and ignorance, but have the light or truth that produces spiritual life.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* 

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life.* No one comes to the Father except through me.” 

Descriptions of Jesus Christ as “the life” point to him as the source or way of life – the one who brings life.

John 20:31 ... but these are written so that you may believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* 

Acts 3:15 ... and you killed *the Author of life*, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 

The phrase “the author of life” could be referring to Jesus Christ’s role in creation, but more likely it has in view his role in giving spiritual and eternal life.

2Tim 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to *the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus*, ... 

Jesus Christ gives eternal life

See also:

- [John 10:28](#) 
- *Jesus Christ’s “name” signifies him in his attainment of salvation and eternal life*, p. 109
- “*In Jesus Christ God’s people have eternal life*”, p. 786
- *We have eternal life* [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1051

Eternal life encompasses the spiritual life that Christians experience now, as well as its developed form of the afterlife. (As such the verses in the previous subsection are also relevant to this subsection.) Having said this, often references to “eternal life” have the afterlife primarily in view.

Note that eternal life is more than just eternal existence, which all will have. In the afterlife it will involve: having a glorified and spiritual “body” or form; being perfectly holy; and a very perceptible experience of God, in which believers will live in God’s actual presence, in constant fellowship with him.

John 4:13-14 Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.^k *The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*” 

^k Greek *forever*

Regarding “the water that I will give” see the comment on [John 4:10](#) – above in *God provides life through Jesus Christ*.

John 6:27a Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for *the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.* 

That “which the Son of Man will give to you” appears to be the “food” (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, Nlrv) that leads to eternal life, rather than being a direct reference to eternal life. The food is ultimately Jesus himself – “the bread of life” (v. 35 ). As such it is inclusive of Jesus’ teaching (cf. v. 68 ) , as supported by what he accomplished in his mission. To obtain this spiritual food one must believe in Jesus, believing what he taught and claimed about himself (cf. comment on [vv. 48-58](#) ).

John 6:68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? *You have the words of eternal life*, ...” 

Jesus has the words or message of the way to eternal life.

John 14:19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. *Because I live, you also will live.* 

The last statement is most likely primarily speaking of Jesus’ resurrection ensuring or leading to the resurrection of believers and subsequently life ever after.

John 17:2-3 ... since *you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.* ³*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* 

As is implied in v. 3, eternal life involves living in fellowship with God (cf. 1Jn 5:20) and Jesus Christ, the means of eternal life.

Jude 1:21 ... keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for *the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.* 



Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life as opposed to death

See also:

- *They have passed from their former state of spiritual death to spiritual life*, p. 855

The punishment or price for sin is ultimately eternal “death”, costing us eternal life. But by giving his life in dying for our sins, Jesus Christ has paid this price for us. He gave his life as a substitute for our lives, that we might live eternally rather than suffer eternal “death”.

Note that in addition to verses speaking of eternal “death”, there are verses in this subsection that speak more generally of spiritual death, in the present life and/or the afterlife.

John 3:16, 36 For God so loved the world,¹ that he gave his only Son, that *whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*. ... ³⁶*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

¹ Or *For this is how God loved the world*

John 5:21, 24-25 For *as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will*. ... ²⁴*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.* ²⁵*Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*

Verse 21 seems to be drawing a parallel between God raising the physically dead to life and Jesus giving spiritual life to the spiritually dead. Jesus’ raising of the physically dead, particularly that of all people at the end of the age, is presumably also encompassed. In v. 25 “the dead” may well be the spiritually dead; the time had come when such people could hear Jesus’ words and come to spiritual life.

John 6:48-58 *I am the bread of life.* ⁴⁹*Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* ⁵⁰*This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.* ⁵¹*I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.* ⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* ⁵⁴*Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* ⁵⁵*For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.*

⁵⁶Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so *whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.* ⁵⁸*This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread^m the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.*

^m Greek lacks *the bread*

There are two subtly different but interrelated interpretations of what Jesus meant when he spoke metaphorically of eating of him, the bread of life. One is that it simply means to believe in him and depend on his death, for eternal life. The other is that it means to partake of Jesus Christ – including following him, trusting him and living in fellowship with him – for the sustenance of one’s life, which likewise leads to eternal life.

John 10:28 *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, “*I am the resurrection and the life.*ⁿ *Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,* ²⁶*and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

ⁿ Some manuscripts omit *and the life*

Jesus is the one through whom resurrection and life come (v. 25a). Those who believe in him will live even though they die physically (v. 25b). At a spiritual level they will never die (v. 26a), but will live eternally.

Rom 5:17-18, 20-21 For *if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.* ¹⁸*Therefore, as one trespass^o led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness^p leads to justification and life for all men.* ... ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, *as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

^o Or *the trespass of one*

^p Or *the act of righteousness of one*

The phrase “reign in life” (v. 17) is understood by many to refer to the future reign that believers will participate in through Jesus Christ, but the context indicates that it could more specifically be referring to their “triumph over sin and death” (NLT), pointing also to spiritual life in the present. In v. 21, Paul speaks firstly of sin reigning, having the power of death, with all people under its reign and facing death. Paul then speaks of God’s grace taking hold of people with them being made “right with God” (NirV®; cf. AMP, NCV, NLT) to bring them to eternal life through Jesus Christ.



Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. 

2Tim 1:9-10 ... who saved us and called us to^a a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^r ¹⁰and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ... 

^a Or with

^r Greek *before times eternal*

By his resurrection Jesus Christ has “ended the power of death” (GNT, cf. NLT), and those who put their faith in what he has accomplished will have life after death, with immortality.

Jesus Christ saves people from the power of death

See also:

- [Rom 5:17-18, 20-21](#) ; [2Tim 1:10](#) 

Luke 1:78-79 ... because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby *the sunrise shall visit us*^s *from on high* ⁷⁹*to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.* 

^s Or *when the sunrise shall dawn upon us*; some manuscripts *since the sunrise has visited us*

The “sunrise” refers to the Messiah. The phrase “who sit in darkness” probably refers to people living in the darkness of their sins. The subsequent phrase, “in the shadow of death”, may well then be speaking of people living under the prospect of eternal “death”, the consequence of their sins. The light given by the Messiah would save people from this.

John 8:51 Truly, truly, I say to you, *if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.* 

Those who follow Jesus’ teaching will not see “death”, i.e. the conclusive and irrevocable destruction of the afterlife.

1Cor 15:54-57 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*” ⁵⁵*“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”* ⁵⁶*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 

Through Jesus Christ believers are given victory over death (vv. 54-55, 57). The “sting” of death – its “power to hurt” (GNT) – comes from sin; sin’s potency in turn comes from the consequent condemnation of the sinner by the law (v. 56). So

with the law no longer being what determines a believer’s righteousness – because of what Jesus Christ accomplished – death no longer has a “sting” for believers.

Heb 2:14-15 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, *that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,* ¹⁵*and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.* 

By destroying or breaking the power of the devil (cf. NLT) – the one who holds the power of death – Jesus Christ saves people from the power of death and frees them from enslavement caused by their fear of death. This enslavement may refer to being encumbered and stifled by a fear of death, or possibly to enslavement to Satan as the one who wields the power of death.

Note: The book of life

On occasions the Bible makes reference to “the book of life”. In this book are listed only the names of those who will receive eternal life. Those whose names are not written in the book of life, instead of having eternal life, will suffer spiritual death.

Phil 4:3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion,^t help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, *whose names are in the book of life.* 

^t Or *loyal Syzygus*; Greek *true yokefellow*

Rev 3:5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and *I will never blot his name out of the book of life.* I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. 

Rev 13:7b-8 And authority was given it [the first beast] over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸and all who dwell on earth will worship it, *everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.* 

The reference to the book of life “of the Lamb” (cf. [Rev 21:27](#) ) appears to imply that Jesus Christ has authority over it, determining whose names are included in it or omitted from it (cf. [Rev 3:5](#) ).

Rev 20:12, 15 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. *Then another book was opened, which is the book of life.* And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.  ... ¹⁵*And if anyone’s name was not found*



written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.



Rev 21:27 But *nothing unclean will ever enter it*, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, *but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

This speaks of entry into the new Jerusalem of the afterlife.

Ps 69:28 Let them be *blotted out of the book of the living*; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

Wicked people are spoken of here.

Ex 32:32-33 But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of *your book that you have written.*³³ But the LORD said to Moses, *"Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book."*

The "book" is understood to be the same one referred to in the other verses in this subsection.

Dan 12:1-2 At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time *your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.*² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Generally commentators interpret v. 1 to be referring to the end days as a time of distress primarily for God's people, with the reign of the antichrist quite possibly in view (cf. 11:36). The eternal deliverance of those whose names are "written in the book" is probably in view (cf. vv. 2-3), bringing "everlasting life" (v. 2).

✦ Believers' names are "written in heaven":

Luke 10:20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that *your names are written in heaven.*

Similarly Hebrews 12:23 speaks of "the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven."

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ

See also:

- *The OT says the ruler will bring justice and salvation to the nations*, p. 485

The term "Jew" basically refers to the descendants of the people of the former Israelite kingdom of Judah. In NT times these people largely lived in the southern part of the land of Israel. The term "Gentiles" refers to non-Jewish people.

In OT times it was firstly only the Israelites, then after the Babylonian captivity more specifically the Jews, who were "God's people" and as such knew of God's salvation. But through Jesus Christ's mission, God has made salvation open to the Gentiles.

Subsections

- God has extended his salvation to the Gentiles
- God has provided salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ died for all people
- God has made the way of faith in Jesus Christ open to Gentiles as well as Jews – there is no difference
- The gospel about Jesus Christ is preached also to the Gentiles . . .
- . . . Through the gospel Gentiles come to faith
- God has given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles as well as to Jews

God has extended his salvation to the Gentiles

Luke 3:6 ... and *all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

Acts 13:26, 47-48 "Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. ...⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, *"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."*⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

In v. 26, "those among you who fear God" refers to Gentiles, in contrast to "sons of the family of Abraham" which refers to Jews. In v. 47 Paul applies God's words to the Messiah to his own work, his work being part of the fulfillment of God's plan to bring salvation to the Gentiles through the Messiah.



Acts 28:28 Therefore let it be known to you that *this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.*^u ☞

^u Some manuscripts add verse 29: *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, having much dispute among themselves*

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of *the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* ☞

The use of "Greek" in comparison to "Jews" (v. 23) denotes Gentiles.

Rom 11:11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass *salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.* ☞

Rev 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, *a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,* ¹⁰*and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"* ☞

This strongly suggests that this great multitude "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (v. 9) – largely Gentiles – had been granted God's salvation (v. 10).

Acts 10:10-15, 28, 34-35 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." ¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time, "*What God has made clean, do not call common.*" ☞ ... ²⁸And he [Peter] said to them, "*You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.*" ☞ ... ³⁴So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that *God shows no partiality,* ³⁵*but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*" ☞

Peter's vision revealed God had granted the Gentiles salvation. The vision showed firstly that God's people were to no longer follow the OT stipulations regarding unclean food (vv. 12-15), but the greater applications that Peter was soon to learn were that Jews were no longer to view Gentiles as unclean (v. 28) and that God accepts all people (vv. 34-35).

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "*Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.*" ☞

Acts 15:3, 12 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, *describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles,* and brought great joy to all the brothers.^v ☞ ... ¹²And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as *they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.* ☞

^v Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 22

The fact that Gentiles had been converted (v. 3) and that God's miraculous signs and wonders had been performed among the Gentiles (v. 12), reflect that God had extended his salvation to the Gentiles. Note that similarly to v. 12, 21:19 says, "After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry."

✚ **Jesus Christ sent Paul to the Gentiles, to turn them to God, so that they might be forgiven and sanctified:**

Acts 26:16-18 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from *the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you* ¹⁸*to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.* ☞

God has provided salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ . . .

Luke 2:27-32 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹"Lord, now you are letting your servant^w depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for *my eyes have seen your salvation* ³¹*that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,* ³²*a light for revelation to the Gentiles,* and for glory to your people Israel." ☞

^w Greek *bondservant*

Rom 1:4-5 ... and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, *Jesus Christ our Lord,* ⁵*through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,* ... ☞



Through Jesus Christ believers, like Paul, have received from God the ministry of calling people from among all the Gentiles to faith and obedience – which lead to salvation. Particularly if the phrase “through whom” has in view what Jesus Christ has accomplished (cf. NlrV), this reflects that God has provided salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

Rom 10:12-13 For there is no distinction between *Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.* ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Arguably the context indicates that “Lord” is most likely referring to Jesus Christ (cf. v. 9). Salvation comes to both Jews and Gentiles through calling on Christ’s name – which involves looking to him in faith, believing what the gospel says of him.

Rom 15:8-12 For I tell you that *Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,* ⁹*and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.* As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” ¹⁰And again it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” ¹¹And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.” ¹²And again Isaiah says, “*The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.*”

Christ’s ministry to the Jews was to confirm God’s promises to the patriarchs (v. 8), particularly the promise that they would be a blessing to all nations. The prime blessing that would come by them would be salvation through the Messiah. So the Gentiles would both praise God and rejoice with the Jews over the fulfillment of these promises (vv. 9-11), and put their hope – presumably primarily hope for salvation – in the Messiah (v. 12).

1Cor 1:21, 23-24 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, *it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.* ... ²³*but we preach Christ crucified,* a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴*but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

God saves people through belief in the message of Jesus Christ and his death (vv. 21, 23). As such Jesus Christ is the power and wisdom of God for salvation for both Jews and Gentiles (v. 24).

Gal 3:13-14 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—*for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴*so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit^x through faith.*

^x Greek *receive the promise of the Spirit*

The blessing given to Abraham is most likely justification by faith (cf. vv. 6-9) – a key aspect of salvation. Through Christ and his redemptive work (v. 13), this blessing has come to the Gentiles (v. 14).

Col 1:27 *To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Jesus Christ’s spiritual presence with every believer, including Gentiles, gives them the real hope of sharing through him in the glory of the afterlife – and thus also having salvation.

... Jesus Christ died for all people

Jesus died for all people, making it possible for anyone to be saved.

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And *the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*

2Cor 5:14-15 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that *one has died for all,* therefore all have died; ¹⁵*and he died for all,* that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

The usages of “all” here may refer to all people. If this is so, “one has died for all, therefore all have died” (v. 14) would mean that as Jesus Christ died on behalf of all, his substitutionary death is applicable to all people – “all share in his death” (GNT) – although it must still be appropriated by each individual. Some however interpret “all” as referring only to all believers. This would mean that “all died” (v. 14) is then either referring to only believers sharing in his death, or to believers dying to their old sinful selves – “we have all died to the old life we used to live” (NLT).

1Tim 2:5-6 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man^y *Christ Jesus,* ⁶*who gave himself as a ransom for all,* which is the testimony given at the proper time.

^y *men* and *man* render the same Greek word that is translated *people* in verses 1 and 4

Heb 2:9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so *that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*



Note that “so that” appears to continue on from Jesus being “for a little while was made lower than the angels” rather than to him being “crowned with glory and honor”.

1Jn 2:2 *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ...

The inclusion of this verse in this subsection needs to be qualified. This verse is not necessarily implying that Jesus died for all people, only actually saying that he died for people from all nations. As such, it may be in the same vein as John 11:51-52, speaking of all of God’s people of all nationalities rather than simply all people.

2Pet 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, *even denying the Master who bought them*, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

This speaks of the false teachers – who presumably are not truly believers – as being bought by Christ’s death. As such this suggests that Jesus Christ paid the price to redeem every person, including those who fail to recognize and accept his redemption.

✦ **By his death Jesus drew all people to himself:**

John 12:32-33 *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.* ³³He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Verse 32 most likely means that when Jesus was “lifted up on the cross” (NLT), he would draw people – or in effect begin to draw people – from all nations to himself for salvation.

God has made the way of faith in Jesus Christ open to Gentiles as well as Jews – there is no difference

See also:

- a) *Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ*, p. 640

Acts 14:1, 27 Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ... ²⁷And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how *he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*

Acts 21:20, 25 And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, “You see, brother, *how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed.* They are all zealous for the law, ... ²⁵But as for *the Gentiles who have believed*, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled,^z and from sexual immorality.”

^z Some manuscripts omit *and from what has been strangled*

As with 14:1 above, this indicates that many Gentiles as well as Jews believed, adhering to God’s way of faith – indicative of it being made open to both Gentiles and Jews.

Acts 15:9 ... and *he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.*

The phrase “us and them” refers to Jews and Gentiles – as do “the circumcised... and the uncircumcised” in Romans 3:30 below.

Rom 3:22-24, 29-30 ... *the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,* ... ²⁹Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Rom 10:8-13 But what does it say? “*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart*” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Gal 3:8, 13-14 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify^a the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ... ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit^b through faith.

^a Or *count righteous*; also verses 11, 24



^b Greek *receive the promise of the Spirit*

The blessing given to Abraham (v. 14) most likely refers to justification by faith (v. 8). Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law (v. 13) – the former way to righteousness and justification, which is in contrast to the way of faith (cf. vv. 9-12). Christ did this in order that the blessing of justification by faith might come to the Gentiles through him (v. 14).

The gospel about Jesus Christ is preached also to the Gentiles . . .

Mark 13:10 And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. 

Acts 13:26 Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. 

As noted earlier, in this context “those among you who fear God” is referring to Gentiles.

Acts 26:19-20 Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. 

Rom 15:15-19 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.¹⁸ For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed,¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ... 

Illyricum (v. 19) was a province of the Roman Empire, north of Macedonia. In preaching the gospel “from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum”, Paul preached in numerous predominantly Gentile cities.

Gal 2:7-8 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised⁸ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ... 

2Tim 4:17a But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. 

. . . Through the gospel Gentiles come to faith

See also:

▪ Rom 15:18 

Acts 13:47-48 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. 

Acts 15:7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 

Acts 26:17-18 ... delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. 

Here Paul reiterates Christ’s commission to him to take the gospel to the Gentiles to enlighten them and turn them to God (v. 18a), so that they would be forgiven and sanctified by faith in Christ (v. 18b).

Rom 1:4b-5, 14-17 ... Jesus Christ our Lord,⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,  ...¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians,^c both to the wise and to the foolish.¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,^d as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”^e 

^c That is, non-Greeks

^d Or *beginning and ending in faith*

^e Or *The one who by faith is righteous shall live*

Paul again is speaking of his call to preach the gospel about Jesus Christ (cf. vv. 1-3, 9) to the Gentiles, so that by believing it they would be saved (v. 16), made righteous by faith (v. 17). Note that “Greeks and barbarians” (v. 14) refers here to the



Gentiles as being either of cultured Greek ways or uncultured, i.e. non-Greeks (cf. text note). Presumably Paul expected to find both categories of Gentiles at Rome (v. 15).

Rom 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to *my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ*, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings *has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith*—

1Cor 1:21, 23-24 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, *it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.* ... ²³*but we preach Christ crucified*, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴*but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

As noted earlier, this indicates that God saves people through belief in the message of Jesus Christ and his death (vv. 21, 23). As such Jesus Christ is the power and wisdom of God for salvation for both Jews and Gentiles (v. 24) who believe.

God has given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles as well as to Jews

Acts 10:44-46a While Peter was still saying these things, *the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.* ⁴⁵And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because *the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.* ⁴⁶*For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.*

Acts 11:15-17 *As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.* ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷*If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?*

Here and in 15:8 immediately below, Peter speaks of the events of 10:44-46a above, where Jewish believers witnessed the Holy Spirit being given also to Gentiles who believed.

Acts 15:8 *And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ...*

Rom 15:16 ... to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so *that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

Being “sanctified by the Holy Spirit” involves receiving the Holy Spirit. Thus this verse implies that God has given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles.

1Cor 12:13 *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^f or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

^f Or servants; Greek bondservants

Gal 3:14 ... so that *in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit^g through faith.*

^g Greek receive the promise of the Spirit

Christ brought redemption (cf. v.13) in order that justification by faith would come to the Gentiles through him, so that all – including Gentiles – might receive the promised Holy Spirit.

‡ The promise of the Holy Spirit for repentant Jews and Gentiles:

Acts 2:38-39 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and *you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* ³⁹*For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.*”

The “promise” (v. 39) is that of the Holy Spirit (cf. AMP), here promised to not only repentant Jews but also to “all who are far off” (v. 39), which probably refers to Gentiles.

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) The Gentiles as Part of God's People

See also:

- *God largely rejected the Jews and accepted the Gentiles, due to the Jews rejecting Christ and the gospel . . .*, p. 633
- *. . . The Jews' negative response contrasted with the responsiveness of the Gentiles*, p. 635
- *Despite Israel's current state – which has benefited the Gentiles – Israel will be saved*, p. 636

Subsections

- Gentiles have been accepted by God as being of his people
- Jesus Christ has made Jews and Gentiles one
- Gentiles have been included in the true "Israel" . . .
- . . . God's people are now of the heavenly Jerusalem
- Those who have faith are the true, spiritual children of Abraham . . .
- . . . and God's promise or blessing to Abraham is for all who have faith
- Note: Believing Jews still have a privileged status, amongst God's people

Gentiles have been accepted by God as being of his people

See also:

- Eph 2:19 ↓

Acts 10:34-35 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that *God shows no partiality*,³⁵ *but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*"

Acts 15:7-9, 14-19 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.⁸ *And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,*⁹ *and he made no distinction between us and them,* having cleansed their hearts by faith. . . [James:]¹⁴ *Simeon [Simon Peter] has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.*¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,¹⁶ "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will

rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,¹⁷ *that the remnant^h of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things*¹⁸ *known from of old.'*¹⁹ Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of *the Gentiles who turn to God, ...*

☰

^h Or rest

In v. 14 James is referring to God earlier saving some Gentiles through Simon Peter's preaching to them (vv. 7-9; **Acts 10:34-35** ↑). He then appears to use a quotation that ultimately refers to the end of the age (vv. 16-18) to affirm that what Peter had described – along with the general concept of the Gentiles coming to God (v. 19) – is consistent with the Scriptures.

These verses provide evidence that people from among the Gentiles have been accepted by God as being of his people along with Jews, in that: God gave the Gentiles the Holy Spirit just as he did to Jews (v. 8) making no distinction between Gentiles and Jews (v. 9); God had not long before taken some Gentile people for himself through Peter (vv. 7-9, 14); there are Gentiles who are called by God's name (v. 17); and Gentiles are said to have turned to God (v. 19).

Rom 9:22-26 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for *vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—*²⁴ *even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?*²⁵ *As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"*²⁶ *"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"*

☰

In vv. 25-26 Paul quotes from Hosea to show that from among the Gentiles who formerly were not God's people, would now be those who God would call his people (cf. **1Pet 2:10** ↓).

1Pet 2:9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

Peter was writing to readers who were predominantly Gentiles.

Rom 15:10 And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."

☰



This speaks of the Gentiles rejoicing “together with his people” (NCV™; cf. AMP, NLT), arguably pointing to them now being part of “his people”, i.e. part of God’s people.

2Cor 6:16 What agreement has *the temple of God* with idols? *For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”* 📖

Most of Paul’s letters were written to churches composed basically of Gentiles, as was the church at Corinth. So references to them being God’s people – as in this verse – illustrate that Gentiles are included in the people of God. The same can be said of expressions such as “God’s chosen ones” (Col 3:12 ↓).

Col 3:12 Put on then, *as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved*, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ... 📖

Rom 16:4 ... who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but *all the churches of the Gentiles* give thanks as well. 📖

The forming of churches by Gentiles illustrates that they had become part of the people of God.

Jesus Christ has made Jews and Gentiles one

See also:

- *All believers – including Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free – are one body “in” Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 788

John 10:16 *And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also*, and they will listen to my voice. *So there will be one flock, one shepherd.* 📖

The “other sheep that are not of this fold” are the Gentiles, who are not of Judaism.

John 11:50-52 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that *Jesus would die for the nation [of Israel], ⁵²and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.* 📖

Eph 2:11-20 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and

strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,ⁱ but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ...* 📖

ⁱ Or sojourners

The references to “peace” and “hostility” in vv. 14-16 are quite possibly referring to that between Gentiles and Jews, rather than between them and God; this may also be the case with “peace” in v. 17. However, having said this, this peace between them was only made possible by Christ’s work in making peace between them and God, i.e. in reconciling both of them to God (v. 16a).

Note that “brought near” (v. 13) may be referring to being brought near to Israel and “the covenants of the promise”, as per the theme of the following subsection. Alternatively, as a number of other translations stipulate, it may be talking of being brought near to God. Even if the latter interpretation is correct, the passage is still very pertinent to the following subsection (as it is to this subsection) indicating that believing Gentiles now have “citizenship in Israel” (NIV® vv. 12, 19).

Eph 3:6 This mystery is^j that *the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* 📖

^j The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

Note that commentators differ somewhat on what “the promise” refers to, but it does seem clear that it is a promise relating to the saving work of the Messiah – in which Gentile believers share in together with Jewish believers.

Col 3:11 *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,^k free; but Christ is all, and in all.* 📖

^k Greek bondservant

“Christ is all, and in all” points to Christ as being that which unifies his people. He is “all that matters” (CEV, NLT); all the distinctions previously referred to become irrelevant, no longer forming any kind of barrier. Note that in addition to



"Greek", Gentiles are also referred to here by the terms "uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian" – with the latter two speaking of uncivilized Gentiles in particular, in contrast to "Greek".

Rev 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood *you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation*, ¹⁰*and you have made them a kingdom* and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." 

Jesus Christ has formed people "from every tribe and language and people and nation" into one kingdom.

Gentiles have been included in the true "Israel" . . .

See also:

- [Eph 2:11-20](#) 
- *. . . and nations will be established with Israel as God's people*, p. 1013

Gal 6:15-16 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon *the Israel of God*. 

The term "Israel of God" (v. 16) refers to those who are "a new creation" (v. 15b). It stands in contrast with circumcision (v. 15a) – the sign of God's old covenant with Israel, in which they were his people. As such the term alludes to a new "Israel" – "the new people of God" (NLT), "God's true people" (CEV). This new people of God is composed not just of believing Israelites or Jews, but believing Gentiles as well.

Rom 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But *a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter*. His praise is not from man but from God. 

Verse 29 may be saying that any person can be considered a "true Jew" (NCV™, NLT; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT) if they are one "inwardly" – and so these verses would be rightly included in this subsection. On the other hand it may be speaking of only Jews, differentiating between those who inwardly manifest all that Jews ought to be and those who are only outwardly Jews. Note that "letter" (v. 29) is a reference to the "the written Law" (GNT; cf. CEV), which is visible and "outward", in contrast to the Spirit.

Rom 11:17-18 But if some of the branches were broken off, and *you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among*

the others and now share in the nourishing root¹ of the olive tree, ¹⁸do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. 

¹ Greek *root of richness*; some manuscripts *richness*

The natural olive "root" represents Israel, particularly the patriarchs with whom Israel's relationship with God was established. The "wild olive shoot" represents Gentile believers accepted into the true, spiritual Israel (i.e. God's people).

Rom 15:27 For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if *the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings*, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. 

That the Gentiles have now been accepted into the true "Israel" is reflected here by the fact that they now share in the Jews' spiritual blessings.

Rev 7:4 And I heard *the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: . . .* 

The phrase "every tribe of the sons of Israel" – here sealed for protection against forthcoming judgments – may be symbolic of the whole church as the new, spiritual Israel (which would mean that the verse is relevant to this subsection). Alternatively actual Jewish believers may be in view.

Ps 73:1 *Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.* 

An application can be made of this verse to the concept of the true "Israel" being composed of all godly people, including Gentiles.

Isa 44:5 *This one will say, 'I am the LORD's,' another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, 'The LORD's,' and name himself by the name of Israel.* 

This may well be alluding to the conversion of people from among the Gentiles, becoming part of "Israel" and likewise identifying with Jacob.

. . . God's people are now of the heavenly Jerusalem

See also:

- *God's people will live in the new Jerusalem*, p. 729
- *Description of the new Jerusalem*, p. 730

For Jews, Jerusalem is the focal point of their worship and identity. But those of the new or renewed people of God –



the true "Israel" – ultimately belong to the new Jerusalem. It is where they will dwell forever with God.

Gal 4:25-26 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia;^m she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But *the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.* 

^mSome manuscripts *For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia*

Those who live as Jews, under the law given at Mount Sinai, are associated with the present city of Jerusalem (v. 25). Contrastingly believers are of the heavenly Jerusalem. The heavenly Jerusalem is the "mother" of believers in at least two senses. Firstly, they are born again of what she represents – a faith that is free of slavery to the law (cf. vv. 24-25). Secondly – as per the theme of this subsection – they belong to her. This second point is indicative of the heavenly Jerusalem being where believers belong – their ultimate home.

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ... 

In a spiritual, positional sense, believers now partake in the heavenly Jerusalem and what it signifies, assured of the full realization of this.

Rev 3:12 The one who conquers, *I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.* 

Having the name of the new Jerusalem written on one, signifies that one belongs to her. Those who overcome, persisting in their faith, will be marked as such. Moreover, they will be an integral part of God's temple, presumably his temple in the new Jerusalem and a key part of it as the earthly temple was of Jerusalem.

Rev 21:2, 9-10 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.  ... ⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ... 

The new Jerusalem will be inhabited by God's people. In view of this, some commentators see this depiction of the new Jerusalem as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband, to be a portrayal of the church as Christ's bride. As such it would speak of God's people, members of the church, being of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Those who have faith are the true, spiritual children of Abraham . . .

Rom 4:9-12, 16-18 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that *faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.* ¹⁰How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? *It was not after, but before he was circumcised.* ¹¹He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. *The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹²and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.*  ... ¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to *all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."* 

The term "the circumcised" (vv. 9, 12) denotes Jews and "the uncircumcised" (v. 9) denotes Gentiles.

Rom 9:6-9 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For *not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."* ⁸*This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.* ⁹For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son." 

There is a similar issue in this passage to that commented on in 2:28-29 in the previous subsection. Paul may be speaking of all believers who prove to be spiritual kin of Abraham by having faith in God's promises – hence its inclusion here. However some commentators understand it more literally as referring to the Jews in contrast to other descendants of Abraham, the Jews being descendants of Isaac (v. 7) who was promised to Abraham (vv. 8-9). Possibly Paul is using terms indicative of the latter meaning to allude to the former.

Gal 3:6-7 ... just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? ⁷Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 



Luke 19:8-9 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, *the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.*"⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. 📖

The assertion that Zacchaeus was "a son of Abraham" (v. 9) seems to refer to Zacchaeus' faith, evidenced by his actions (v. 8), implying that he was not merely a physical descendant but also a spiritual descendant of "Abraham, the man of faith" (Gal 3:9 ↓).

Matt 3:7-10 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹*And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.* ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 📖

This points to the fact that Jews are not necessarily children of Abraham in a spiritual sense, while Gentiles can become so (v. 9b). Moreover, unrepentant Jews will be cut off from Abraham, and so no longer be of God's people (v. 10)

... and God's promise or blessing to Abraham is for all who have faith

See also:

- *By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him*, p. 644

The background to the following passages is that because Abraham believed God's promise that his descendants would be countless like the stars, God credited Abraham's belief (or faith) to him as righteousness (cf. Gen 15:5-6). Note that in a number of the following passages Paul speaks of this blessing of righteousness – given in association with God's promise – as being itself a promise.

Rom 4:9-11 *Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.* ¹⁰*How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.* ¹¹*He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ...* 📖

As soon becomes clear, v. 9 is speaking of the blessedness of people to whom, like Abraham, God credits righteousness by faith apart from works (cf. vv. 1-6). (Note that these three verses were included in the previous subsection, but here italics have been applied to additional clauses pertaining to the theme of this subsection.)

Rom 4:13-16 *For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.* ¹⁴For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶That is why it [the promise] *depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham*, who is the father of us all, ... 📖

There is no record of God specifically promising Abraham that "he would be heir of the world" (v. 13). Paul could be alluding to Abraham being the father of all believers, who like him would be granted righteousness by faith. As such, Paul would have in view the promise that Abraham would be "the father of many nations" (vv. 17, 18 ↑), Gentiles as well as Jews. This interpretation appears to be supported by the cross reference in the ESV to Genesis 17:4-6. Alternatively, it could be referring to Abraham and his spiritual offspring inheriting the earth (cf. Matt 5:5) – in the form of the world to come – as an ultimate fulfillment or extension of the promise to Abraham that he would inherit the land of Canaan.

Verse 14 is saying that if it is through the law that one is to become an heir then the role of faith is nullified and the promise is void, in part at least because no one can keep the law – which in fact brings wrath (v. 15). In v. 16, "the adherent of the law" refers to Jews – to whom the law was given – in the context probably believing Jews in particular.

Gal 3:9 *So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.* 📖

Gal 3:14, 16, 22-24, 29 ... *so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit^a through faith.* 📖 ... ¹⁶*Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.* 📖 ... ²²But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, *so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.* ²³Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴So then, the law was our guardian until *Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.* 📖 ... ²⁹*And if you are*



Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. 

ⁿ Greek receive the promise of the Spirit

The "blessing of Abraham" (v. 14a) primarily refers to justification by faith (v. 24; cf. v. 8 ↓), by which we receive the promised Spirit (v. 14b). Similarly, the "promises" (v. 16) and "the promise" (v. 22) probably refer to righteousness or justification by faith and to the Spirit – possibly along with associated blessings, particularly salvation and life. The promises were made to Abraham and to his "offspring", Christ (v. 16) – in whom they are fulfilled. The promises are shared in by faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 14, 22), by which one is identified with Christ as Abraham's offspring (v. 29).

† **God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham is fulfilled by God justifying the Gentiles by faith:**

Gal 3:8 *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify^o the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."* 

^o Or count righteous; also verses 11, 24

God promised to bless all nations through Abraham (cf. . . . *and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham*, p. 323). This promise is fulfilled by God justifying the Gentiles by faith. For all who follow Abraham's example of having faith in what God has said are considered righteous as he was, and so are justified. As reflected in the following subsection, a related aspect of God's fulfillment of this promise is that Jesus Christ – the object of the faith that leads to justification for people of all nations – was himself a descendant of Abraham. So as the Savior of all nations came through Abraham, the nations were thus blessed through Abraham.

Note: Believing Jews still have a privileged status, amongst God's people

The Jews' privileged status is largely related to their religious heritage (cf. **Rom 3:2 ↓**; **Rom 9:4-5 ↓**; **Acts 3:25a ↓**) and to the related fact that salvation came through them (cf. **Rom 9:5 ↓**; **Acts 3:25 ↓**; **Luke 2:30-32 ↓**; **John 4:22 ↓**).

Rom 3:1-2 *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ²Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.* 

Rom 9:3-5 *For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers,^p my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵To them belong the*

patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. 

^p Or brothers and sisters

The clause "to them belong the adoption" (v. 4) refers to God effectively adopting Israel as his children (cf. Deut 14:1; Ex 4:22; Isa 43:6; Hos 1:1). The phrase "the glory" (v. 4) probably refers partly at least to the manifestations of God's glory to the Israelites, such as in the cloud in the desert (cf. Ex 16:10) and in the temple (cf. 1Ki 8:10-11).

Acts 3:25 *You [Jews] are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'* 

Luke 2:30-32 *... for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ^{32a}a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.* 

The clause "for glory to your people Israel" implies that God's salvation would bring glory or honor to Israel because of the Messiah – the means of God's salvation – coming from Israel.

John 4:22 *You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.* 

† **On Judgment Day, punishment and rewards will be given to Jews first:**

Rom 2:9-10 *There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.* 

This order may suggest that the Jews have a primacy in both status and responsibility.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Epilogue: Jesus Christ's Mission and Israel

Subsections

- Jesus Christ came foremost to Israel . . .
- . . . and the gospel of Christ was first preached to the Jews
- But the Jews largely rejected Jesus Christ . . .



- ... and many Jews strongly opposed the spreading of the gospel
- The Jews' negative response to Jesus Christ brought God's judgment
- God largely rejected the Jews and accepted the Gentiles, due to the Jews rejecting Christ and the gospel . . .
- ... The Jews' negative response contrasted with the responsiveness of the Gentiles
- But God has left a faithful remnant of Israel
- Despite Israel's current state – which has benefited the Gentiles – Israel will be saved

Jesus Christ came foremost to Israel . . .

See also:

- [Acts 13:23-24](#) ↓

Acts 3:26 *God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you [Jews] first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.* 📖

Matt 2:6 “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for *from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.*” 📖

One aspect of Jesus' role as “shepherd” of Israel in his first advent was to guide the people in God's ways, leading them to salvation.

Matt 4:23 *And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.* 📖

Galilee, Samaria and Judea (cf. [Acts 10:36-39a](#) ↓) were adjoining regions – listed here north to south – which largely encompassed the land of Israel. At least most of Jesus' ministry took place in these regions, thus reflecting the prominence of Israel in his mission.

Matt 10:5-6 *These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* 📖

Jesus' directions to his disciples reflect the priority of the people of Israel, the Jews, in his own mission.

Matt 15:21-28 *And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is*

severely oppressed by a demon.” ²³But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” ²⁴*He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶*And he answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”* ²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.¶ 📖

¶ *Greek from that hour*

Jesus' words appear to point out that the people of Israel were the primary focus of his mission (vv. 24, 26), while also testing the faith of the Canaanite woman (vv. 26, 28).

John 11:51-52 *He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.* 📖

Here “nation” refers to the Jewish nation. The mention of Jesus dying for the Jewish nation before reference is made to the “children of God” of other nations, arguably points to the primacy of the Jews in Jesus' mission.

Acts 10:36-39a *As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.* 📖

Luke 1:16-17 *And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.* 📖

John the Baptist's ministry, preliminary to Jesus Christ's ministry, is spoken of here. John was to minister to “the children of Israel” (v. 16) – “to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (v. 17), i.e. for Jesus to come to them. This points to the priority of Israel in Jesus' mission.

Acts 5:31 *God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* 📖

Israel is given prominence even in this reference to Jesus Christ after his mission.



... and the gospel of Christ was first preached to the Jews

Acts 11:19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, *speaking the word to no one except Jews.* 

Acts 2:5, 14, 22-24, 36-39 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem *Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.*  ... ¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: *“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.*  ... ²²“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.  ... ³⁶Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” ³⁷Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” 

This is the first recorded proclamation of the gospel following Jesus’ ascension, made to a crowd largely composed of Jews.

Acts 13:14-16, 23-26, 43 ... but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And *on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue* and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.” ¹⁶So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: *“Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen.*  ... ²³Of this man’s offspring *God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.* ²⁴Before his coming, *John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.* ²⁵And as John was finishing his course, he said, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’ ²⁶“Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation.  ... ⁴³And after the

meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. 

This is an example of the priority given to the Jews in the early preaching of the gospel. Note that in this context “you who fear God” (vv. 16, 26) likely denotes Gentiles. However these Gentiles would have been converts to Judaism, as indicated in v. 43 and by the fact that they were worshipping in a Jewish synagogue (vv. 14-16).

Acts 13:45-46 But when *the Jews* saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁶And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, *“It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you.* Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 

Acts 18:5-6 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, *testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.* ⁶And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. *From now on I will go to the Gentiles.*” 

This implies that Paul had initially made the Jews his priority in spreading the gospel.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of *the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* 

The phrase “to the Jew first” alludes to their unique position and chronological precedence, in which God used them in bringing his revelation and plan of salvation to the whole world. They were God’s chosen people, the recipients of the OT laws and prophecies, the participants with God in the first covenant, and the people through whom the Messiah came. Additionally, the gospel was to be first revealed to them, which is what Paul has in view here.

✦ **Jesus Christ’s ministry to the Jews was to bring salvation to the Gentiles:**

Rom 15:8-9 For I tell you that *Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,* ⁹*and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.* As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.” 

Christ’s ministry to the Jews – “the circumcised” – was in order to confirm God’s promises to the patriarchs (v. 8), particularly the promise that they would be a blessing to all



nations. The prime blessing that would come by them would be salvation through the Messiah. The Gentiles would then glorify God for his mercy to them through the fulfillment of these promises (v. 9).

But the Jews largely rejected Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- 1Thes 2:14-16 ↴
- . . . *However, many others did not believe Jesus*, p. 568
- c) *Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death*, p. 570

John 3:32 He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet *no one receives his testimony*. ☞

This indicates that the Jewish people largely did not accept Jesus' message.

John 4:44 (For *Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown*.) ☞

This illustrates Jesus' rejection by the Jews, referring here in particular to those of his hometown.

John 1:11 He came to his own,^r and *his own people^s did not receive him*. ☞

^r Greek to *his own things*; that is, to his own domain, or to his own people

^s *People* is implied in Greek

Although the first occurrence of "own" is sometimes taken to refer to the world (cf. v. 10), the second at least is more often understood to be referring to Jesus' own people, the Jews.

John 5:16-18 And *this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath*.¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."¹⁸ *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God*. ☞

Note that references to Jesus being persecuted by the Jews, generally have the Jewish leaders in view.

John 8:48, 52-53 *The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"* ☞ ...⁵² *The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'*⁵³ *Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"* ☞

John 10:30-33, 37-39 I and the Father are one."³¹ *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him*.³² Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"³³ *The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."* ☞ ...³⁷ *If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;*³⁸ *but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.*"³⁹ *Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands*. ☞

Acts 3:13-15 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant^t *Jesus, whom you [Jews] delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him*.¹⁴ *But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,*¹⁵ *and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses*. ☞

^t Or *child*; also verse 26

Acts 7:51-54 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you."⁵² *Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered,*⁵³ *you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."*⁵⁴ *Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him*. ☞

Note that in addition to the Jews' betrayal and killing of Jesus Christ (v. 52b), Stephen also points out other aspects of their obstinacy towards God (vv. 51-53) – raising their ire (v. 54), leading to them stoning him (cf. 59).

. . . and many Jews strongly opposed the spreading of the gospel

Acts 9:22-23, 28-29 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and *confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ*.²³ *When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him,* ☞ ...²⁸ *So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord*.²⁹ *And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists.*^u *But they were seeking to kill him*. ☞

^u That is, Greek-speaking Jews



Acts 13:44-45, 49-50 The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁹And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. ⁵⁰But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Acts 14:19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

Acts 17:13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

Acts 18:12-13 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law."

Acts 20:19 ... serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ...

Note that Paul is speaking here – and in the following passages.

Acts 26:19-21 Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. ²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

2Cor 11:23-24 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

1Thes 2:14-16 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind ¹⁶by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!

^v Or *completely, or forever*

Note that opinions vary as to which revelation of God's wrath is being referred to in v. 16. It could be a contemporary occurrence, or possibly a future one – with the present tense being used to indicate its certainty. It could concern one particular group of Jews, or the Jews as a whole. Alternatively, some think that sinful humankind in general may be in view, with the earlier reference to the Thessalonians being persecuted by their own countrymen (v. 14).

✚ **The Jews did not submit to God's righteousness, which comes through Christ:**

Rom 10:1-4 Brothers,^w my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, *being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.* ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.^x

^w Or *Brothers and sisters*

^x Or *end of the law, that everyone who believes may be justified*

The Jews were ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God (v. 3a), through belief in Christ (v. 4). Thus their zeal for God was misplaced (v. 2), as they sought to establish their own righteousness rather than submitting to God's righteousness (v. 3b) by believing in Christ.

The Jews' negative response to Jesus Christ brought God's judgment

See also:

▪ [Matt 21:37-44](#) ↴

Matt 23:29-38 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'* ³¹Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. ³³You serpents, you brood of vipers, *how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?* ³⁴Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, ³⁵so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah,^y whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶Truly, I say



to you, *all these things will come upon this generation.* ³⁷“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁸See, your house is left to you desolate. 📖

^y Some manuscripts omit *the son of Barachiah*

Verse 32 appears to indicate that this generation of Jews – particularly the spiritual leaders (cf. vv. 29-31) – would in a sense bring to completion the sins that their ancestors began. This would include them killing a number of those who would spread the gospel (v. 34). Their generation would suffer a judgment that would be the culmination of God’s judgment for all the righteous blood that they and their forefathers had shed (vv. 35-36). The judgment may refer – initially at least – to the destruction by the Romans of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. [Luke 19:43-44 ↓](#); [Luke 23:28-31 ↓](#)). The “house” (v. 38) that would be left desolate, may be the temple (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT); Jerusalem and the nation are other possibilities. In v. 37, Jesus speaks of his longing to take the Jewish people under his care and guidance, but they were not willing.

[Luke 19:12, 14-15, 27](#) He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. 📖 ... ¹⁴But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’ ¹⁵When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. 📖 ... [The king:] ²⁷But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.” 📖

The king represents Jesus Christ, and his enemies represent the Jews or at least their leaders. Verse 27 has in view their judgment on Jesus Christ’s return.

[Luke 19:41-44](#) And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” 📖

Jesus wept with heartfelt compassion because the people of Jerusalem had not recognized their “visitation” (v. 44b), the time of God’s intervention, providing salvation and the opportunity for peace (v. 42). Consequently they would face

destruction (vv. 43-44) – which came by the Romans in A.D. 70.

[Luke 23:26-31](#) And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ ³¹For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” 📖

In v. 31 “when the wood is green” may refer to the time of Jesus being with them. The verse then would probably be contrasting the Jews’ rejection of Jesus – leading to his crucifixion by the Romans – with the horrors that would befall the Jewish nation in the “dry” time to come when Jerusalem would face destruction by the Romans (cf. [Luke 19:43-44 ↑](#)).

[Rom 11:7-10](#) What then? *Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,* ⁸as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.” ⁹And David says, “Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; ¹⁰let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever.” 📖

Having rejected the gospel of Christ and sought righteousness in their own way, the bulk of the Jews did not obtain righteousness (v. 7a) – in contrast to the elect amongst them. Instead God judicially hardened them, leaving them bereft of spiritual perception (vv. 7b-8) and facing grave punishment (vv. 9-10).

In the psalm from which the quotation in vv. 9-10 is taken, “table” may well allude to the food metaphors of the preceding verse in the psalm, depicting the ill treatment of the psalmist by the wicked. As such Paul may have in mind the wickedness of the Jews in rejecting Christ, using the quotation to speak of the Jews’ unrighteousness leading to judgment. Alternatively some commentators consider that Paul is using the reference to feasting to allude to the rich religious heritage of the Jews under the old covenant as becoming a snare to them in their failure to accept the gospel of the new covenant (v. 9), resulting in looming judgment (v. 10).



✦ Zechariah's portrayal of two shepherds:

Zec 11:7-17 So I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders. And I took two staffs, one I named Favor, the other I named Union. And I tended the sheep. ⁸In one month I destroyed the three shepherds. But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me. ⁹So I said, "I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another."¹⁰And I took my staff Favor, and I broke it, annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples. ¹¹So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep traders, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. ¹²Then I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. ¹³Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter. ¹⁴Then I broke my second staff Union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. ¹⁵Then the LORD said to me, "Take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs. ¹⁷"Woe to my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded!" 

Zechariah firstly portrays a shepherd who many think is the rejected messianic Shepherd-King (vv. 7-14) and then a "foolish" or "worthless" (CEV, GNT, NLT) shepherd (vv. 15-17) – which some understand to symbolize the final anti-Christ. The flock is of course Israel – "doomed to be slaughtered" (v. 7), i.e. marked for God's judgment (cf. vv. 4-6). It is not clear who or what the three shepherds (v. 8) represent. The covenant made with the nations (v. 10) most likely speaks of God having restrained other nations from overrunning Israel; the revoking of this left Israel open to destruction. Verses 12-13 were fulfilled as a prophecy when the Jewish leaders paid Judas thirty silver coins to betray Christ and then, on Judas returning it, using it to buy the potter's field (cf. Matt 27:3-10). Verse 14 then associates the disunity of the nation with its rejection of this first shepherd.

God largely rejected the Jews and accepted the Gentiles, due to the Jews rejecting Christ and the gospel . . .

See also:

- [Matt 8:8-12](#) ; [Acts 28:24-28](#) 

Matt 21:33-46 "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants^z to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, "This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance." ³⁹And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." ⁴²Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;"^a this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" ⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."^b ⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet. 

^z Greek *bondservants*; also verses 35, 36

^a Greek *the head of the corner*

^b Some manuscripts omit verse 44

The master represents God; the servants, his prophets; and the son, Jesus Christ (who is also symbolized by the "stone that the builders rejected", v. 42, cf. v. 44). However opinions differ on the other aspects of the parable. One view is that the vineyard represents the kingdom of God; the tenants depict the Jews generally; and the "other tenants" (v. 41) refers to believers who would come from among the Gentiles. Such a view would neatly fit the theme of this subsection. A somewhat different view is that the vineyard represents Israel; the tenants depict the Jewish leaders; and the "other tenants" (v. 41) refers to all true people of God, not just chiefly Gentiles.



Luke 14:15-18a, 21-24 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”¹⁶ But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.¹⁷ And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant^c to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. ¶ ...²¹ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’²² And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’²³ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’²⁴ For I tell you,^d none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.” ¶

^c Greek *bondservant*; also verses 21, 22, 23

^d The Greek word for *you* here is plural

This is often viewed as alluding to the invitation into God’s kingdom being extended to the Gentiles (v. 23), following its rejection by many of the Jews (vv. 18-20) – who would in turn be denied access into it. Note that v. 21 appears to be portraying the invitation being given to outcasts of Jewish society, many of whom did respond to Jesus and/or the gospel.

Rom 10:16-21 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”¹⁹ But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, “I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry.”²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, “I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”²¹ But of Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.” ¶

After indicating that the Jews generally rejected the gospel (v. 16), Paul examines the possibilities that perhaps this was because they either did not hear it or did not understand it. He emphatically states that they did hear it (v. 18). He then indicates that they should have understood it, using the OT quotations to imply that the Gentiles with less spiritual understanding had responded when confronted with the gospel (vv. 19-20). The Jews’ problem was not that the gospel was beyond their understanding but that they themselves were “a disobedient and contrary people” (v. 21).

Rom 11:11-12, 15 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather *through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.*¹² Now if *their trespass means riches for the world*, and if *their failure means riches for the Gentiles*, how much more will their full inclusion^e mean! ¶ ...¹⁵ For if *their rejection means the reconciliation of the world*, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¶

^e Greek *their fullness*

In vv. 11, 12, “their trespass” refers to the Jews’ rejection of the gospel (cf. v. 28 ↓) and God’s way of righteousness that is by faith. Their “failure” (v. 12) could refer to their failure to take hold of God’s salvation and/or them being rejected by God (v. 15), broken off from their place as his people (cf. vv. 17, 19-20 ↓).

Rom 11:17-22 But if *some of the branches were broken off*, and you [Gentiles], *although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root^f of the olive tree*,¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.¹⁹ Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”²⁰ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.²¹ For if *God did not spare the natural branches*, neither will he spare you.²² Note then the kindness and *the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen*, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. ¶

^f Greek *root of richness*; some manuscripts *richness*

Rom 11:25, 28-31 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers:^g *a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* ¶ ...²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.³⁰ For just as *you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience*,³¹ so they too have now been disobedient in order that by *the mercy shown to you* they also may now^h receive mercy. ¶

^g Or *brothers and sisters*

^h Some manuscripts omit *now*



... The Jews' negative response contrasted with the responsiveness of the Gentiles

See also:

- Rom 10:20 

Matt 8:8-12 But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, ⁱ'Do this,' and he does it." ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel ^h have I found such faith. ¹¹I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹²while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 

ⁱ Greek *bondservant*

^h Some manuscripts *not even in Israel*

Those that would "come from east and west" (v. 11) refers to those who would come from outside of Israel, i.e. Gentiles like the centurion. The "sons of the kingdom" (v. 12) refers to Jews who were as such a part of God's people and of his kingdom, but who without faith would be thrown out. These last two verses are very pertinent to the previous two subsections.

Acts 13:45-48 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁶And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." ⁴⁸And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. 

Acts 18:5-8 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, *testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus*. ⁶And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. *From now on I will go to the Gentiles.*" ⁷And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire

household. *And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.* 

The many Corinthians who believed (v. 8b) would have been largely Gentiles. Note that Crispus (v. 8a), as the synagogue ruler, would have been a Jew. He and his household were exceptions to the generally negative response of the Jews towards the gospel.

Acts 28:24-28 And some [of the Jews in Rome] were convinced by what he said, but *others disbelieved*. ²⁵And disagreeing among themselves, *they departed after Paul had made one statement*: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ²⁶"Go to this people, and say, *You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive*. ²⁷For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' ²⁸Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." ^k 

^k Some manuscripts add verse 29: *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, having much dispute among themselves*

‡ The Gentiles have obtained righteousness, by faith – in contrast to Israel:

Rom 9:30-32a What shall we say, then? That *Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith*; ³¹but that *Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness^l did not succeed in reaching that law*. ³²Why? *Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.* 

^l Greek *a law of righteousness*

In vv. 31-32 Paul appears to be speaking of Israel failing to obtain the righteousness of the law – the righteousness that the law embodied.



But God has left a faithful remnant of Israel

See also:

- *Note: Believing Jews still have a privileged status, amongst God's people*, p. 627

Rom 9:27, 29 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel^m be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, ¶ ... ²⁹And as Isaiah predicted, "If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah." ¶

^mOr children of Israel

Note that v. 29 quotes Isaiah 1:9. Rather than "offspring" (from the Septuagint), the original text is arguably better translated as "survivors" (cf. NRSV, Isaiah 1:9), which more closely reflects the concept of a remnant (v. 27).

Rom 11:1-7 I ask, then, *has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham,ⁿ a member of the tribe of Benjamin.* ²God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ³"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." ⁴But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. ⁷What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. *The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, ...* ¶

ⁿ Or one of the offspring of Abraham

God did not totally reject his people Israel, for as in Elijah's time (vv. 2-4) God chose a remnant from among them. "The elect" (v. 7) refers to those among the Jews – "a chosen few of the people of Israel" (CEV). Israel in general failed to obtain righteousness (cf. 9:31-10:3); in contrast the elected remnant amongst them did.

Acts 2:22, 41 *Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—* ¶ ... ⁴¹*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.* ¶

This and the following references – along with the above cross references – illustrate that thousands of Jews did respond to the Gospel message about Jesus Christ, making up a sizable faithful remnant of Israel.

Acts 4:4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. ¶

The contexts indicate that Jews are primarily in view here and in 5:14 below – as in the other references in this subsection.

Acts 5:14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ... ¶

Acts 14:1 Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ¶

Acts 21:20a And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, *how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed.*" ¶

Despite Israel's current state – which has benefited the Gentiles – Israel will be saved

See also:

- *II. God's Plans for Israel*, p. 981

Rom 11:11-12, 15-16, 23-24 So I ask, *did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.* ¹²Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion^o mean! ¶ ... ¹⁵For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? ¹⁶If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¶ ... ²³And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, *how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.* ¶

^o Greek their fullness

In v. 15, "their rejection" is probably speaking of the Jews being rejected by God, but possibly the Jews' rejection of the gospel is in view (cf. CEV). Opinions differ as to the meaning of "life from the dead" (v. 15). Possibilities include: further spiritual renewal and/or blessing for the world; the resurrection of the dead; or Israel's spiritual resurrection. In v. 16, "firstfruits" and "root" represent the patriarchs, while "whole lump" and "branches" depict the Jewish people as a whole. The verse is not meaning that all Jews are holy, but that God will fulfill his promises made to them as a people (cf. 3:3-4). (cf. NSB)



Rom 11:25-32 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers:^p *a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* ²⁶*And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";* ²⁷*"and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."* ²⁸*As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.* ²⁹*For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* ³⁰*For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,* ³¹*so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now^q receive mercy.* ³²*For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.* 

^p Or *brothers and sisters*

^q Some manuscripts omit *now*

In keeping with the context, the clause "all Israel will be saved" (v. 26) probably refers to Israel as a whole, rather than every individual Israelite or Jew. Alternatively some see it as referring to all redeemed Israelites (or even all believers including Gentiles), past and living. (cf. NEL, ZBC, NBC) Likewise "all" (v. 32) refers not to all individuals but to all peoples, i.e. Jews and Gentiles. Verse 30 is speaking of God's mercy – through the gospel of Jesus Christ – being turned to the formerly disobedient Gentiles as a result of the Jews disobediently rejecting the gospel (vv. 11b-12a, 15, 23, 25, 28). But, v. 31 explains, now that the Jews too have become

disobedient they are able to share in God's mercy shown to the Gentiles.

Matt 23:38-39 *See, your house is left to you desolate.* ³⁹*For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'* 

As noted earlier, v. 38 may speak initially of the desolation of Jerusalem – and the temple in particular – by the Romans. But in light of v. 39, Israel's ongoing state – particularly its spiritual state – may also be alluded to. Verse 39 could well be implying that a good proportion of Jews will rightfully acknowledge Jesus Christ (cf. Zec 12:10), at the time of his return. As such this would point to the salvation of Israel.

✦ **A possible further reference to the end of the prominence of the Gentiles in God's plan of salvation:**

Luke 21:24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.* 

The "times of the Gentiles" may be referring to the time of the Gentiles' prominence, relative to the Jews, in God's plan of salvation. However, the period of Gentile domination of the city of Jerusalem could well be in view instead.

Pray for persecuted Christians



The New Order

I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

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II. Key Elements of the New Order

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I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

See also:

- c) *God's Covenant with Israel and the Law*, p. 332
- II. *The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin*, p. 384
- *The first covenant (with its priesthood and law) was inadequate and superseded by the superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 665
- . . . *Components of the first covenant were merely a shadow of what was to come in the new covenant*, p. 666

The law was given to Israel through Moses – hence the term the “Mosaic Law”. It was what God’s covenant with Israel was based upon. (The contents of this law – including its provisions for dealing with sin – are discussed in the sections cross-referenced above.)

In order to be righteous before God, the Israelites had to continually follow this law, keeping all of its commands – something which they proved incapable of doing. But through Jesus Christ’s life and death, God has provided a new way of righteousness, for all people – leading to salvation. As a result of this, the role of the law has been profoundly changed.

Note that the term “the law” is used in a number of ways in the NT, but most commonly to refer to the Mosaic Law. The references to “the law” in verses in this section have been interpreted here as referring to the Mosaic Law.

a) Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ

See also:

- I. *Getting Right with God*, p. 1026

Subsections

- [The Mosaic Law cannot bring perfection . . .](#)
- [. . . The law only exacerbates the problem of sin](#)
- [People are not justified or made righteous by obeying the law – but by faith in Jesus Christ . . .](#)
- [. . . This is the way of the righteousness from God, who justifies by faith – not by law](#)

- [By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him](#)
- [One’s righteous standing is no reason to boast, as it is not due to what one does – but to faith](#)

The Mosaic Law cannot bring perfection . . .

Heb 7:11 *Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?* 

The Levitical priesthood was an integral part of the law, and so closely associated with it.

Heb 7:18-19 *For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.* 

Heb 10:1 *For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.* 

Rom 8:3 *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^a he condemned sin in the flesh, ...* 

^a Or *and as a sin offering*

The last part of the verse clarifies that “what the law ... could not do” was condemn sin. The law could not “do away with sin” (GNT), and so could not bring perfection.

. . . The law only exacerbates the problem of sin

Rom 4:15 *For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.* 

The law clearly stipulates boundaries or rules which we must not break, but we inevitably do break them. So the law “brings wrath” because we face God’s wrath as the consequence of sinning and breaking the law. Without the law there is no “violation” (NASB, NRSV) of such rules and ensuing wrath.

Rom 5:13-14, 20 *... for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.  ... ²⁰Now the law*



came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ... 

Verse 13 indicates that with the law people are more accountable for sin, the reason being is that in sinning they are breaking commands that have been clearly specified as Adam did (v. 14). In view of this, the expression "to increase the trespass" (v. 20) may well mean that the law increased the seriousness of sin. Other possibilities are that this expression means that the law was added to: magnify sin, as in make it more apparent; or literally increase sin (cf. GNT). It may even encompass all these concepts. (For a fuller explanation see *The primary purpose of the law is to make people aware of sin*, p. 660.)

Rom 7:5, 7-11 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.  ... ⁷What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ⁸But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 

The law actually stimulates sin, arousing sinful passions (v. 5), such as "all kinds of covetousness" (v. 8). In fact if it were not for the law, sin would be "a dead thing" (v. 8, GNT) – immaterial. The clause "when the commandment came" (v. 9) may refer to the introduction of the law which brought sin into the picture, but more often it is interpreted to mean Paul's full realization of what the law meant in his own life. This realization caused sin to come to life in him, bringing his death (vv. 9b-11; cf. v. 5) – referring most likely either to provisional spiritual death or being under condemnation of death. Verse 1 appears to mean that the law allows sin the opportunity to deceive, as the law presents truth and – being contrary to the law – sin deceives us in regard to its truths.

1Cor 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 

The law gives sin its power. For it is the law that makes sin transgression against God, i.e. violation of standards he has set. As such it gives sin the power to bring about condemnation (of sinners) and so bring death.

Gal 3:22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 

The reference to "the Scripture" primarily has the law in view. Under the law the people were effectively imprisoned by sin.

People are not justified or made righteous by obeying the law – but by faith in Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- *People are justified and made righteous by God's grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law*, p. 648
- *We are granted righteousness and justified before God* [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1050

God's way now for us to be made righteous before him is through having faith in Jesus Christ. This primarily involves believing Jesus Christ to be (with what he has accomplished) the means of righteousness – and accordingly trusting in him for one's own righteousness. In conjunction with this, faith in Jesus Christ encompasses believing what the Bible says about: who he is; his death and resurrection; and the outcomes of his mission. This is discussed further in *c) Belief in Jesus Christ (I): General*, p. 1040; and *d) Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes*, p. 1049.

Acts 13:38-39 Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹and by him everyone who believes is freed^b from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. 

^b Greek *justified*; twice in this verse

The two instances of "freed" in v. 39 appear to speak of being freed from the guilt of one's sins – i.e. "justified" (cf. ESV text note).

Rom 3:20 For by works of the law no human being^c will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. 

^c Greek *flesh*

Rom 9:30-33 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness^d did not succeed in reaching that law. ³²Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." 

^d Greek *a law of righteousness*

Because Israel was intent on pursuing righteousness via the law and the associated "works" rather than by faith in Jesus



Christ, they stumbled (v. 32) over him – the “stone” (vv. 32b-33a); i.e. they failed because they did not try to gain righteousness by the only means that it can be obtained. This is in contrast to the Gentiles (v. 30) and “whoever believes in him” (v. 33b). The latter is spoken of as not being “disappointed” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), presumably regarding being made righteous through faith, and so not being ashamed – particularly before God.

Gal 2:16, 21 ... yet we know that a person is not justified^e by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.  ... ²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness^f were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. 

^e Or counted righteous (three times in verse 16); also verse 17

^f Or justification

Gal 3:2-5, 10-12 Let me ask you only this: *Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?* ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by^g the flesh? ⁴Did you suffer^h so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—  ... ¹⁰For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”ⁱ ¹²But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” 

^g Or now ending with

^h Or experience

ⁱ Or The one who by faith is righteous will live

Although there is no mention in verses 2-5 of justification (or being made righteous), receiving the Holy Spirit is indicative of it – even alluding to it. In v. 10 Paul says that all who rely on observing the law to gain justification are cursed because no one is able to continually do everything written in it. In v. 11 Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 to imply that one can only be justified by faith. Verse 12 has been included here as it makes the associated point that the inaccessible way of the law to justification and life is incompatible with the way of faith. The contrasting phrases – “live by them” (v. 12b) and “live by faith” (v. 11b) – indicate that the law stipulates that we will live by doing the things it says, whereas the way of faith stipulates that we will live by faith. The two paths are diverse and in fact incompatible.

Gal 3:21b-22 For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. ²²But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 

By asserting that “the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin” (v. 22) Paul affirms that righteousness certainly did not come by the law, as v. 21b implies. The “promise” (v. 22) is no doubt inclusive of righteousness (v. 21), but probably also incorporates associated concepts, notably life (v. 21) and salvation.

Gal 5:4-5 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^j by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 

^j Or counted righteous

The “hope of righteousness” (v. 5) is either referring to being pronounced right with God on Judgment Day, or being made righteous in ourselves (i.e. the consummation of our sanctification) following Christ’s return. In conjunction with being justified by faith and so even now viewed by God as righteous, we also await by faith these final aspects of “righteousness”.

Heb 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ... 

The writer is actually rebuking his readers for failing to build on elementary Christian beliefs, with them not having moved on to more advanced aspects. In doing so he speaks of repentance “from dead works” together with faith as being elementary and foundational aspects of Christianity. The term “dead works” is likely a reference to trying to obtain righteousness by works.

... This is the way of the righteousness from God, who justifies by faith – not by law

See also:

▪ [Gal 3:22](#) ↑

▪ [Gal 3:8](#) ↓

Rom 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,^k as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”^l 

^k Or beginning and ending in faith

^l Or The one who by faith is righteous shall live

The phrase “the righteousness of God” – as with similar expressions in the following passages – likely primarily



means "righteousness from God", whereby people can be deemed righteous in his sight. It may also point to God's own righteousness in effecting this righteousness in a way which satisfies his own justice and holiness. The expression "from faith for faith" appears to mean "through faith from beginning to end" (GNT; cf. NCV, NIV, NLT). Another possible meaning is "both springing from faith and leading to faith [disclosed through the way of faith that arouses to more faith]" (AMP). The quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 (as with Galatians 3:11 in the previous subsection) is used by Paul to support his assertion that one can only be deemed righteous by faith, implying by it that because of their faith the righteous will live.

Rom 3:21-22a, 28-30 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.  ... ²⁸For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.



Note that v. 21 indicates that in fact the law itself testifies to this "righteousness of God ... manifested apart from the law".

Rom 10:1-10 Brothers,^m my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, *being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.* ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.ⁿ ⁵For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because, *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 

^m Or *Brothers and sisters*

ⁿ Or *end of the law, that everyone who believes may be justified*

The Jews' zeal in their attempt to establish their righteousness in their own way, was not acting in accordance with knowledge of God's righteousness (vv. 2-3). Verse 4

indicates that through Jesus Christ, God's righteousness (cf. v. 3) is now gained by belief or faith, and that the law is no longer a valid means of gaining righteousness before God. The basic thrust of verses 6-8 is that the righteousness that is by faith – in contrast to that which is by the law – is not inaccessible or too difficult. The references to bringing "Christ down" (v. 6) and bringing him "up from the dead" (v. 7) most likely are alluding to his incarnation and resurrection. These have already taken place and been achieved; nothing else needs to be done to gain righteousness and justification but to confess and believe (vv. 9-10).

Phil 3:3-9 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God^o and glory in Christ Jesus and *put no confidence in the flesh*— ⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law,^p blameless. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and *count them as rubbish*, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, *not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith*— 

^o Some manuscripts *God in spirit*

^p Greek *in the law*

The expression "put no confidence in the flesh" (v. 3) refers to not relying on our own human effort to gain "a righteousness of my own that comes from the law" (v. 9). In vv. 7-9, Paul says that he had regarded the things he listed in vv. 5-6 as credit towards acquiring righteousness by the law, but now realized that they were in fact useless, incompatible with God's way to righteousness – which is by faith in Christ (v. 9).

† We are to believe in God who justifies and credits righteousness apart from any works of our own:

Rom 4:5-8 And to the one who does not work but believes in^q him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." 

^q Or *but trusts*; compare verse 24



In the quotation in vv. 7-8 (Ps 32:1-2), David speaks of forgiveness of sins – and thus righteousness – which did not come through works of the law. David was forgiven when he confessed his sin (Ps 32:5), with his words (Ps 32:1-2, 5) being indicative of his faith. Note that v.24 in the following subsection similarly speaks of righteousness being counted to those who believe in God.

By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him

See also:

- *Abraham believed God, and God credited this to him as righteousness*, p. 323
- *Those who have faith are the true, spiritual children of Abraham . . .*, p. 625
- *. . . and God's promise or blessing to Abraham is for all who have faith*, p. 626
- *Like Abraham, by faith we receive what God has promised . . .*, p. 1101

In believing God's promises, Abraham was credited with righteousness – and received the promises. Paul maintains that likewise those who believe what God has said/promised regarding righteousness by faith – having faith in Jesus Christ – will be credited with righteousness. Additionally, with their belief – and consequent righteousness – showing them to be children of Abraham in a spiritual sense, they become heirs of the promise made to Abraham (cf. [Rom 4:13](#) ↓).

Note that just as Abraham was declared righteous by belief or faith, similarly Hebrews 11 speaks of Abel's (v.4) and Noah's (v.7) righteousness also coming by faith – “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. . . .⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” This also appears to be the case in the example of Enoch (v.5), who because of his faith “was commended as having pleased God.”

Rom 4:2-3 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.³For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”

The phrase “but not before God” (v.2) may be meaning that if the prior supposition was true – that he was justified by works – Abraham could still not boast before God (cf. CEV).

Alternatively it may mean that this supposition was not true in God's eyes (cf. NCV, NLT). This second alternative is consistent with v.3, which by implication refutes the supposition.

Rom 4:9-12 Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? *We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.*¹⁰How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.¹¹He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,¹²and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Rom 4:13-24 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.¹⁴For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.¹⁵For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.²²That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”²³But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone,²⁴but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, . . .

The promise that Abraham “would be heir of the world” (v.13) in the context may be alluding to Abraham being the father of all believers ([vv. 11-12](#) ↑; v.16) – who like him would be granted righteousness by faith – i.e. “the father of many nations” (vv. 17, 18), Gentiles as well as Jews. Alternatively, it



could be referring to Abraham and his spiritual offspring inheriting the earth (cf. Matt 5:5) – in the form of the world to come – as an ultimate fulfillment or extension of the promise to Abraham that he would inherit the land of Canaan.

Regarding v. 16, the promise comes by faith to all Abraham's spiritual offspring, both believing Jews ("the adherent of the law") and Gentiles who have faith like Abraham did. In v. 20, the expression "he grew strong in his faith" means either: "his faith grew stronger" (NLT); or "His faith made him strong" (CEV; cf. AMP, GNT).

Gal 3:5-9, 13-14 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or *by hearing with faith*—⁶*just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"*? ⁷*Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.* ⁸*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify^r the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."* ⁹*So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.* ...
¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—¹⁴*so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit^s through faith.* ...

^r Or *count righteous*; also verses 11, 24

^s Greek *receive the promise of the Spirit*

Abraham by his example (v. 6) leads the way to righteousness by faith, and so all who have faith are likewise blessed through him (v. 8) and along with him (v. 9). Verse 14 indicates that by Christ's redemptive work (v. 13) the blessing given to Abraham of righteousness through faith has been extended to the Gentiles – along with the associated outcome of faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Note that the phrase "the promised Spirit" may be associating the gift of the Holy Spirit with the promise (or promises) made to Abraham, with the Spirit being an integral part of the fulfillment of the promise.

‡ **The promise to Abraham, and his "offspring", was not done away with by the law:**

Gal 3:15-18, 29 To give a human example, brothers:^t *even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.* ¹⁶*Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.* ¹⁷This is what I mean: *the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.* ¹⁸*For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes*

by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. ...
²⁹*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.* ...

^t Or *brothers and sisters*

God's covenant with Abraham was not superseded by the later introduction of the law (v. 17; cf. v. 15). Thus the covenant to Abraham and his "offspring" – with its promises – still stands. Due to their association with Christ – who is Abraham's "offspring" (v. 16) – believers are also counted as Abraham's seed (v. 29) or spiritual offspring and so heirs of the "promise" (v. 29) or promises (v. 16) made to him.

With these references to the "promise" Paul may have primarily in view justification by faith (cf. [vv. 5-9](#) †; v. 24). (Other possibilities are the promise of the Spirit by faith, as per v. 14 above; or even various or all of the promises made to Abraham, cf. v. 16, 21.) The references to the "promise" and "promises" at least allude to faith and righteousness, as it was because of faith and the righteousness that comes by faith that Abraham received the promise (cf. [Rom 4:13, 16](#) †). So Paul appears to imply that the law did not set aside faith as the basis for righteousness; the principle still applies for those who have faith in and belong to Christ – and so are of Abraham's "offspring" (v. 29).

One's righteous standing is no reason to boast, as it is not due to what one does – but to faith

See also:

- [Rom 4:2-3](#) †
- *Note: Our good deeds or works do not earn righteousness and salvation, which are by grace*, p. 1071

Rom 3:27-28 *Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.* ²⁸*For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.* ...

We have no reason to boast because we cannot ourselves earn justification, through observing the law; our justification is only by faith. Note that "the law of faith" is akin to "the way of faith" (NCV™).

Eph 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* ...

Rom 11:17-21 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root^u of the olive tree, ¹⁸*do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that*



supports you. ¹⁹Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 📖

▫ Greek root of richness; some manuscripts richness

The natural “olive root” represents Israel, particularly the patriarchs with whom Israel’s relationship with God was established. The “wild olive shoot” represents Gentile believers accepted into “Israel”, God’s people. Gentile believers should not be arrogant toward or boast over (cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) Israel in being of God’s people because: they do not stand on their own (vv. 17-18); it is only by faith that they stand at all (v. 20); and they can be broken off too (v. 21).

✦ **There is nothing special about believers when God calls them, so they cannot boast as it is only because of God that they are in Jesus Christ:**

1Cor 1:26-31 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards,^v not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being^w might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰And because of him^x you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” 📖

▫ Greek according to the flesh

▫ Greek no flesh

▫ Greek And from him

In v. 28 Paul expands on the previous verse, saying that God has chosen the lowly, the despised and those seen as nothing, “to reduce to nothing” (NRSV) the things that are important in the eyes of the world – so that no one can be in a position to boast before him (v. 29), as it is nothing to do with what they were. Rather it is because of God alone that believers are in Christ, by whom they have their righteousness – along with sanctification and redemption (v. 30). So no one can boast about their standing, for it is in no way due to ourselves; one can only rightfully boast in God alone (v. 31).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace and Jesus Christ’s law*, p. 658
- *a) Prologue: God Draws People to Himself*, p. 758
- *e) God Shows Grace to His People*, p. 825
- *The gospel is of God’s grace*, p. 1762

Bear in mind that in this section, “works” refers to things one does to attempt to work for or earn righteousness and salvation. This includes good deeds but mainly has in view actions specifically aimed at fulfilling the law’s demands. Note that the following subsections all speak of aspects of God’s salvation, as per the theme of this section.

Subsections

- God chooses and calls people by his grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ – not because of works
- God leads people to respond to him by his grace
- People are justified and made righteous by God’s grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law
- People are saved by God’s grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . People are saved by God’s grace and mercy rather than by works and the law
- Eternal life is a gift from God, through Jesus Christ
- Note: Jesus Christ’s grace and mercy are integral to salvation

God chooses and calls people by his grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ – not because of works

See also:

- *God chooses people (to be his people) . . .*, p. 758
- *. . . God chooses people to receive spiritual blessings*, p. 759
- *God calls people . . .*, p. 760
- *. . . God calls people to the blessings and other aspects of the faith*, p. 761

That God would choose some people and not others has been a subject of great debate and frustration. But the Bible never gives any indication that this is in any way unjust; to the contrary, as shown in the references below, it takes the view that the fact that God would choose any at all is indeed a reflection of his glorious grace. For further discussion, see



the introductory comment on *a) Prologue: God Draws People to Himself*, p. 758.

Eph 1:4-6 ... even as *he* [God] *chose us in him* [Jesus Christ] *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵*he predestined us* for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶*to the praise of his glorious grace*, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

^y Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

Gal 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting *him who called you in the grace of Christ* and are turning to a different gospel—

In essence this may be referring to God calling people “by his grace through Christ” (NCV™; cf. CEV, NLT) – his grace expressed in Christ. This is supported by the fact that some manuscripts do not refer to Christ (cf. CEV and text note, GNT and text note).

Gal 1:15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born,^z and who *called me by his grace*, ...

^z Greek *set me apart from my mother's womb*

The reference to being called by grace may be speaking of Paul's conversion – hence the verse's inclusion here. Alternatively his apostolic work (cf. v. 16, GNT, NCV) may primarily be in view. Possibly Paul is not intending to distinguish between the two.

1Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, *the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ*, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

1Pet 2:9-10 But *you are a chosen race*, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of *him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*. ¹⁰*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy*.

By God's mercy (v. 10b), believers are “a chosen race”, “called... out of darkness into his marvelous light” (v. 9).

Rom 9:16 So then *it depends not on human will or exertion, a but on God, who has mercy*.

^a Greek *not of him who wills or runs*

Here “it” refers to God's choice of persons to be his people (cf. vv. 11-12). This and the following verses (11:5-6; 2Tim 1:9) speak not only of God's choice of persons being due to God's mercy or grace, but also indicate that it is not due to our own efforts or works.

Rom 11:5-6 So too at the present time *there is a remnant, chosen by grace*. ⁶*But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace*.

The “remnant” refers to those that God had chosen from among the largely unbelieving Jewish nation.

2Tim 1:9 ... [God] *who saved us and called us to^b a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^c ...*

^b Or *with*

^c Greek *before times eternal*

God leads people to respond to him by his grace

See also:

- *God enables people to believe*, p. 763
- *God enables people to come to him, in repentance*, p. 764

Acts 11:21-23 And *the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord*. ²²The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When *he came and saw the grace of God*, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ...

Acts 18:27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped *those who through grace had believed*, ...

Rom 2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that *God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

God's kindness is akin to his grace, which is often described as his “undeserved kindness”.

2Cor 4:15 For it is all for your sake, so that as *grace extends to more and more people* it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

This is speaking of God's grace being extended to people to bring them (cf. NCV, NLT) to him.

1Tim 1:13-14 ... though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But *I received mercy* because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴*and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*.



Particularly in light of v. 13, the clause “the grace of our Lord overflowed for me” (v. 14) would appear to primarily have in view the effecting of Paul’s salvation. In line with this, the addition of the following phrase – “with the faith” – points to Paul’s faith being a product of the aforementioned grace. (Note that it is Jesus Christ’s grace that is referred to here.)

People are justified and made righteous by God’s grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law

Rom 3:22b-24 For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ...

Rom 5:1-2 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we^d have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith^e into this grace in which we stand, and we^f rejoice^g in hope of the glory of God.

^d Some manuscripts *let us*

^e Some manuscripts *omit by faith*

^f Or *let us*; also verse 3

^g Or *boast*; also verses 3, 11

The “grace in which we stand” quite probably is referring to believers being justified and at peace with God (v. 1), a position in which they stand by grace, through Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:15-21 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, *much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.* ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but *the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.* ¹⁷For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, *much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.* ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass^h led to condemnation for all men, so *one act of righteousnessⁱ leads to justification and life for all men.* ¹⁹For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so *by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.* ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but *where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,* ²¹*so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

^h Or *the trespass of one*

ⁱ Or *the act of righteousness of one*

In vv. 15-16 “the free gift”, evoked by grace, primarily refers to “the free gift of righteousness” (v. 17). Verses 18-19 speak further of this justification and righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. In vv. 20-21 grace is again associated with righteousness. Paul says that despite the proliferation of sin, God’s grace has overcome it (v. 20), for in providing righteousness, God’s grace brings eternal life through Jesus Christ (v. 21; cf. vv. 17-18).

2Cor 5:21; 6:1 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. ^{6:1}Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

In 6:1, Paul urges the Corinthians not to waste the grace of God, his grace manifested in making people righteous through Jesus Christ (5:21).

Titus 3:7 ... so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Gal 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness^j were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

^j Or *justification*

Righteousness comes by God’s grace – by what Jesus Christ’s death accomplished – not through abiding by the law. The following reference (5:4) by implication makes the same point about justification, which is of course akin to righteousness.

Gal 5:4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^k by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

^k Or *counted righteous*

✦ **It is God who justifies:**

Rom 8:30, 33 And those whom he predestined he also called, and *those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.* ... ³³Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? *It is God who justifies.*

People are saved by God’s grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- [Rom 5:17-21](#) ↑
- [God saves people through Jesus Christ](#) + ref., p. 533

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ...



Eph 1:7-8 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ...*



Jesus Christ appears to be in view in the first part of v. 7, but "his grace,⁸ which he lavished upon us" may well be speaking of God and God's grace (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Eph 2:4-8 *But¹ God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ...*

¹ Or *And*

In v. 7, "the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" has largely in view the consummate salvation of "the coming ages" (v. 7a) and all the blessings associated with it.

2Tim 1:9 ... [God] *who saved us and called us to^m a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,ⁿ ...*

^m Or *with*

ⁿ Greek *before times eternal*

1Pet 1:3, 10 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ...* ¹⁰*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ...*

In v. 10, "the grace that was to be yours" refers to "this salvation" – which has been provided by God's grace. Aspects of this salvation are described in v. 3, where it is likewise spoken of as the product of his "great mercy".

Rom 4:16 That is why it depends on faith, in order *that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring*—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ...

In regard to "the promise" – which is associated with salvation and comes by grace – see the earlier comment on Romans 4:11-24 in *By faith Abraham was declared righteous*

and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him, p. 644.

2Cor 6:2 *For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

This "favorable time" concerns the expression of God's favor. His favor corresponds to his grace (cf. v. 1 ↑) by which he has provided the present opportunity of salvation, through Jesus Christ (cf. 2Cor 5:21 ↑).

Luke 1:76-79 *And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us^o from on high ⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

^o Or *when the sunrise shall dawn upon us; some manuscripts since the sunrise has visited us*

Because of "the tender mercy of our God" (v. 78a), God has provided people with "salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins" (v. 77) – by the coming of Jesus Christ, "the sunrise" (v. 78b). Verse 79 speaks of aspects of this salvation. The clause "those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" probably primarily refers to the Gentiles, but may denote both Jews and Gentiles living in the darkness of their sins. Peace with God is paramount in the final phrase.

... People are saved by God's grace and mercy rather than by works and the law

Eph 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Note that the "gift of God" (v. 8) may be referring either to faith in particular or to the whole process of being saved.

2Tim 1:9a ... *who saved us and called us to^p a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace ...*

^p Or *with*

Titus 3:4-5 *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ...*



Acts 15:10-11 Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. 📖

In v. 10 Peter is arguing against trying to put the Gentile disciples under the yoke of the law, a yoke that the Jews had never been able to carry – i.e. live up to. Verse 1 refers to the grace of Jesus Christ, which is at one in purpose with and in many ways synonymous with the grace of God.

✦ **It was by God's grace that Jesus died for everyone:**

Heb 2:9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that *by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.* 📖

Eternal life is a gift from God, through Jesus Christ

See also:

▪ **Eph 2:8** ↑

The fact that eternal life is indeed a gift from God – through the gift of his Son – is illustrative of salvation being of God's grace.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but *the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* 📖

1Jn 5:11 And this is the testimony, that *God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* 📖

John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew *the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.*" 📖

The "gift of God" probably refers to eternal life, although some think it refers to Jesus as the one through whom eternal life comes. Jesus gives spiritual "living water" – which results in eternal life. Note that in Jesus' use here of "water", some commentators see a possible allusion to the Holy Spirit (cf. John 7:38-39).

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires *take the water of life without price.* 📖

The term "water of life" appears to reflect Jesus' use of "living water" (cf. **John 4:10** ↑) in alluding to eternal life. It is "without price", indicative of it being a gift.

✦ **God's free gift of righteousness, by grace, that brings life:**

Rom 5:15-17 But *the free gift is not like the trespass.* For if many died through one man's trespass, *much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.* ¹⁶*And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin.* For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but *the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.* ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, *much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.* 📖

Note that similarly Romans 3:24 speaks of how people "are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Note: Jesus Christ's grace and mercy are integral to salvation

See also:

▪ **Rom 5:15** ↑

Acts 15:11 But *we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.* 📖

2Cor 8:9 For you know *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* 📖

Gal 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting *him who called you in the grace of Christ* and are turning to a different gospel— 📖

For comment, see the comment on **Gal 1:6** – under *God chooses and calls people by his grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ – not because of works*, p. 646.

1Tim 1:12-16 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But *I received mercy* because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴*and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁵The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶*But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience* as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 📖



Paul typically uses "Lord" (cf. [2Tim 1:18](#) ↓) in reference to Jesus Christ rather than to God. This fact coupled with the context suggests that the "grace of our Lord" (v. 14) is speaking of Jesus Christ's grace. Of course God's grace (and mercy) and Jesus Christ's grace (and mercy) are intertwined, and so a number of commentators refer to God's grace when discussing v. 14.

2Tim 1:18 ... may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus. 📖

Jude 1:21 ... keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 📖

Acts 2:46-47 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. 📖

The reference to God earlier in the verse suggests that "the Lord" (v. 47) may well be speaking of Jesus Christ. His grace and mercy is apparent in Luke saying that he "added" believers to the church, indicating that the new members were saved on Christ's initiative rather than their own.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Release from the Law through Jesus Christ

See also:

- [c\) Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit](#), p. 1072

This section looks at how Jesus Christ has fully realized the key objectives of the Mosaic Law, and how as a result God's people have been released from the law.

The most notable implication of this release is that God's people have been freed from bondage to the law as the means of obtaining righteousness and being made holy. Additionally, other major aspects of the law are no longer applicable to God's people. There is also a change of focus in their lives, with them living their lives primarily by faith and in step with the Holy Spirit (cf. [c\) Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit](#), p. 1072) – rather than being preoccupied with the requirements of the law. (See also *Instead of being*

under the law, believers are under grace and Jesus Christ's law, later in this section.)

Note that the law's commands that are applicable to the believer's new spiritual relationship with God or to their relationships with other people, are still very much relevant in that they give guidance in how to please God (cf. [d\) The Relevance of the Law](#), p. 659).

Subsections

- Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards
- So through Jesus Christ believers have been released from the law
- With Jesus Christ's once and for all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sin
- The regulations and rituals of the law are no longer applicable . . .
- . . . Believers are released from the food regulations of the law
- Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace and Jesus Christ's law

Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards

See also:

- [b\) Jesus Christ's Death and Atonement for Sin](#), p. 591
- [The Mosaic Law cannot bring perfection . . .](#), p. 640
- [The first covenant \(with its priesthood and law\) was inadequate and superseded by the superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ . . .](#), p. 665
- . . . Components of the first covenant were merely a shadow of what was to come in the new covenant, p. 666
- [Previous sacrifices offered by priests were ultimately ineffective in dealing with sin . . .](#), p. 673
- . . . As high priest, Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all, p. 674

Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards, primarily the removal of sin and making God's people holy. In conjunction with this, he realized the corresponding goal of salvation.

Heb 10:1, 10-14 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. 📖 ... ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body



of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ^q had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. 

^q Greek *this one*

The law's work toward making God's people holy merely foreshadowed the "realities" (v. 1) that would be realized through Jesus Christ. The law's sacrifices for sin were not sufficient to comprehensively deal with sin and make people perfect (vv. 1, 11). But by the sacrifice of himself Jesus Christ fulfilled the primary goal that the law with its sin offerings pointed towards – the consummate removal of sins (v. 12), sanctifying God's people (vv. 10, 14).

Heb 7:18-19, 25-27 For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.  ... ²⁵Consequently, he [Christ] is able to save to the uttermost^r those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 

^r That is, completely; or at all times

The law with its priesthood had worked towards making God's people perfect (vv. 18-19; cf. v. 11) and to remove sin (v. 27) – though it could not effectively do so. Verses 25-27 point to the fact that this goal has been realized by Jesus Christ, in sacrificing for sins once for all (v. 27) and achieving the corresponding goal of completely saving God's people (v. 25; cf. [Heb 9:12](#) ↓). Note that "a former commandment" (v. 18) may refer in particular to priests of the Levitical priesthood becoming priests "on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent" (v. 16). In any case it was an aspect of the law which "made nothing perfect" (v. 19).

Heb 9:6-14 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still

standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age).^s According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,¹⁰ but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. ¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^t then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify^u for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^v conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 

^s Or which is symbolic for the age then present

^t Some manuscripts good things to come

^u Or For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies

^v Some manuscripts your

Jesus Christ fully realized the efforts made under the law's regulations to remove sin and secure holiness for God's people – to the extent that they may now enter God's presence. Under the law the high priest alone entered the earthly Most Holy Place – the second inner room of the sanctuary – with the blood of sacrifices made for sin (v. 7). This indicated that the sacrifices ultimately were not able to clear the people's consciences, for them themselves to be able to enter God's presence (vv. 8-9). But by his own blood Jesus Christ entered God's very presence in heaven to obtain eternal redemption (v. 12) and realize true inner cleansing for God's people (vv. 13-14). As such they may serve God (v. 14b), having been made holy – with the implication that Jesus Christ's work has opened the way into God's presence (v. 8) for all God's people. Note that in vv. 9-10 two contrasting eras are referred to – "the present age" (v. 9) and "the time of reformation" (v. 10). These appear to refer respectively to: the old order under the Levitical priesthood (cf. text note) and the new order inaugurated by what Christ has done.

Col 2:11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ... 

Circumcision was a key aspect of the Mosaic Law, signifying adherence to the law as a whole. Arguably the suggestion here is that circumcision symbolizes the removal of sin, with faultless obedience to the law meaning that sin has been removed from one's life. However such complete obedience to the law is impossible. But in Jesus Christ God's people have had the controlling power of the sinful nature cut off,



through what Christ has done – “the circumcision of Christ” (v. 11) – making them holy. As such, Jesus Christ realized what circumcision symbolizes.

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 

God's grace and a fuller revelation of truth came through Jesus Christ. The verse may allude to the fact that with this “grace and truth” Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law's objectives of effecting holiness and salvation.

✦ Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets:

Matt 5:17-18 Do not think that I have come to abolish *the Law or the Prophets*; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, *not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.* 

There are differing views as to what Jesus meant by saying he had come “to fulfill” (v. 17) the Law and the Prophets. It involves the fact that they pointed to Jesus as the Messiah and that he would do or “bring about” (NCV™) that of which they spoke. This includes him fully realizing the holiness and righteousness before God that the law had worked towards but could not accomplish, as well as fulfilling other prophecies related to the Messiah and his work. Other things that some commentators suggest that “to fulfill” the law entails are: expounding God's laws so as to “give them their full meaning” (CEV; cf. vv. 21-22a, 27-28, 31-35, 38-39, 43-44); and fulfilling the law's requirements by perfectly obeying all of it.

The expression “until all is accomplished” (v. 18) refers to Jesus fulfilling “everything” of which the law and the prophets spoke – presumably including the consummation of his work at the end of the age.

So through Jesus Christ believers have been released from the law

See also:

- *The first covenant (with its priesthood and law) was inadequate and superseded by the superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 665
- *c) Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit*, p. 1072

Rom 7:1, 4-6 Or do you not know, brothers^w—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that *the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?*  ... ⁴Likewise, my brothers, *you also have died to the law through the body of Christ*, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit

for God. ⁵For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But *now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*^x 

^w Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 4

^x Greek of *the letter*

This refers to the concept of believers being in or united with Jesus Christ, in a spiritual sense. As such, through Jesus Christ's death and because of its implications, believers have themselves “died as far as the law is concerned” (NIRV®, v. 4; cf. **Gal 2:19** ↓). In v. 6, “that which held us captive” is a reference to the law (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Rom 10:4 For *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*^y 

^y Or *end of the law, that everyone who believes may be justified*

The assertion that Christ is the “end” of the law may mean that he was the “goal” of the law, that it would have its fulfillment in him. But it could well instead mean that he “ended the law” (NCV™, cf. CEV, GNT), instituting righteousness by belief (and the new way of living by the Holy Spirit). The two interpretations are actually compatible: as the “goal” or focal point of the law, Jesus Christ has come and fulfilled it, and so has completed its work – thus ending it.

Gal 2:19 For *through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.* 

Believers have died to the law so as to live for God, freer to serve him more effectively. In saying that “through the law” he died to the law, Paul may be meaning that in accordance with the law and the penalty of death that it demands for sin, he has died – in being crucified with Christ (v. 20) – and by dying he has been released from the realm of the law. Alternatively Paul may have in view the law's role in leading one to Christ, in whom one has died to the law.

Gal 3:19, 23-25 Why then the law? *It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring [Jesus] should come to whom the promise had been made*, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.  ... ²³Now *before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.* ²⁴So then, *the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.* ²⁵But *now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ...* 



The law was only ever to be the authority over God's people until Jesus Christ came, when faith would supersede it as the way for God's people to be justified.

Gal 4:1-5 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave,^z though he is the owner of everything,² but *he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.* ³*In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles^a of the world.* ⁴*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,* ⁵*to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* 

^z Greek *bondservant*; also verse 7

^a Or *elemental spirits*; also verse 9

One direct result of Christ coming "to redeem those who were under the law" (v. 5), is that we are now no longer under the law. Regarding v. 3, there is debate over the meaning of the "elementary principles" of the world. The immediate context suggests that v. 3 is speaking of people being in slavery to the "rules" (NCV™) of this world – primarily the Mosaic Law (cf. AMP.), from which Christ has redeemed or set them free (vv. 4-5). However the Greek can also be translated as "elemental spirits" (cf. text note). This correlates well with v. 8 ("you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods"), although v. 8 is speaking more specifically of the Galatians' own prior predicament, which does not appear to be the case with v. 3.

Gal 4:21-26, 30-31; 5:1 *Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?* ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. ²³But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. ²⁴Now this may be interpreted allegorically: *these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.* ²⁵Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia;^b she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.  ... ³⁰But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." ³¹So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.  ^{5:1}For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 

^b Some manuscripts *For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia*

In contrast to those under the old covenant, under the new covenant God's people are free from being enslaved to the law – the "yoke of slavery" (5:1). "Cast out the slave woman and her son" (v. 30) is a call for Paul's readers to rid

themselves of legalistic adherence to the law and of those who propagate this.

1Cor 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though *not being myself under the law*) that I might win those under the law. 

Gal 2:4 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in— who slipped in to *spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery*— 

The "false brothers" – unenlightened as to the freedom from the law which Paul and his companions had in Christ – wanted to make them slaves again to the law. Thus this verse supports the assertion that through Christ believers have been released from the law.

✦ The Law was in force only until John's ministry:

Luke 16:16 *The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.* 

^c Or *everyone is forcefully urged into it*

The Law was in force until John the Baptist's ministry, proclaimed along with the teaching of the Prophets. John's ministry was preparatory to that of Jesus, who began the proclamation of the kingdom of God, superseding the Law and the Prophets in prominence.

With Jesus Christ's once and for all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sin

Note that this and the following two subsections speak of aspects of the law from which believers have been released.

Heb 7:27 *He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.* 

Heb 9:6-14 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and *not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.* ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age).^d *According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations*



for the body imposed until the time of reformation. ¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^e then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify^f for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^g conscience from dead works to serve the living God. 

^d Or which is symbolic for the age then present

^e Some manuscripts good things to come

^f Or For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies

^g Some manuscripts your

The offerings for sin and uncleanness (vv. 7, 9) were “imposed until the time of reformation” (v. 10). They no longer apply under “the new order” (v. 10, NIV), due to what Jesus Christ’s sacrifice has accomplished (vv. 12, 14). For as v. 12 indicates, Jesus Christ sacrificed himself before God, for our sins – once and for all – thus “securing eternal redemption”. Note that “dead works” (v. 14) appears to be inclusive of – or even primarily speaking of – the offering of sacrifices, further implying that they are no longer needed.

Heb 9:26b-28 But as it is, *he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* ²⁷And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸so *Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.* 

Verse 26b implies that Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for sin once and for all did away with sin, and the need to sacrifice for it. The first part of v. 28 also suggests this and what follows further alludes to it, speaking of Jesus Christ coming again but “not to deal with sin”.

Heb 10:3-18 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵Consequently, *when Christ^h came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” ⁸When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, “Behold, I have*

come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christⁱ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” ¹⁷then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” ¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. 

^h Greek *he*

ⁱ Greek *this one*

The OT sacrifices were ineffective in dealing with sin (vv. 3-4, 11). As such they ultimately were not desired by God or pleasing to him (vv. 5-6, 8), a standing which anticipates their redundancy. Later in accordance with God’s will, Jesus Christ set aside the first covenant with its sacrifices for sin (v. 9), through the once and for all sacrifice of himself for sin (vv. 10, 12, 14). This means that God’s people are now sanctified (vv. 10, 14) and forgiven (vv. 17-18a), and so “there is no longer any offering for sin” (v. 18b).

The regulations and rituals of the law are no longer applicable . . .

See also:

- [Heb 9:6-14](#) ↑
- [c\) Circumcision: Its Needlessness](#), p. 1446

Acts 10:28 And he said to them, *“You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.” *

Aspects of the law that distinguished Jews from other peoples – such as food regulations and other Jewish customs (cf. [Gal 2:14](#) ↓) – meant that Jews had to largely be separate from Gentiles (cf. [Gal 2:12-13](#) ↓). But God had shown Peter that such regulations and corresponding differentiations between Jews and Gentiles were no longer applicable (cf. [Acts 10:9-16](#) ↓).



Rom 14:5 *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* 

Paul is primarily referring to the special days set aside by the law for special observances. The verse indicates that keeping such days for special observances is not mandatory for Christians.

Gal 4:9-10 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, *how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?* ¹⁰*You observe days and months and seasons and years!* 

In v. 10 Paul may well be referring to the Galatians wrongly observing regulations of the law as mirroring their past pagan observances (cf. v. 8) – hence the inclusion of these verses here. Alternatively Paul may have the actual pagan observances themselves in view.

Gal 5:6 For *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.* 

Similarly 6:15 says, “For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”

Eph 2:14-15 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵*by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances*, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ... 

The law with its various regulations and rituals (v. 15a) given to the Jews, distinguished and separated the Jews from the Gentiles. By abolishing it (or its former role) through his death, Jesus Christ destroyed the barrier and associated hostility between Jews and Gentiles (v. 14).

Col 2:13-14, 16-17 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, *God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*  ... ¹⁶*Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.* 

In v. 14, “the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands” appears to portray a record of our sins with the corresponding “legal demands” of the law which we have broken. Paul may be implying that Christ cancelled not only our sins but also the “legal demands” of the law. Verses 16-17 are saying that the various aspects of the old covenant

mentioned (v. 16) merely foreshadowed what was to come with Christ (v. 17). So there is now no longer any binding requirement to observe such regulations – in accordance with what God has done through Christ (vv. 13-14).

Heb 7:15-19 This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶*who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” ¹⁸For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.* 

The former commandment that is set aside (v. 18) is most likely that requiring the priests to be descendants of Aaron, the legal requirement referred to in v. 16. The Aaronic priesthood and its functions ultimately proved to be weak and useless (v. 18), for in conjunction with them the law could not bring perfection (v. 19). So the Aaronic priesthood is no longer applicable to God’s people, who now have a priest from a different order with a permanent priesthood (v. 17).

Gal 2:11-14 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because *he stood condemned. ¹²For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”* 

By their action (vv. 12-13) Peter and other Jews were adhering to Jewish ways based on the law, pandering to the views of “the circumcision party” (v. 12). As such, their action wrongly implied that the Gentiles should likewise follow Jewish customs (v. 14b) based on the law. The implication is that such Jewish customs based on the law are not applicable to Christians.

... Believers are released from the food regulations of the law

See also:

- [Col 2:16-17](#) 
- *Creatures were designated as either clean or unclean for eating . . .*, p. 403



The distinction between “clean” and “unclean” animals existed since Noah’s time (cf. Gen 7:2). Animals that were designated “clean” could be eaten and were used in sacrifices, in contrast to “unclean” animals. The restrictions on not eating “unclean” animals were included in the OT law (as per the subsection cross-referenced above). Note that in regard to believers being permitted to eat food previously sacrificed to idols, see . . . *Do not do anything that will cause another to “stumble”*, p. 1333.

Mark 7:14-19 And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵*There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.*”^j ¹⁷And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? *Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?*”^k (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

^j Some manuscripts add verse 16: *If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear*

^k Greek *goes out into the latrine*

Acts 10:9-16 The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour¹ to pray. ¹⁰And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹²*In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.* ¹³*And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”* ¹⁴*But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”* ¹⁵*And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.”* ¹⁶This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

¹ That is, noon

Note that the vision had a deeper meaning than just illustrating that believers are free of restrictions concerning “unclean” foods. In terms of God’s people, one was no longer to distinguish between Jews and Gentiles (cf. v. 28 ⬆) – nor adhere to the accompanying differential practices of the law, of which food restrictions was one of the most prominent.

Rom 14:3, 14, 20 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and *let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.* ... ¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that *nothing is unclean in itself*, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

... ²⁰*Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats.*

Note that here Paul makes allowance for those with weak consciences to abstain from eating certain foods. Food previously sacrificed to idols may have been the background to the discussion, rather than simply the law’s food regulations.

Heb 13:9-10 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for *it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.* ¹⁰*We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.*

Like the other verses in this subsection, this concerns regulations regarding particular foods. However, rather than forbidding certain foods, the false teaching in question here advocated eating certain “ceremonial foods” (v. 9). In light of the reference in v. 10 to priests, the “teachings” and the “ceremonial foods” (NIV®) may primarily be referring to teachings propagating certain food regulations of the law. However, rules regarding foods were also common in other religions and cults, and the “diverse and strange teachings” may have instead concerned such things.

The “altar” (v. 10) seems to refer to Christ’s sacrifice – or the cross, being the “altar” on which he was sacrificed. The phrase “no right to eat” (v. 10) most likely somewhat ironically alludes to the regulations regarding eating and food under the law. Thus v. 10 would appear to teach – in addition to believers not needing to follow the law’s food regulations (v. 9) – that those who do legalistically adhere to the law, with its regulations, have no share in Christ’s sacrifice and the blessings it brings.

Matt 15:1-2, 20 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²*“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.”* ... [Jesus:] ²⁰*These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.*

Here it is not actually food regulations of the law that are being spoken of as unnecessary, but rather the related practice of washing hands before eating. This did not actually come directly from the law, but apparently had been derived from it by Jewish religious leaders and so had become a religious tradition.

‡ **All food is created by God and so is good – and to be received with thanksgiving:**

1Tim 4:1-5 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ²through the



insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³who forbid marriage and require abstinence from *foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving* by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.* 

Ascetic teaching rather than the law is in question here – but the principles outlined are applicable to this subsection. In v. 5 “prayer” may well refer to giving thanks for food before meals, and possibly “the word of God” may then denote Scripture used in giving thanks. Alternatively, the “word of God” could be referring to teaching in Scripture regarding all food being acceptable – notably the above references.

Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace and Jesus Christ’s law

See also:

- *... and live in God’s grace*, p. 1074

Believers are not under the law but “under grace”. By grace righteousness and salvation are not only gained (cf. [Titus 2:11 ↓](#)), as discussed earlier, but are also maintained. For in his grace God enables believers to live godly lives (cf. [Titus 2:12 ↓](#)) and continues to provide for forgiveness when they do sin (cf. comment on [Acts 13:43 ↓](#)). Accordingly, believers are to rely on God’s grace both in striving to please God and for forgiveness.

Rom 6:14-15 For sin will have no dominion over you, since *you are not under law but under grace*. ¹⁵What then? Are we to sin because *we are not under law but under grace*? By no means! 

Titus 2:11-12 For *the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ...* 

God’s people are to comply with training/teaching that has come through or resulted from God’s grace.

Acts 13:43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, *urged them to continue in the grace of God.* 

Continuing in the realm of God’s grace involves continuing to be faithful to him, thus remaining under God’s grace for our righteous status before him.

1Pet 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this *is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.* 

The teaching contained in Peter’s letter was – or at least reflected and was based on – “the true grace of God”, in which Peter encouraged his readers to stand firm.

Rom 11:22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you *continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.* 

Many commentators see Paul here as talking specifically of the Gentiles as a whole, rather than individual believers. But the concept of the need to continue in God’s “gracious kindness” (AMP) – so as not to be “cut off” – is obviously also applicable to individuals.

1Cor 9:20-21 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though *not being myself under the law*) that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (*not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ*) that I might win those outside the law. 

In the bracketed section of v. 21, Paul indicates that he was not “without law toward God” (NKJV); rather he was under God’s authority through being “under the law of Christ” (cf. [Gal 6:2 ↓](#)). The “law of Christ” presumably primarily denotes Jesus’ teaching and apostolic teaching based on it. As such it would encompass the law’s spiritual and moral commands, as interpreted by Jesus and other NT teaching (cf. [James 1:25 ↓](#)).

Gal 6:2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so *fulfill the law of Christ.* 

James 1:25 But the one who *looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts*, he will be blessed in his doing. 

God’s people are to obey “the perfect law that sets people free” (GNT; cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). Similar to “Christ’s law” ([1Cor 9:21 ↑](#); cf. [Gal 6:2 ↑](#)), “the law of liberty” (cf. 2:12) refers to God’s word (cf. vv. 22-24) – seemingly including the law’s moral commands as interpreted by Jesus Christ and the NT writers. This “law” that Christians are under gives freedom from both rigorous regulations and sin. As such, note that Christians are freer to please God and so judgment by this law will in fact demand a higher standard of speech and actions, as alluded to in 2:12 – “So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.”



‡ The significance of the old covenant is understood only through Christ:

2Cor 3:14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. 

When listening to the old covenant being read, the people's minds and hearts were in a sense covered so that they could not see the significance of the old covenant, with its transitory nature probably being what Paul had foremost in mind. Only through Christ is this "veil" taken away.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) The Relevance of the Law

The spiritual and moral commands of the law are largely in view this section. These commands are those pertaining to the believer's spiritual relationship with God and their relationships with other people.

Subsections

- The law is not nullified . . .
- . . . The law is still good
- The primary purpose of the law is to make people aware of sin
- The spiritual and moral commands of the law are still to be obeyed
- The law's principles – such as love, justice and mercy – are of central importance, above its rules

The law is not nullified . . .

See also:

- Rom 8:3b-4 

Matt 5:17-18 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 

In regard to the phrase "to fulfill them" (v. 17), see the earlier comment in *Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards*, p. 651.

Rom 3:31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. 

In saying that by faith "we uphold the law", Paul is probably meaning that the way of faith validates the law. As such, Paul is probably speaking of either: faith showing the law to play a key role in God's plan of salvation, such as in regard to awareness of sin; or faith providing the way of fulfilling the law's demands (cf. NCV, NLT) thus showing the law's demands to be legitimate.

Acts 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, ... 

Rom 2:18, 20 ... and [you Jews] know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;  ... ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 

These verses illustrate that the law is still relevant, as by the law we know God's will and what is best (v. 18), having in the law "the embodiment of knowledge and truth" (v. 20b).

1Tim 1:9-11 ... understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers,^m liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to soundⁿ doctrine, ¹¹in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. 

^mThat is, those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery

ⁿ Or healthy

The law is important for governing and/or condemning the ungodly.

. . . The law is still good

See also:

- *God's word is holy, righteous and good*, p. 305

1Tim 1:8 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ... 

Note that the subsequent verses showing how one should use the law "lawfully" or properly (vv. 9-11) have been included in the previous subsection. The following subsections speak further of proper use of the law.



Rom 7:12-16 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through *what is good*, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. ¹⁴For we know that *the law is spiritual*, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, *I agree with the law, that it is good.*

In v. 13b Paul is saying that sin produces death in us through the good law, so through the law sin is shown for what it is, i.e. unequivocally and “utterly sinful” (NASB, NIV). By saying that he hates the things he does that violate the law (v. 15b) and that he does not want to do such things (v. 16a), Paul shows that he agrees that the law is good (v. 16b) – “my bad conscience shows that I agree that the law is good” (NLT).

Rom 8:3b-4 By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^o he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that *the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us*, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

^o Or *and as a sin offering*

As well as indicating that the law is righteous (v. 4a) and thus good, this further shows that it has not simply been dismissed (as per the theme of the previous subsection). For this speaks of the law’s righteous requirements being fully met by believers, who live by the Spirit (v. 4b). As such, this implies that it is important that the law’s requirements be met – which in turn implies that the law is good.

Ps 119:39 Turn away the reproach that I dread, for *your rules are good.*

Isa 42:21 The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness’ sake, *to magnify his law and make it glorious.*

In conjunction with and in addition to being good, God’s law is in fact exalted and glorious.

‡ The law is not opposed to the promises of God:

Gal 3:21 *Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.*

The law is not opposed to the promises of God, in particular the promise of righteousness through faith. For they are not in practice two opposing ways of gaining righteousness and thus life, as righteousness cannot be gained through the law. The two have different purposes, working in conjunction with each other – as Paul expounds elsewhere in Galatians 3.

The primary purpose of the law is to make people aware of sin

See also:

▪ **Rom 7:13**

Rom 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For by works of the law no human being^p will be justified in his sight, since *through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

^p Greek *flesh*

Note that v. 19 speaks of another purpose of the law, which follows on from that of making people aware of sin (v. 20). It teaches that the law leaves people without excuse and accountable to God, under his judgment.

Rom 7:7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet *if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”*

Gal 3:19 *Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions*, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

The phrase “because of transgressions” may mean that the law was given to restrain sin, but more likely it is indicating that the law’s purpose was to show or define what transgressions are (cf. **Rom 4:15** ; NBC)

Rom 4:15 For the law brings wrath, but *where there is no law there is no transgression.*

Where there is no law there is no “violation” (NASB, NRSV) of clearly defined boundaries or rules – i.e. the law defines what God requires and what sin is.

Rom 5:20 Now *the law came in to increase the trespass*, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ...

A literal reading of the phrase “to increase the trespass” indicates that the law was added to augment sin (cf. GNT). Although this is quite possibly the meaning, a more common explanation is that it means that the law magnified sin, showing clearly what sin is and how wrong it is (cf. CEV, NLT). Another related interpretation, an expansion of this one, is that it means that the law magnified the seriousness of sin, for by showing what sin is, it has made those who sin more accountable as they are breaking clearly defined rules (cf. **Rom 3:19**).



Prov 29:18 *Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,⁹ but blessed is he who keeps the law.* 

⁹ Or *the people are discouraged*

The reference to “the law” at the end of the verse suggests that the earlier mentioned prophetic revelations would, in part at least, have pointed to the law and the need to obey it. As such this verse reflects that an absence of consciousness of the law leads to unchecked sin, with one being unaware of what sin is and what God requires.

Isa 51:7 *Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings.* 

In conjunction with making one aware of what sin is, God’s law enables one to “know righteousness”, and so to know what is right and therefore what is not right – i.e. wrong and sinful.

Heb 10:3 *But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.* 

Complimentary to making people aware of sin, the law’s stipulated sacrifices on its annual Day of Atonement reminded people of sin.

‡ **Prior to Christ’s coming and the advent of faith, the law played a supervisory role:**

Gal 3:23-25 *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ...* 

Verse 23 may be presenting a negative aspect of the law, but it is often interpreted in a positive sense in the light of vv. 24-25. As such it is understood to mean that the law guarded God’s people, keeping them in “protective custody” (NLT).

The spiritual and moral commands of the law are still to be obeyed

See also:

- *Obeying God and doing what is right*, p. 1058
- a) *The Need to Obey God*, p. 1062

Matt 5:19 *Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* 

Most likely Jesus had the moral commands of the law primarily in view, with a number of them being the subject of his subsequent teaching (cf. vv. 21-48).

Luke 4:8, 12 *And Jesus answered him, “It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.””  ... ¹²And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” *

The quotations of commands from the law here and in a number of the following passages, indicate that such laws are to be obeyed.

Luke 10:25-28 *And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” *

Jesus shows that these key commands of the spiritual and moral realms of the law are significant for eternal life.

Rom 2:12-16 *For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.* 

How one’s actions measure up against God’s law will be a key factor on judgment day (vv. 12-13, 16) – in conjunction with one’s knowledge of the law (v. 12), including one’s innate awareness of the law’s requirements (vv. 14-15). Thus this illustrates that the law is still to be obeyed. Note that in regard to v. 13, Paul subsequently argues (cf. ch. 3) that no one is able to keep the whole law so as to be declared righteous through obedience to it.

1Tim 1:9-11 *... understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers,^r liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound^s doctrine, ¹¹in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.* 



^r That is, those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery

^s Or *healthy*

Breaking the moral commands of the law – as such ungodly people freely do – is acting contrary to gospel doctrine (vv. 10b-11).

Eph 6:1-2 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ...* 

1Pet 1:15-16 ... but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 

Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 

This quotation from Jeremiah 31:33 refers to the new covenant instituted by Jesus Christ, in which God’s people are more inclined and able to obey his commands – indicative of the fact that the spiritual and moral commands of the law are still to be obeyed.

James 2:8-11 *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. ¹¹For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.* 

Here James clearly supports keeping the law and disapproves of breaking it. Note the thought behind v. 10 probably is that whoever breaks one command of the law, has broken the law as a whole.

1Jn 5:2-3 *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.* 

Ezek 11:19-20 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 

This looks forward to God bestowing his Holy Spirit on his people, enabling and moving them to follow his laws. Now

having his Holy Spirit, believers are in fact more accountable than God’s people previously were for keeping his commands.

The law’s principles – such as love, justice and mercy – are of central importance, above its rules

See also:

- [Luke 10:25-28](#) ; [James 2:8](#) 
- *Note: Inner righteousness and right attitudes are needed, rather than mere compliance with rules*, p. 1076
- *It is permissible to do good and necessary things on the Sabbath*, p. 1456
- ... “Love your neighbor as yourself” *sums up God’s law*, p. 1541

Note that assertions such as that made in this subheading have been used to justify the breaking of some of God’s moral laws. As a general guideline at least, if a fundamental principle of the law is used to justify the breaking of a particular moral command of God, then it is being misapplied. This is in part because the moral commands largely reflect the law’s basic principles.

Matt 22:35-40 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” 

Mark 12:33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. 

Rom 13:8-10 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. 

Gal 5:13-14 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 



Note that in v. 13 Paul is speaking of being free from bondage to the law, primarily its numerous ceremonial rules and regulations.

Matt 23:23-24 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!* 

The Jewish leaders had become preoccupied with lesser matters of the law, to the detriment of the more important matters (cf. [Luke 1:42a](#) ↓).

Luke 11:42a *“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God.”* 

Mic 6:6-8 *“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with ^tthousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,^u and to walk humbly with your God?”* 

^t Or *Will the LORD accept*

^u Or *steadfast love*

Believers should still give offerings (though not ones for sin) but doing so is of secondary importance to upholding the central principles of the law (v. 8). Note that the term rendered as “kindness” has also been rendered as “mercy” (cf. ESV text note, NIV, NKJV, NLT). This is also the case with “steadfast love” below in Hosea 6:6.

Hos 6:6 *For I desire steadfast love^v and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* 

^v Septuagint *mercy*

Matt 12:1-13 *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” ³He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.” ⁹He went on from there and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse him. ¹¹He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other.”* 

Matters relating to mercy (v. 7) and doing good (v. 12) are more important than the law's regulations. For comment on vv. 1-8, see the comment on the parallel passage [Mark 2:23-28](#) – under *It is permissible to do good and necessary things on the Sabbath*, p. 1456.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Key Elements of the New Order

See also:

- [21. Being Right with God](#), p. 1025

Through Jesus Christ's mission God enhanced his relationship with his people and the world. Two defining aspects of this new order are God's new covenant with his own people and the kingdom of God.

As well as having instituted these two things in his mission, Jesus Christ continues to play a key role in both of them. Jesus Christ's role as high priest is arguably the central aspect of God's new covenant with his people. Jesus Christ's reign as Lord of all things involves reigning over the kingdom of God. Additionally, his reign extends to reigning over all things that are as yet to be subjugated to God's kingdom, which awaits consummation.

a) God's New Covenant

See also:

- [c\) God's Covenant with Israel and the Law](#), p. 332
- [c\) Release from the Law through Jesus Christ](#), p. 651
- [b\) Jesus Christ as High Priest](#), p. 671

For a discussion of the term "covenant", see the introductory comment on [II. Key Old Testament Covenants](#), p. 321. Note that in addition to a number of the following subsections, the superiority of God's new covenant with his people to that of the old covenant (or first covenant) which God made with Israel, is further illustrated in the following section – [b\) Jesus Christ as High Priest](#), p. 671. It discusses in detail the advantages of Jesus Christ's priesthood of the new covenant over the priesthood of the old covenant.

Subsections

- [Prelude: The OT Scriptures speak of God instituting a new covenant with his people – through the Messiah](#)
- [The first covenant \(with its priesthood and law\) was inadequate and superseded by the superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ . . .](#)
- [. . . Components of the first covenant were merely a shadow of what was to come in the new covenant](#)
- [Jesus Christ's blood ratified the new covenant](#)

- [The new covenant is everlasting](#)
- [The new covenant is spiritual – of an internal nature and of the Holy Spirit](#)
- [Under the new covenant God's people know him and are forgiven](#)
- [Other contrasting aspects of the new covenant with the old](#)

Prelude: The OT Scriptures speak of God instituting a new covenant with his people – through the Messiah

[Jer 31:31-34](#) *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." *

[Jer 32:40](#) *I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.* 

[Isa 42:6](#) *I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ...* 

The Messiah is in view here – and in the following passages – as the one through whom the new covenant would be established.

[Isa 49:8b-9a](#) *I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, ⁹saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.'* 

This appears to have in view, partly at least, aspects of the Messiah's work that will be achieved in Jesus Christ's second coming. Many prophecies concerning the Messiah will not be fulfilled – or consummately fulfilled – until his return.



Mal 3:1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and *the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.* 📖

The “messenger of the covenant” refers to the Messiah as the one who would institute the new covenant.

The first covenant (with its priesthood and law) was inadequate and superseded by the superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- [Heb 10:1](#) ↕; [Heb 9:15](#) ↕
- *c) Release from the Law through Jesus Christ*, p. 651

The covenant which God made with Israel proved inadequate as Israel could not keep the covenant (by obeying its law) and consequently could not be righteous before God. But God has abolished the old covenant and introduced a superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ and his mission. Note that as the first covenant was based on the law, the earlier section *c) Release from the Law through Jesus Christ*, p. 651, also points to the first covenant being abolished.

Heb 7:11-12, 15-22 *Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?* ¹²*For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.* 📖 ... ¹⁵*This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek,* ¹⁶*who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.* ¹⁷*For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”* ¹⁸*For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness* ¹⁹*(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.* ²⁰*And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath,* ²¹*but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”* ²²*This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.* 📖

In Psalm 110 David speaks of God installing a Davidic king as “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”, which is referred to here in vv. 11, 17, 21. With Jesus Christ in view, the writer asserts that this psalm indicates that there was

need “for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron” (v. 11b). He implies that the fact that this was needed shows that the Levitical priesthood could not bring perfection (cf. [Heb 10:1](#) ↕) and that consequently the law (and covenant) that came with it (v. 11a) was inadequate and hence set aside (vv. 12, 18-19a). That this change has occurred, the writer points out, becomes more clear with the appearance of a priest of a different order (vv. 15-17). In vv. 20-22 the writer then asserts that because on oath God has made him a priest forever, Jesus Christ is the “guarantor of a better covenant” (v. 22). For discussion on Melchizedek and the superiority of his priesthood, see *Jesus Christ was appointed by God as high priest forever, in the superior priestly order of Melchizedek*, p. 672. Note that “a better hope” (v. 19) is referring to the hope generated by either the new covenant in general, or more specifically the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Heb 8:6-9, 13 *But as it is, Christ^a has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.* ⁷*For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.* ⁸*For he finds fault with them when he says:^b “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,* ⁹*not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.* 📖 ... ¹³*In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.* 📖

^a Greek *he*

^b Some manuscripts *For finding fault with it he says to them*

The “ministry” (v. 6) Jesus has been given refers is his ministry as high priest, of a new covenant. God found “fault” (v. 8) with the people under the first covenant, because they did not remain faithful to it (v. 9).

Heb 10:8-10 *When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law),* ⁹*then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second.* ¹⁰*And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* 📖

The quotation from Psalm 40:6-8 (in the Septuagint) is here attributed to Jesus Christ, implying it was paralleled and fulfilled in Jesus Christ and his work. Verse 8 reflects the preliminary nature and limited capacity of the first covenant



– a system requiring repetitive sacrifices and offerings. Verses 9-10 show that Jesus Christ came to set aside this first system of sacrifices with the new “system” based on his sacrifice, according to God’s will – a sacrifice which sanctifies us, something that the old system could not do.

Heb 12:24 ... and to *Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant*, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. 

Note that 9:15 in the following subsection also refers to Jesus Christ as “the mediator of a new covenant” – i.e. the one who brought the new covenant into being, or through whom it was brought into being.

1Pet 1:18-19 ... knowing that *you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ*, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 

The phrase “the futile ways” may refer to the Jewish way of life under the old covenant, as being ultimately pointless and futile – useless for gaining salvation. As such these verses would speak of the first covenant being superseded through Jesus Christ. Alternatively the sinful, pointless way of life of non-Jews (cf. v. 14) may be in view.

... Components of the first covenant were merely a shadow of what was to come in the new covenant

Heb 10:1 For since *the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities*, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. 

Col 2:16-17 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in *questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath*. ¹⁷*These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ*. 

The things listed in v. 16 were largely things (or references to things) of the old covenant – only a shadow of what was to be realized with Jesus Christ and the new covenant (v. 17).

Heb 8:1-2, 5 Now the point in what we are saying is this: *we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,² a minister in the holy places, in the true tent^c that the Lord set up, not man*.  ... ⁵*They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”* 

^c Or *tabernacle*; also verse 5

The sanctuary in heaven is very much a part of the new covenant, it being where Jesus Christ serves as the high priest of the new covenant (vv. 1-2). The earthly sanctuary of the old covenant – where its priests served – was merely “a copy and shadow” of the heavenly one, based on a “pattern” of it (v. 5).

Heb 9:1-15 *Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness*. ²For a tent^d was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence.^e It is called the Holy Place. ³Behind the second curtain was a second section^f called the Most Holy Place, ⁴having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. ⁵Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. ⁶These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age).^g According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. ¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^h then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctifyⁱ for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^j conscience from dead works to serve the living God. ¹⁵Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.^k 

^d Or *tabernacle*; also verses 11, 21

^e Greek *the presentation of the loaves*

^f Greek *tent*; also verses 6, 8

^g Or *which is symbolic for the age then present*



^h Some manuscripts *good things to come*

ⁱ Or *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies*

^j Some manuscripts *your*

^k The Greek word means both *covenant* and *will*; also verses 16, 17

This passage presents various parallels between the two covenants. It begins by describing important aspects of the first covenant (vv. 1-6). Then those of the new are contrasted directly to the limitations of the corresponding ones of the first (vv. 7-14) – paralleled in such a way that they illustrate how the things of the first covenant were merely a shadow of those of the second. In a sense they foreshadowed what was to come in the new covenant. In v. 11, “the good things that have come” is quite possibly speaking of the good things of the new covenant that had come.

Note that the “first section” (v. 8) was the outer section of the tabernacle, which in part was for a barrier to the second section, the Most Holy Place (vv. 2-7). Here it is used to represent “the entire system” (NLT) of the first covenant, which could not provide unrestricted access to God’s presence.

✦ What Jesus taught and introduced could not be contained in the religious order of the old covenant:

Matt 9:16-17 *No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.* 📖

By these illustrations Jesus implied that the things of the new covenant could not be contained nor restricted by the old covenant.

Jesus Christ’s blood ratified the new covenant

See also:

- [Heb 9:11-15](#) ↑
- *Jesus Christ’s sacrifice of himself for us means that our sins can be forgiven . . .*, p. 592
- *. . . and that we can therefore be justified and righteous before God*, p. 593

The shedding of Jesus Christ’s blood through his death, made it possible for people’s sins to be forgiven and so opened the way for the new relationship – or covenant – between God and his people. As the new covenant is made possible and instituted through Christ’s death, the shedding of his blood in effect ratified the new covenant – just as the sprinkling of “the blood of the covenant” by Moses

ceremonially confirmed the old covenant (cf. [Heb 9:16-20](#) ↓; [Ex 24:6-8](#), in *God made a covenant with Israel, based on his law . . .*, p. 332). Hence Jesus Christ’s blood, shed in his death, is described as “the blood of the covenant”.

Matt 26:28 *... for this is my blood of the^l covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.* 📖

^l Some manuscripts insert *new*

Luke 22:20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, *“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”* 📖

^m Some manuscripts omit, in whole or in part, verses 19b-20 (*which is given . . . in my blood*)

At the “last supper” Jesus used the cup of wine to symbolize his blood that would be shed (cf. [Matt 26:28](#) ↑) in ratifying the new covenant.

Heb 9:15-20 Therefore *he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*ⁿ ¹⁶*For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.”* 📖

ⁿ The Greek word means both *covenant* and *will*; also verses 16, 17

In verses 15-17, the author uses a word play – the same Greek word being used for both “will” and “covenant” (cf. v. 15 text note). He draws a parallel between the necessity of Jesus Christ’s death in order for the new covenant – with its promised eternal inheritance (v. 15) – to come into force, and the death of the maker of a will for the will to come into force. The author then emphasizes this point (vv. 18-20) by saying that there was this same necessity for the shedding of blood for the first covenant to be “inaugurated”. Thus Christ is the mediator of the new covenant because by his own death and blood he has inaugurated and correspondingly, as with a will, made its eternal inheritance now open to those who had been bound by sin under the inadequate first covenant (v. 15).

Heb 10:29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned *the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified*, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 📖



The reference is to deliberately keeping on sinning after coming to know the truth (cf. v. 26), a contemptuous treatment of Jesus Christ and “the blood of the covenant” shed in his death.

Heb 12:24 ... and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. 

The “sprinkled blood” is linked with Jesus’ role as mediator of the new covenant, and alludes to the sprinkling of the blood of the old covenant (Ex 24:5-8); thus this verse points to Jesus Christ’s blood being the blood of the new covenant. The latter part of the verse refers to Genesis 4:10, which metaphorically describes Abel’s blood as crying out to God. Christ’s blood “speaks a better word” in that it “speaks” of atonement rather than retribution.

Heb 13:20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ... 

The reference to Christ’s blood here appears to be linked to him being the “great Shepherd of the sheep”, rather than to the preceding clause (cf. NIV). As such, this verse seems to indicate that Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of God’s people through his blood of the covenant (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT) – i.e. by virtue of him sacrificing himself to establish God’s new covenant with his people.

1Pet 1:2 ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 

The phrase “sprinkling with his blood” may refer primarily to purification by Christ’s blood (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT), a reference to the sprinkling of the blood of animal sacrifices signifying purification. However, particularly with the prior reference to obedience, it may instead allude to Exodus 24:3-8, where the people were sprinkled with blood to signify their agreement to and them being bound to the first covenant with God (cf. **Heb 9:18-20** ). If so, Peter may be implying here that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that ratifies the new covenant of God with his people (cf. CEV text note), with them in a spiritual sense being sprinkled by his blood, signifying their compliance to the new covenant. (Note that these two interpretations are not unrelated.)

✦ Just as things used under the first covenant needed to be cleansed with blood, their superior heavenly counterparts required purification with the better sacrifice of Jesus’ blood:

Heb 9:21-24 And in the same way he [Moses] sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.

²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. ²³Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 

The “heavenly things” (v. 23) appears to refer to elements of God’s heavenly sanctuary. It is not clear in what sense they needed to be purified. One possibility is that Paul is to some degree speaking figuratively, highlighting the need for a greater sacrifice (than those made for the things of the earthly sanctuary) in order to enter God’s most holy presence in heaven, to atone for unholy sins.

The new covenant is everlasting

See also:

- [Heb 13:20](#) 
- [Isa 59:21](#) 

The uses of “covenant” in the OT references in this subsection are usually considered to most likely refer to the new covenant. However some of them may also have in view an ultimate fulfillment in a millennium age. Note that a covenant of such a future age may be in view in Ezekiel 34:25 and 37:26, which make reference to an everlasting “covenant of peace” (cf. *Israel will have peace – and no fear – forever . . .*, p. 998).

Isa 55:3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. 

This quite possibly is speaking of the new covenant, while also having in view God’s promise to David of an unending dynasty – a promise linked to Jesus Christ’s accomplishments in his first mission (cf. Acts 13:34) and which will culminate in Jesus Christ’s reign on his return.

Isa 61:8 For I the LORD love justice; I hate robbery and wrong;° I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. 

° Or robbery with a burnt offering

Jer 32:40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. 



The eternal nature of the new “everlasting covenant” is reinforced in this verse by it saying that God will not stop doing good to his people and that they will not turn away from him.

Ezek 16:60 ... yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and *I will establish for you an everlasting covenant.*

2Cor 3:11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will *what is permanent* have glory.

This refers to the new covenant (cf. v. 6 ↓) as permanent.

The new covenant is spiritual – of an internal nature and of the Holy Spirit

Under the new covenant God’s people are renewed internally. As such they are able to abide by the new covenant and worship God in their hearts and minds, or spirit. God facilitates all this through his Holy Spirit, who lives and works in his people as they live under the new covenant.

Isa 59:21 “And as for me, *this is my covenant with them,*” says the LORD: “*My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,*” says the LORD, “from this time forth and forevermore.”

God’s “words” may well refer to – or at least be inclusive of – his laws (cf. AMP, GNT). As such this verse appears to imply that under the new covenant the Holy Spirit “writes the law of God inwardly on the heart” (AMP; cf. **Jer 31:33 ↓**; **Ezek 36:26-27 ↓**).

Jer 31:33 But *this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.* And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Under the new covenant God’s laws have become internal principles, not just commands from an external source. Bear in mind that the reference to “the house of Israel” (cf. **Heb 8:10 ↓**) is applicable to the new people of God, inclusive of Gentiles.

Ezek 36:26-27 And *I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷*And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*^p

^p Or my just decrees

This is generally understood to be referring to or have a fulfillment in the new covenant, in which God would renew his people internally – including giving them his Holy Spirit – and move them to follow his laws (cf. **Jer 31:33 ↑**).

John 4:19-24 The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” ²¹*Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.* ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.* ²⁴*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*”

Under the old covenant the Jews were to carry out worship practices – such as sacrifices and annual feasts – only in Jerusalem, the location of the temple. Jesus’ teaching points to the new covenant, the time when worship would be “in spirit and truth” – internal and not subject to geographical restrictions.

Rom 7:6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that *we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*^q

^q Greek of the letter

Although not necessarily intended, the terms “the new way” and “the old way” parallel the new covenant and the old covenant. As such this verse at least reflects – and quite possibly teaches – that the new covenant is “of the Spirit” (cf. **2Cor 3:3, 6-8 ↓**), as per the theme of this subsection.

2Cor 3:3-8 And you show that *you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*^r ⁴Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God ⁶who has made us competent^s to be ministers of *a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit.* For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses’ face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸will not *the ministry of the Spirit* have even more glory?

^r Greek *fleshly hearts*

^s Or *sufficient*

Verse 3 portrays God’s people under the new covenant. The Corinthians’ new spiritual lives were composed not with ink



but with God's Holy Spirit, "not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (v. 3b). This clause alludes to the two covenants. As such it contrasts the old covenant with the new covenant under which the Corinthians' new spiritual lives were formed – the latter covenant being written with the Spirit internally on human hearts, as reflected in v. 6. Verse 8 further associates the Holy Spirit with the new covenant. Note that "the letter" (v. 6) is a reference to the law – which brings death, in contrast to the Spirit.

Under the new covenant God's people know him and are forgiven

Under the new covenant, God's people know him more intimately and more completely. Also under the new covenant, the forgiveness of God's people which the old covenant foreshadowed and signified is emphatically and comprehensively accomplished.

Heb 8:10-12 *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹¹And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹²For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.* 

This is a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. [Jer 31:33](#) ; [Heb 10:16-18](#) ). Verses 11-12 show that under God's new covenant, all God's people know him and their sins are truly forgiven. Note that v. 10b speaks of the new covenant also fulfilling a primary aim of the old covenant – "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (cf. [Jer 24:7](#) .

Jer 24:7 *I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.* 

Particularly with the covenantal language of the second clause, this is quite probably looking forward to the new covenant which Jeremiah describes a few chapters later in 31:31-34 (cf. [Heb 8:10-12](#) ). In conjunction with knowing him personally, God's people will know – and not lose sight of – who he is.

Heb 10:16-18 *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," ¹⁷then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.* 

Under the new covenant the sins of God's people are totally forgiven (v. 17) and so no further sacrifices are required (v. 18).

Rom 11:27 ... "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." 

The context is the turning to God of Israel as a whole at the end of the age. The new covenant – with its forgiveness for those who turn to God – is generally considered to be in view.

Other contrasting aspects of the new covenant with the old

See also:

- *Living by the Spirit brings life – in contrast to living by the sinful nature and to the law*, p. 1075

2Cor 3:6-11 ... [God] who has made us competent^t to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. ¹⁰Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. 

^t Or sufficient

In contrast to the old covenant based on the law, the new covenant brings life through the Spirit (v. 6). The new covenant also far exceeds the old covenant in its glory (vv. 7-9). Paul shows the new covenant to be more glorious by pointing out that it is: of the Spirit (v. 8); brings righteousness (v. 9); and is everlasting (v. 11).

Gal 4:22-26, 28-31 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. ²³But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. ²⁴Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. ²⁵Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia;^u she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.  ... ²⁸Now you,^v brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born



according to the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for *the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.*” ³¹*So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.* 📖

♣ Some manuscripts *For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia*

♣ Some manuscripts *we*

Those under the old covenant are like Hagar’s children in that they are: merely “born according to the flesh” (vv. 23, 29); in slavery under the yoke of the law given at Mount Sinai (vv. 24-25), as exemplified by those of “the present Jerusalem” (v. 25); and without a share in the inheritance of God’s people (v. 30). In contrast, those under the new covenant are: born (or reborn spiritually) by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the result of a promise (vv. 23, 28-29); free from the yoke of the law (vv. 26, 31; cf. 5:1), typified by “the Jerusalem above” (cf. [Heb 12:22 ↓](#)) which is free (v. 26); and will “inherit with the son of the free woman” (v. 30).

Heb 12:18-24 *For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest* ¹⁹*and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.* ²⁰*For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.”* ²¹*Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”* ²²*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,* ²³*and to the assembly^w of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,* ²⁴*and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.* 📖

♣ Or *church*

Verses 18-21 speak of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, reflecting unappealing aspects of the old covenant such as its less spiritual nature, fearsomeness and severity. The wonderful aspects of the new covenant – to which and to whom believers “have come” – are then stated in contrast (vv. 22-24). The “assembly of the firstborn” (v. 23) likely refers to believers, either: as those who in Christ will share in the blessings that he (the firstborn Son) has won; or simply as those who are of Christ, having followed him.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Jesus Christ as High Priest

See also:

- [c\) *The Role of the Priests*, p. 394](#)
- [d\) *Epilogue: God’s People Relate to God through Jesus Christ*, p. 795](#)

As referred to earlier, in the replacement of God’s old covenant with Israel by God’s new covenant with all who are now his people, the Levitical priesthood of the old covenant has been replaced by Jesus Christ’s priesthood of the new covenant. The following subsections highlight the superiority of Jesus Christ’s priesthood to the Levitical priesthood.

Subsections

- Jesus Christ is the high priest of God’s people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary
- Jesus Christ was appointed by God as high priest forever, in the superior priestly order of Melchizedek
- Previous sacrifices offered by priests were ultimately ineffective in dealing with sin . . .
- . . . As high priest, Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all
- As high priest, Jesus Christ continues to intercede for God’s people
- Jesus Christ is a high priest who is perfect – but can still identify with his people’s humanity

Jesus Christ is the high priest of God’s people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers,^x you who share in a heavenly calling, consider *Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession*, ... 📖

♣ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

In accordance with the faith, believers confess Jesus Christ to be their high priest.

Heb 10:21 ... and since *we have a great priest over the house of God*, ... 📖

The “house of God” refers to the church (cf. 3:6), the family of believers. Jesus Christ is the high priest of all God’s people.

Heb 4:14 Since then *we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God*, let us hold fast our confession. 📖



Heb 6:19-20 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into *the inner place behind the curtain*,²⁰ *where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.* 

In speaking of Jesus Christ ministering before God in his heavenly sanctuary, this refers or alludes to the earthly tabernacle set up in Moses' time (cf. *The ark was kept in the Most Holy Place, shielded by a veil – in the tabernacle and later the temple . . .*, p. 343). This tabernacle was God's temporary earthly sanctuary and dwelling place with his people. It was there that the priests performed their most sacred duties. The following passages also refer to this tabernacle, which was a tent structure.

Heb 8:1-2, 5 Now the point in what we are saying is this: *we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²a minister in the holy places, in the true tent^y that the Lord set up, not man.*  ...
⁵*They [other high priests] serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.* For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." 

^y Or *tabernacle*; also verse 5

Verse 5 underlines the superiority of the heavenly sanctuary, of which the earthly one is merely "a copy and shadow".

Heb 9:11-12, 24 But when *Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^z then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*  ...²⁴*For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.* 

^z Some manuscripts *good things to come*

As indicated by v. 24, "the holy places" is used in v. 12 to refer to the heavenly sanctuary, wherein is the very presence of God – as does the "greater and more perfect tent" (v. 11). In contrast to the earthly high priests who only entered a man-made sanctuary, and that only briefly once a year – Jesus Christ entered into the heavenly sanctuary, "once for all" (v. 12).

✦ High priests represent people before God:

Heb 5:1 *For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.* 

Jesus Christ was appointed by God as high priest forever, in the superior priestly order of Melchizedek

See also:

▪ Heb 6:20

Genesis 14:18-20 tells of Abraham (then Abram) meeting with Melchizedek, who was king of Salem (which would become Jerusalem). It refers to Melchizedek as "priest of God Most High", indicating he was a priest and worshipper of the Lord. Aside from Hebrews, the only other time that Melchizedek is mentioned in the Bible is in Psalms 110:4, a messianic verse, quoted below in Hebrews 5:6 and 7:17, 21. The meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek – along with the implications arising out of it – is discussed at the end of this subsection in Hebrews 7:1-10.

Aspects of the superiority of Jesus Christ's priesthood in the order of Melchizedek (over the Levitical priesthood) are discussed in most of the following passages. Most notable is the fact that Jesus Christ's priesthood is everlasting.

Heb 5:5-6, 9-10 So also *Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; ⁶as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."*  ...⁹And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰*being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.* 

The first quotation (v. 5b) is from Psalm 2, which was composed for the coronation of kings. It is quite possibly being used here both to reflect the fact that God had appointed Jesus Christ as high priest and to assert the superiority of his priesthood, him being both a king and God's Son. Along with the second quotation, it shows that like Melchizedek Jesus Christ is both a king and a high priest.

Heb 7:11-17 *Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?*¹²For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. ¹³*For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.* ¹⁴*For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.* ¹⁵This becomes even more evident when *another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an*



indestructible life. ¹⁷For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” 

The Levitical priesthood, with the law, was inadequate and so there was the need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek (v. 11). In vv. 13-14 the writer indicates that this priest is Jesus Christ, from the tribe of Judah rather than the tribe of Levi. “This” (v. 15a) probably refers to the assertion that there has been a change in the priesthood and the law (v. 12; cf. NLT), with the previous ones having been inadequate (v. 11). That this change has occurred becomes clearer with the appearance of a priest of a different order (who is Christ). His appointment has been made (in part at least) on the basis of an indestructible life, and thus he has an everlasting priesthood in the order of Melchizedek (vv. 15-17; cf. v. 24 ↓).

Heb 7:20-25 And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’” ²²This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. ²³The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost^a those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. 

^a That is, completely; or at all times

The fact that God appointed Jesus Christ as a priest forever is affirmed by God having done so with an oath (vv. 20-21). This guarantees that the new order or covenant is a superior one (v. 22), in part at least because as its high priest endures forever it will also. A further advantage of Jesus Christ’s priesthood is that with it being everlasting, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him (v. 25).

Heb 8:6 But as it is, Christ^b has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. 

^b Greek *he*

The ministry or priesthood Jesus Christ has received from God is as superior to the Levitical high priesthood as the new covenant is to the old covenant.

‡ **Melchizedek’s superiority to Abraham and the Levitical priesthood:**

Heb 7:1-10 For this *Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God*, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ²and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his

name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. ⁴See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! ⁵And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers,^c though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸In the one case tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. 

^c Or brothers and sisters

This shows Melchizedek’s spiritual superiority to both Abraham and the Levitical priesthood that came from Abraham, the priests being Abraham’s descendants. Melchizedek’s superiority is evidenced by Abraham giving him “a tenth part of everything” (vv. 2, 4-10) and by him blessing Abraham (vv. 1, 6-7). It is also alluded to by that fact that no account is given of Melchizedek’s ancestry, birth or death – which is interpreted to imply an everlasting priesthood (vv. 3, 8; cf. vv. 15-17 ↑). Additionally, note that the meanings of his name and his kingly title (v. 2) have messianic overtones.

Previous sacrifices offered by priests were ultimately ineffective in dealing with sin . . .

See also:

- [Heb 7:11](#) ↑
- [a\) Offerings for Atonement for Sinners](#), p. 384

Note that the contrasts made in this and the following subsection between Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and those made by priests, largely refer to the high priest’s sacrifice for the sins of all the people on the annual Day of Atonement – the most significant sacrifice stipulated in the law.

Heb 9:7-10 ... but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age).^d According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered



that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,¹⁰ but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. 

^d Or *which is symbolic for the age then present*

Verse 7 reflects how because of their sin people cannot stand in God's presence. The fact that only the high priest could enter into God's presence, and only once a year, illustrates the insufficiency of the sacrifices in eradicating sin. (For if the sacrifices had have eradicated sin, then the people themselves could have entered God's presence on a regular basis.) So the gifts and sacrifices could not clear the conscience of the worshiper (v. 9b). They were merely external procedures (v. 10), never able to cleanse the heart and deal effectively with sin.

Note that v. 10 appears to refer more to regulations regarding ceremonial cleanness than offerings specifically for sin. But with the prior reference to offerings for sin (v. 7) and the subsequent discussion of Jesus Christ's sacrifice of himself (cf. vv. 11-14) what is said in v. 9b regarding the shortcomings of these regulations is likely also referring to or at least applicable to sin offerings. This is further supported by the parallels made between uncleanness and sin in the OT.

Heb 10:1-6 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, *it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.* ²*Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?* ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* ⁵*Consequently, when Christ^e came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.* 

^e Greek *he*

Following on from vv. 1-4, vv. 5-6 further emphasize that the sacrifices of the old covenant were ineffective in removing sin.

Heb 10:11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 

Rom 3:25 ... whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, *because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.* 

The second sentence indicates that the sins committed under the old covenant were not satisfactorily punished or dealt with (and because of God's righteousness could not remain as such). This shows that – in contrast to God's presentation of Jesus Christ as a "propitiation" – previous sacrifices were ultimately ineffective in dealing with sin.

... As high priest, Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all

Heb 7:27 *He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.* 

Heb 9:11-12 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^f then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²*he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.* 

^f Some manuscripts *good things to come*

Verse 12 refers to the high priest being required to enter the Most Holy Place with the blood of sacrificed animals each time he entered, which was annually on the Day of Atonement. This was to make atonement for the Most Holy Place – because of its defilement by the people's sins – and as part of the process of making atonement for the people's sin (cf. Lev 16:11-17). In contrast to the high priests of the old covenant, by the sacrifice of himself Jesus Christ entered into God's presence once for all, by his own blood – "thus securing an eternal redemption" (v. 12).

Heb 9:24-28 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵*Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,* ²⁶*for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* ²⁷And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸*so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.* 

In contrast to the high priest who sacrifices every year with blood that is not his own (v. 25b), Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all by "the sacrifice of himself" (v. 26) – i.e. with his own blood.



Heb 10:10, 12-18 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ...¹²But when Christ^g had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” ¹⁷then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” ¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. ☞

^g Greek *this one*

1Pet 3:18 For Christ also suffered^h once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ... ☞

^h Some manuscripts *died*

As high priest, Jesus Christ continues to intercede for God’s people

See also:

- *Jesus Christ is the high priest of God’s people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary*, p. 671

Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for sin – to make God’s people holy and reconcile them to God – was itself a form of intercession on their behalf. Further to this, in his ongoing priestly ministry for them, Jesus Christ continues to intercede before God for them, speaking to God on their behalf. This second aspect is in view in this subsection.

Heb 7:23-25 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, ²⁴but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. ²⁵Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermostⁱ those who draw near to God through him, since *he always lives to make intercession for them.* ☞

ⁱ That is, completely; or *at all times*

Rom 8:34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.^j ☞

^j Or *Is it Christ Jesus who died . . . for us?*

Heb 9:24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ☞

Even “now” Jesus Christ appears for us before God “as our Advocate” (NLT).

1Jn 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But *if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* ☞

Job 16:19-21 *Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he who testifies for me is on high.* ²⁰My friends scorn me; my eye pours out tears to God, ²¹*that he would argue the case of a man with God, as^k a son of man does with his neighbor.* ☞

^k Hebrew *and*

This OT reference is not necessarily pointing directly to Jesus Christ, but is often understood to anticipate his intercessory role. Note that what Job is actually saying or meaning is also debatable, particularly in vv. 20-21.

Rom 5:9-10 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, *much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.* ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, *much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* ☞

The latter parts of each of these two verses may well refer to Jesus Christ’s present life and ministry for believers – largely that pertaining to his role as high priest of God’s people, particularly his intercession for them. However, note that some commentators interpret them instead as referring to believers being saved through sharing in Christ’s resurrected life in their union with him.

‡ **Jesus’ prayer of intercession for his disciples and all believers:**

John 17:9, 11, 15, 17, 20-21, 24 *I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.* ☞ ...¹¹And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. *Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.* ☞ ...¹⁵*I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.*¹ ☞ ...¹⁷*Sanctify them^m in the truth; your word is truth.* ☞ ...²⁰*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* ☞ ...²⁴*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have*



given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 

¹ Or *from evil*

^m Greek *Set them apart* (for holy service to God)

Note that Luke 22:32a tells of an instance of Jesus interceding in prayer on behalf of one of his people (Simon Peter): "... but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail."

Jesus Christ is a high priest who is perfect – but can still identify with his people’s humanity

See also:

- *Note: Jesus’ humanity was vital to his mission to save people*, p. 522

Jesus Christ is a high priest who is himself perfect. As such Jesus Christ: was able to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice; does not need to sacrifice for himself; and is able to remain always in God’s presence to represent his people. On the other hand, Jesus Christ is also a high priest who can identify with his people’s humanity. As such, being perfect yet empathetic, Jesus Christ is a high priest who will meet his people’s needs (cf. [Heb 7:26 ↓](#); [Heb 2:16-18 ↓](#); [Heb 4:15-16 ↓](#)).

Heb 7:26-28 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. 

Heb 5:8-10 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. 

References to Jesus Christ being made perfect (v. 9; cf. [Heb 7:28 ↑](#); [Heb 2:10 ↓](#)) are not indicating that Jesus Christ was ever in any way imperfect. A common view is that they are speaking of him being perfectly molded for his high priestly role – in fully experiencing humanity through his suffering (v. 8 cf. [Heb 2:10 ↓](#); [Heb 4:15 ↓](#)). Alternatively the verses may be speaking of Jesus Christ as being perfected in the sense of maturing in his incarnation, through his suffering. When he was very young he was not disobedient, but on the other hand he was still to learn to obey, or to obey in the most trying circumstances.

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 

Heb 2:16-18 For surely it is not angels that he [Christ] helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. 

Jesus Christ can identify with his people’s humanity as he was “made like his brothers in every respect” (v. 17) and “he himself has suffered when tempted” (v. 18). And so we have “a merciful and faithful high priest” (v. 17), “able to help those who are being tempted” (v. 18).

Heb 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. 

The “help” (v. 16) may be from God rather than Jesus Christ. But even so, these verses indicate that Christ’s identification with his people’s humanity is critical to obtaining such help, with him as high priest representing them before God in their time of need.

✦ Every high priest is selected from among men:

Heb 5:1 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 

In saying that every high priest is “chosen from among men”, this points to the need for Jesus Christ to have become like his people in order to represent them before God as their high priest.

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) The Kingdom of God

See also:

- *b) God Reigns Supreme*, p. 250

NT teaching on the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) follows on from OT teaching on God's reign or kingship (cf. *b) God Reigns Supreme*, p. 250). It indicates that Jesus Christ's coming inaugurated a more far-reaching, spiritual dimension of God's reign. Its domain is in the hearts and minds of those who submit to God. This kingdom of God also has both a present and future dimension – existing now, but only being fully consummated at the end of the age. Then God's authority will be fully imposed in all spheres of existence – once and for all.

Note that the kingdom of God is often spoken of as Jesus Christ's kingdom (cf. *Note: The kingdom of God is also the kingdom of Jesus Christ*, p. 683).

Subsections

- The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission
- The kingdom of God will come in all its fullness in the future
- The spiritual nature of the kingdom of God
- The dynamism and power of the kingdom of God
- The great cost of participating in the kingdom of God
- Those who will enter the kingdom of God . . .
- . . . Those to whom the kingdom of God belongs
- Those who will not enter nor inherit the kingdom of God
- Note: The kingdom of God is also the kingdom of Jesus Christ

The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission

See also:

- *Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God*, p. 566

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was arrested, *Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,*¹⁵ *and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* 

With Jesus' mission, the time had come for the kingdom of God to "come near" (NRSV).

Matt 11:12 *From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,ⁿ and the violent take it by force.* 

ⁿ Or *has been coming violently*

John the Baptist's ministry was to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry, so in it was the beginnings of the coming of the kingdom of God (cf. **Luke 16:16** ↓). The verse is speaking of either: hostile forces opposing the kingdom (as per the ESV text); or the kingdom "forcefully advancing" (NIV®; cf. ESV text note), with fervent people pressing their way into it (cf. **Luke 16:16** ↓).

Luke 16:16 *The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.^o* 

^o Or *everyone is forcefully urged into it*

Matt 12:28 *But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.* 

Matt 13:11, 17 And he answered them, *"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.*  ... ¹⁷*For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.* 

In v. 11, "to them it has not" refers to listeners with calloused hearts. In v. 17, the "prophets and righteous people" were OT prophets and righteous people who lived before Jesus came and had looked forward to the coming of the kingdom – including the things associated with its coming such as referred to in v. 11.

Matt 13:37-38 He answered, *"The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.* ³⁸*The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ...* 

That Jesus "sowed" the people of the kingdom into the world shows that in his mission the kingdom had indeed come.

Luke 17:20-21 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, *"The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed,* ²¹*nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."*^p 

^p Or *within you, or within your grasp*

Jesus appears to be saying that the coming of the kingdom of God was not going to be manifested with wondrous signs, but was in fact already in the midst of them – presumably meaning in Jesus himself, along with his work and teaching,



and in the lives of his followers. However, note the alternative renderings in the text note.

Matt 16:28 Truly, I say to you, *there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.* 

Generally commentators do not consider that “coming” is here referring to Christ’s second coming. Although many see this verse as alluding to the transfiguration (cf. 17:1-8), it possibly refers instead to Jesus Christ’s resurrection and the ensuing phase of the kingdom.

Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “*Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers^a has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.*” 

^a Or *brothers and sisters*

The things mentioned in the first clause of the quotation were established through Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. However it is debatable as to whether this verse is referring to the present forms of these things. If it is, then the verse is pertinent to this subsection; otherwise it would be better placed in the following subsection.

The kingdom of God will come in all its fullness in the future

See also:

- [Rev 12:10](#) 
- *God will impose his absolute rule on all*, p. 253
- *The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace*, p. 720

Matt 6:9-10 Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”¹⁰ *Your kingdom come, your will be done,^s on earth as it is in heaven.* 

^r Or *Let your name be kept holy, or Let your name be treated with reverence*

^s Or *Let your kingdom come, let your will be done*

“Your kingdom come” appears at least primarily to be a request for the full manifestation of the kingdom (cf. CEV, NLT), yet to be realized. Some commentators interpret it to also refer to the furthering of the kingdom in its present form. Possibly both aspects are in view.

Matt 25:34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*’ 

The future judgment day is in view, when the righteous will be rewarded with participation in God’s kingdom in its complete form.

Luke 13:28-29 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, *when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.*²⁹ *And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.* 

This speaks of the future consummation of the kingdom, with the messianic banquet (v. 29; cf. [Note: The feast in the kingdom of God](#), p. 748).

Luke 21:31 So also, *when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.* 

The phrase “these things” refers to signs of the end of the age.

Luke 22:15-18 And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it^t *until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*”¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves.¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine *until the kingdom of God comes.*” 

^t Some manuscripts *never eat it again*

The Passover, which was celebrated in remembrance of God’s saving the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, will be fulfilled in a more complete sense by the final salvation for God’s people in the future consummation of the kingdom. With this in view, it would appear that Jesus is alluding to the messianic banquet (cf. [Luke 13:28-29](#) ) and God’s kingdom in the afterlife. Note, however, that as Jesus’ death with the salvation that it brought is also linked to the Passover (cf. 1Cor 5:7), some commentators think that Jesus may instead be referring to his appearance after his death and resurrection.

2Tim 4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and *by his appearing and his kingdom: ...* 

This appears to point to Jesus Christ implementing his Kingdom in its final form on his return (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

2Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.* To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 

Paul appears to speak of a form of the kingdom that he will not experience until the afterlife.



Rev 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.*” 

The setting is in the end times, when the whole world will be brought under God and Jesus Christ’s rule, becoming theirs. As such it will be integrated into the kingdom of God.

✦ **Some people mistakenly thought that the kingdom was going to appear at once:**

Luke 19:11-12 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because *they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.* ¹²*He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.* 

Following on from v. 11, v. 12 suggests that God’s kingdom would come in all its fullness only after Jesus had gone away and then returned – with Jesus quite likely telling the parable (cf. vv. 12-27) partly to correct the people’s mistaken notion (v. 11).

The spiritual nature of the kingdom of God

See also:

- [Matt 13:31-33](#) ; [Mark 4:26-27](#) 

John 18:36 Jesus answered, “*My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.*” 

The first statement points to the spiritual nature of the kingdom, it not being a physical or material kind as are those in this world. In connection with this, the final statement speaks of the kingdom having an “origin or source” (AMP) from a place other than this world – i.e. heaven, ultimately God (cf. [John 3:3 text note](#) ). Jesus’ kingdom is a spiritual one, in contrast to the values, aims and methods of this world. As such his servants were not to turn to physical force.

Luke 17:20-21 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, ²¹nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, *the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.*”^u 

^u Or *within you, or within your grasp*

The final clause of v. 21 may well indicate that God’s kingdom is within the hearts of its people (cf. ESV text note, CEV text note). As such it is a spiritual kingdom – as opposed to being an observable thing (v. 20). (See also the earlier comment on

these verses in [The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ’s mission](#), p. 677.)

John 3:3, 5 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born again^v he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”  ...⁵Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* 

^v Or *from above*; the Greek is purposely ambiguous and can mean both *again* and *from above*; also verse 7

The members of God’s kingdom have been spiritually reborn, born of the Spirit (v. 5), born “from above” (v. 3 text note). Being born of the Holy Spirit involves the spiritual renewal produced by the Spirit, which we open ourselves to in humbly turning to God. There are a number of interpretations as to what “water” (v. 5) refers. These include: spiritual cleansing; water baptism, for repentance; the Holy Spirit (cf. John 7:37-39); God’s word (cf. Eph 5:26; 1Pet 1:23); or physical birth. With the last interpretation, “born of water and the Spirit” would then mean that one needs to be born physically and also spiritually.

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* 

Matt 18:4 *Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* 

Being a spiritual domain, godly spiritual traits are of great importance in the kingdom of God (cf. [Rom 14:17](#) ). One prominent such trait is humility, which not only enables one to enter the kingdom (cf. v. 3) but is also critical for one’s continuing participation in the kingdom and spiritual growth.

Luke 8:10 ... he said, “*To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’* 

The kingdom of God holds secrets hidden from the people of “the world”. Such secrets regard spiritual matters, and are given to or discerned by those with spiritual openness and spiritual insight.

✦ **Reversals in the rewards of God’s kingdom:**

Matt 19:30 *But many who are first will be last, and the last first.* 

Jesus said this when speaking of rewards bestowed when the kingdom is consummated (cf. 19:28-20:16). The implication appears to be that rewards in the kingdom will be not as one might expect; in fact they will generally reflect the reverse of worldly values. As such one should be wary of being



presumptuous or acquisitive (cf. v. 27) in contemplating one's reward.

The dynamism and power of the kingdom of God

Matt 13:31-33 He put another parable before them, saying, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³²It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."* ³³He told them another parable. *"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."* 

The point of these parables is that despite its small beginnings, the kingdom of heaven will spread throughout the world.

Mark 4:26-29 And he said, *"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."* 

The phrase "produces by itself" (v. 28) indicates that the growth of the kingdom is not brought about simply by human effort. Rather it is in a way that is in fact beyond human comprehension – "he knows not how" (v. 27). There are a number of differing interpretations of this parable, or at least of aspects of it. The parable may be depicting the growth of the kingdom through the spreading of the gospel (i.e. the scattering of the seed) which produces a harvest of converts. It may instead be illustrating the spiritual growth in believers or members of the kingdom. It could also be referring to the growth and eventual consummation of the kingdom, with the harvest involving judgment. All such interpretations of this parable speak of the remarkable growth of God's kingdom, pointing to its dynamism and power.

1Cor 4:20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. 

God's kingdom "consists of and is based on" (AMP) spiritual power – not talk.

Heb 12:27-28 This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ... 

The power of God's kingdom is such that it cannot be "destroyed" (NLT) – in contrast to created things (v. 27) – or derailed.

‡ The greatness of those in the kingdom of God:

Matt 11:11 Truly, I say to you, *among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.* 

There are different interpretations of how "one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than" John. Possibly the most common one is that this is referring to the superior or more privileged position of those who have already entered the kingdom, in contrast to those – such as John – who had lived under the old covenant.

The great cost of participating in the kingdom of God

Matt 13:44-46 *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.* 

Although some commentators have a somewhat different understanding, both these parables seem to be essentially illustrating the absolute cost of the kingdom of God; one must be prepared to forgo everything for it. Note the joy in doing so that is apparent in v. 44.

Luke 9:59-62 To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰And Jesus^w said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." ⁶²Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." 

^w Greek *he*

This speaks of the cost of serving in the kingdom of God, with it requiring us to make it the main priority and focus of our lives – above everything else. For further comment see [Put God and Jesus Christ before everyone else](#), p. 1392.

Luke 18:22-30 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. *Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.*" ²³But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. ²⁴Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through the



eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”²⁶Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?”²⁷But he said, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”²⁸And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.”²⁹And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers^x or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,³⁰who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

^x Or wife or brothers and sisters

Jesus command to sell everything (v. 22) is given here to an extremely rich man whose main spiritual problem was that he loved his riches. The extent that this command is relevant to people generally is debatable. At the very least it suggests that to follow Jesus Christ and enter God’s kingdom one needs to shed all that is not a necessity for living. Verses 28-29 speak of giving up even the dearest of things for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Acts 14:22 ...strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Participating in the kingdom of God is not only costly in terms of what one has to give up, it also involves accepting hardship and suffering (cf. **2Thes 1:5** ↓; **Rev 1:9** ↓).

2Thes 1:5 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

This associates suffering (along with the need for patient endurance) with participating in God’s kingdom.

Those who will enter the kingdom of God . . .

See also:

- *God’s people will enter the kingdom of God . . .*, p. 739

Matt 18:1-4 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”²And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them³and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Mark 10:15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Similar to Matthew 18:1-4 above, this speaks of the humility, trust and receptiveness exemplified in little children (cf. **Matt 19:14** ↓), which are required to enter God’s kingdom.

Matt 21:31-32 Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

This and Mark 1:14-15 below indicate that those who repent and believe will enter the kingdom of God. Those portrayed as such here are those who recognized themselves to be sinners – the tax collectors and the prostitutes – as opposed to the self-righteous chief priests and elders to whom Jesus was speaking.

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

John 3:3, 5 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again^y he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
⁵Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

^y Or from above; the Greek is purposely ambiguous and can mean both again and from above; also verse 7

Mark 12:28-34a And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”²⁹Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.³⁰And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’³¹The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”³²And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.³³And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”³⁴And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”



Realizing the utmost importance of love for God and for others – particularly as opposed to external aspects of religion (v. 33) – is critical for drawing near to God’s kingdom. For to participate in God’s kingdom, one’s life must be based on love for God and others.

Matt 7:21 *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* 📖

Note that the future form of the kingdom is in view in this and the remaining verses.

Matt 13:43 *Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* He who has ears, let him hear. 📖

2Pet 1:10-11 *Therefore, brothers,^z be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* 📖

^z Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

In v. 10 Peter refers to the spiritual qualities listed earlier in vv. 5-7 (i.e. faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love). One needs to nurture and grow in such things, acting accordingly, to ensure one’s entry into God’s kingdom at the end of the age.

... Those to whom the kingdom of God belongs

See also:

- *... and God’s people will inherit the kingdom*, p. 739

Note that those to whom the kingdom of God belongs are the same as those who will enter it.

Matt 5:3, 10 *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* 📖 ... ¹⁰*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* 📖

To be “poor in spirit” (v. 3) means to be aware of one’s spiritual need, with the suggestion of looking to God to fulfill such need.

Matt 19:14 *... but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”* 📖

Matt 21:43 *Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.* 📖

The kingdom of God will be given to those who produce the spiritual “fruits” that are of the kingdom. These “fruits” involves the spiritual traits and practices that characterize the kingdom and its citizens. Jesus may have primarily in view producing such “fruits” in oneself or in the world – or both.

Matt 25:34-36, 40 *Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’* 📖 ... ⁴⁰*And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,^a you did it to me.’* 📖

^a Or *brothers and sisters*

Luke 6:20 *And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”* 📖

For comments on this and the following verse from James, see the comments on [Luke 6:20-21](#) and [James 2:5](#) – under . . . *Contrastingly, the poor are given prominence as recipients of the gospel and God’s kingdom*, p. 1909.

James 2:5 *Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?* 📖

‡ **God enables people to participate in the kingdom:**

Col 1:12-13 *... giving thanks^b to the Father, who has qualified you^c to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ...* 📖

^b Or *patience, with joy giving thanks*

^c Some manuscripts *us*

Note that somewhat similarly Revelation 5:10 speaks of Jesus Christ forming his people into a kingdom – akin to enabling them to participate in the kingdom of God. It says: “... and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”



Those who will not enter nor inherit the kingdom of God

See also:

- Eph 5:5 ↓

Matt 5:20 For I tell you, *unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* 📖

Anyone who is like the Pharisees – with their hypocritical and self-righteous ways, and closed mindedness – will not enter God’s kingdom.

Matt 7:21-23 *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’* 📖

The “workers of lawlessness” (v. 23b) are people who have not done “the will of my Father who is in heaven” (v. 21b). Those who claim to be Christians and to have done such works will not enter God’s kingdom if they have in fact not sought to do the will of God.

Matt 13:41, 47-50 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 📖 ... ⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 📖

1Cor 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous^d will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^e ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 📖

^d Or wrongdoers

^e The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

Gal 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,*

²¹envy,^f drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 📖

^f Some manuscripts add *murder*

Matt 5:19 Therefore *whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* 📖

Being “called least in the kingdom of heaven” may be referring to the consummation of the kingdom and its reign enveloping all creation, with such people being deemed as the least of all people – in effect condemned. As such this verse would be applicable to this subsection. However, the phrase “in the kingdom of heaven” suggests that such people may still be accepted into the kingdom rather than necessarily being shut out and in hell. Furthermore, with “these commandments” most likely referring to the OT law, Jesus may be speaking of these commands being incorrectly downplayed by some teachers under the new covenant, in the present form of God’s kingdom that he introduced – rather than them generally flouting Christian teaching.

✦ It is extremely difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God:

Mark 10:23-25 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, *“How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”* ²⁴And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, *“Children, how difficult it is^g to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”* 📖

^g Some manuscripts add *for those who trust in riches*

Note: The kingdom of God is also the kingdom of Jesus Christ

See also:

- Matt 13:41 ↑

As shown in the following section, *Jesus Christ as Lord of All*, God has granted authority over all things to Jesus Christ. This includes authority over his kingdom (cf. [Luke 2:29](#) ↓). Thus the kingdom can be referred to as being of God and also as being of Jesus Christ.



Eph 5:5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in *the kingdom of Christ and God*. 

This verse and Revelation 11:15 below are instances of the kingdom being referred to as being of both Jesus Christ and God. The subsequent verses are largely examples of it being spoken of as being Jesus Christ's. (There are of course numerous times where it is spoken of as being God's kingdom, as seen earlier.)

Rev 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ*, and he shall reign forever and ever." 

Col 1:13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to *the kingdom of his beloved Son*, ... 

2Tim 4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and *by his appearing and his kingdom*: ... 

2Pet 1:11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into *the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. 

Luke 23:42 And he said, "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom*." 

John 18:36-37 *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."* ³⁷Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "*You say that I am a king*. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." 

"My kingdom" (v. 36) can be equated with the kingdom of God. "You say that I am a king" (v. 37) appears to affirm that he is a king (cf. AMP, NIV, NLT). Jesus' answer in v. 37 seems to associate his bearing witness to the truth with his kingship, perhaps pointing to his authority to propagate truth.

Luke 22:29-30 ... and *I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom*, ³⁰*that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom* and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 

✦ Jesus Christ's handing over of the kingdom to God:

1Cor 15:24-28 Then comes the end, *when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power*. ²⁵*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet*. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For "God^h has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸*When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all*. 

^h Greek *he*

Jesus Christ will reign until he has subdued all his enemies (v. 25). Then the end of this age will come when he turns the kingdom over to God (v. 24).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Jesus Christ as Lord of All

See also:

- *Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power*, p. 100
- *Note: The kingdom of God is also the kingdom of Jesus Christ*, p. 683
- *God has appointed Jesus Christ judge and will judge all people through him*, p. 711
- *The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace*, p. 720
- *Jesus Christ is the church's Lord and ruler*, p. 774

God has made Jesus Christ Lord of all things, to rule over all creation on God's behalf.

The NT speaks of Jesus Christ's lordship as being initiated or affirmed, in him being pronounced Lord of all upon his post-resurrection exaltation to God's right hand. However, note that some verses suggest that in some sense at least he was Lord of all things prior to this, speaking of his prior power or authority over all things. This point is discussed further in the comments under Luke 2:11 and Colossians 1:15-18 in . . . *and God made Jesus Christ Lord of all*, p. 686.



Subsections

- Following his death and resurrection, God exalted Jesus Christ to his right hand . . .
- . . . and God made Jesus Christ Lord of all
- God has given Jesus Christ authority and power over all things
- God has entrusted everything to Jesus Christ – and made him heir of all things
- Jesus Christ has power over all other powers
- Jesus Christ's power extends over death
- In the end, all Jesus Christ's enemies will be made his footstool – totally conquered

Following his death and resurrection, God exalted Jesus Christ to his right hand . . .

See also:

- Acts 5:31 ↓; Phil 2:9 ↓
- *Jesus was taken up to God in heaven*, p. 583
- *Because he had willingly suffered death, God exalted and glorified Jesus Christ*, p. 584

In seating Jesus Christ at his right hand, God exalted Jesus Christ in honor and authority above every other being.

Luke 22:69 But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God. 

The phrase “seated at the right hand of the power of God” alludes to Psalm 110:1 (cf. Acts 2:34 ↓; Heb 1:13 ↓), which is understood to be messianic. The phrase speaks of being in God's presence with divine authority. Note that Jesus said this when on trial before the council of the elders, and so some commentators take it to mean that from that point on he was in a sense at God's right-hand. However it is probably more commonly understood that Jesus was referring to when he would return to heaven.

Mark 16:19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 

Acts 2:32-34 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, ... 

Acts 7:55-56 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” 

Rom 8:34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.ⁱ 

ⁱ Or Is it Christ Jesus who died . . . for us?

Eph 1:19-20 ...and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ... 

Col 3:1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 

Heb 1:3b-5, 13 After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?  ... ¹³And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? 

The first quotation in v. 5 is from Psalms 2:7. Psalm 2 is a coronation psalm, and it appears to be quoted here in reference to Christ's enthronement at God's right hand. The second quotation is part of the promise given to David that future kings in his line would have a special relationship with God likened to a father-son relationship. Quoting it here in reference to Christ signifies his enthronement as a Davidic king (at God's right hand) and to him being God's son. Verse 13 quotes from Psalm 110:1 (cf. Luke 2:69 ↑).

Heb 10:12 But when Christⁱ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ... 

ⁱ Greek *this one*

This speaks of both Jesus Christ's role as High Priest – in sacrificing for sins – and his enthronement at the right hand of God. The messianic Psalm 110 (referred to above) also speaks of the Messiah both sitting at God's right hand and being a priest (in vv. 1, 4): ‘The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” ... ⁴The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”’ As Jesus Christ has both the position of sovereign authority at God's



right hand and the office of high priest (as discussed earlier in this chapter), he fulfills this prophecy from Psalm 110 and also that of Zechariah 6:11-13 (cf. *The OT promises that such a one would arise as a great ruler of Israel*, p. 484), which likewise speaks of the Messiah being both high priest and king.

Heb 12:2 ... looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him *endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* 📖

Rev 3:21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as *I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.* 📖

This reflects the fact that Jesus Christ is seated at God's right hand. It emphatically highlights Jesus Christ's position of authority in saying that he sat down "with" God "on his [God's] throne".

... and God made Jesus Christ Lord of all

Acts 2:36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that *God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.* 📖

Preceding this in vv. 24-35, Peter declares that David was prophesying about the Messiah's resurrection in Psalms 16:10 and the Messiah's exaltation to the position of supreme authority at God's right hand in Psalms 110:1 (cf. **Acts 2:34** ↑). In his message Peter implies that God's raising and exaltation of Jesus (cf. **Acts 2:32-33** ↑) fulfills these prophecies. By so doing, Peter asserts here in v. 36, God has designated Jesus as Lord of all things and to be the promised Messiah or Christ.

Acts 5:31 *God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior*, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 📖

The term rendered "Leader" points to Jesus Christ's lordship.

Acts 10:36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through *Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)*, ... 📖

Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for *the same Lord is Lord of all*, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 📖

Rom 14:9 For to this end *Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* 📖

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore *God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,*¹⁰*so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*¹¹*and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father. 📖

Commentators differ as to whether "name" (v. 9b) is referring to Jesus Christ's actual name. If it is, it would probably not be referring to "Jesus", appearing to have been given after his exaltation (v. 9a). "Lord" would be a more likely candidate (cf. ZBC). Furthermore, being the Greek translation for the Hebrew "LORD", it well fits the designation of "the name that is above every name" (v. 9). Whether it is or not referring to his actual name, it is clear that Jesus Christ's rank above all others is reflected – something which will be shown in the future when all will acknowledge and submit to him as Lord (vv. 10-11).

Jude 1:4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny *our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.* 📖

Rev 17:14 They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for *he is Lord of lords and King of kings*, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful. 📖

Mark 2:28 *So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.* 📖

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a *Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* 📖

Although elsewhere Jesus is spoken of as being the "Lord" of individuals' (cf. Lk 1:43; 6:46; 11:1), this and Mark 2:28 immediately above are notable examples of him being referred to as Lord in a more general sense prior to his exaltation.

1Cor 8:6 ...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and *one Lord, Jesus Christ*, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. 📖

The fact that Jesus Christ is the only Lord reflects the assertion that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

✦ Jesus Christ is "the firstborn of all creation":

Col 1:15-18 He is the image of the invisible God, *the firstborn of all creation.*¹⁶*For by^k him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*¹⁷*And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*¹⁸*And he is the head of the body,*



the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 

^k That is, by means of; or in

The term “firstborn” (v. 15) points to Christ’s pre-eminence, alluding to the privileged status of a firstborn son in Jewish society. This passage suggests that in some sense at least Jesus Christ has always been Lord of all things. This is pointed to by the description of Jesus Christ as “the firstborn of all creation” (v. 15), along with him being the creator and sustainer of all things (vv. 16, 17b) and the fact that all things were created for him (v. 16b). (Regarding the latter, see the comment on [Col 1:16](#) – under *God has entrusted everything to Jesus Christ – and made him heir of all things*, p. 688.) Similarly, some verses in the following two subsections suggest that Jesus had authority over all things in his mission prior to his death – in Matthew 28:18, John 3:35, John 13:3 and John 17:2. See also the cross references in the following subsection. But note that here in v. 18b, Paul appears to indicate that following his resurrection Jesus Christ’s authority had a wider or greater extent.

God has given Jesus Christ authority and power over all things

See also:

- [Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power](#), p. 100
- [God granted Jesus sovereign authority](#), p. 538

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*” 

John 17:2 ... since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 

Rom 9:5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is *the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever.* Amen. 

1Cor 15:27-28 For “*God^l has put all things in subjection under his feet.*” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted *who put all things in subjection under him.* ²⁸*When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.* 

^l Greek *he*

Eph 1:22-23 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of *him who fills all in all.* 

In v. 23, “fills all in all” (cf. [Eph 4:10](#) ↓) appears to speak of Jesus Christ extending and/or manifesting his presence and authority, “as head over all things” (v. 22). Alternatively or additionally, Paul may have in view Christ making all things complete (cf. AMP, GNT).

Eph 4:10 *He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.*) 

Jewish thought understood there to be different heavens. Paul asserts that Jesus Christ ascended higher and was supreme over all such heavens. In light of the above comment on 1:23, “fill all things” appears to speak of Jesus Christ being supreme throughout the whole universe.

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by *the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.* 

Jesus Christ now has the power to bring everything under his control, but these verses appear to suggest that he will not fully do so until his return.

Heb 2:5 Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. 

There are different interpretations of this verse. Interpretations of the “world to come” include the millennium, the afterlife and the present age (cf. NCV). The verse probably speaks of the subjection of this “world to come” to Jesus Christ, or possibly to him and his followers.

Rev 2:26-27 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him *I will give authority over the nations,* ²⁷and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as *I myself have received authority from my Father.* 

This indicates that God has given Jesus Christ authority over the nations.

Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: “The words of *the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.*” 

This verse alludes to Isaiah 22:22, where “the key of the house of David” symbolized authority over David’s royal house. In parallel to this, here Jesus Christ is portrayed as holding “the key of David”, symbolizing his sole authority over entry into the kingdom of God. (cf. NBC) The latter part of the verse appears to further enforce this point – and also illustrates Jesus Christ’s supreme authority.



Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers^m has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 

^mOr *brothers and sisters*

See the earlier comment on this verse in *The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ’s mission*, p. 677.

Dan 7:14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. 

This is a messianic prophecy, which the above NT verses imply has its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

God has entrusted everything to Jesus Christ – and made him heir of all things

As is also implied by the previous subsections, God has entrusted all things to Jesus Christ as Lord (cf. **Matt 1:27** ↓; **John 3:35** ↓) and furthermore has made him the heir of all things (cf. **Heb 1:2** ↓; **Ps 2:8** ↓). The latter may largely have in view the future consummation of Jesus Christ’s authority, with all things being in complete submission to him.

Matt 11:27 *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* 

This is quite possibly speaking of God giving Jesus Christ “authority over everything” (NLT) – hence the verse’s inclusion here. But given the context, it may more specifically be speaking of hidden matters of God’s will (cf. vv. 25, 27b) being committed to Jesus.

John 3:35 *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.* 

John 13:3 Jesus, knowing that *the Father had given all things into his hands*, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ... 

Heb 1:2 ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by *his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things*, through whom also he created the world. 

Ps 2:8 Ask of me, and *I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.* 

This is considered to be messianic.

Matt 21:37-38 Finally he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.”³⁸But *when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’* 

The son represents Jesus Christ and the “inheritance” would appear to be the vineyard in the parable (cf. v. 33) which represents Israel. As such this portrays Israel – or even God’s kingdom – as Jesus Christ’s inheritance or part thereof.

† All things were created for Jesus Christ:

Col 1:16 For byⁿ him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 

ⁿ That is, by means of; or in

This would at least appear to be implying that all things were made for Jesus Christ and his purposes. Note that some commentators understand the assertion that all things were created “for him” to be more specifically indicating that Jesus Christ is the goal towards which all creation converges or moves. As such, all things were created for being in or of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has power over all other powers

See also:

- *Jesus delivered people from demons and Satan – demonstrating power over evil* + ref., p. 560

Eph 1:19-21 ... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and *seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* 

Col 2:10 ... and you have been filled in him [Christ], *who is the head of all rule and authority.* 

1Pet 3:21-22 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, *with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.* 



1Jn 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but *he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.* 

This demonstrates that Jesus Christ's power is superior to Satan's power.

Rev 1:5a ... and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and *the ruler of kings on earth.* 

Rev 17:12-14 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. ¹³These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴They will make war on the Lamb, and *the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.* 

Rev 19:15-16 *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.* ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, *King of kings and Lord of lords.* 

This is from a description of Jesus Christ's return, where he crushes the forces of evil (cf. [Rev 17:12-14](#) ↑) and enforces his authority and rule.

Jesus Christ's power extends over death

See also:

- [Jesus even raised the dead](#), p. 561
- [Jesus Christ saves people from the power of death](#), p. 615

Rev 1:18 ... and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and *I have the keys of Death and Hades.* 

As the holder of the keys of death and the place of the dead, Jesus Christ has total authority over their domain – including authority over who goes in and out of them, and when.

2Tim 1:10 ... and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior *Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,* ... 

This speaks of what Christ accomplished by his resurrection – he “broke the power of death” (NLT, cf. GNT), in a sense nullifying it. The following reference (1Cor 15:26) speaks of Jesus Christ's final destruction of death at the end of the age, after which it will no longer have any effect on humankind. The nullification of death by Jesus Christ and the fact that he will destroy it completely, both illustrate his power over it.

1Cor 15:26 *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* 

John 10:17-18 For this reason the Father loves me, because *I lay down my life that I may take it up again.* ¹⁸*No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.* This charge I have received from my Father. 

Even in his incarnation, death's power over Jesus (cf. [Rom 6:9](#) ↓) was limited (cf. [Acts 2:24](#) ↓). While experiencing death himself, Jesus still had the authority to resume his life again (cf. [John 2:19-21](#) ↓).

John 2:19-21 *Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* ²⁰The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹*But he was speaking about the temple of his body.* 

Acts 2:24 God raised him up, *loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* 

Rom 6:9 *We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.* 

In conjunction with Jesus Christ having power over death, death no longer has any power over him.

† Jesus Christ has the power to give life:

John 5:21, 25-29 *For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.*  ... ²⁵“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when *the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.* ²⁶*For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.* ²⁷And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when *all who are in the tombs will hear his voice* ²⁹*and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.* 

Verses 21, 25-26 may refer primarily to spiritual life (cf. v. 24) – which is eternal – although Jesus Christ's power to resurrect the dead (vv. 28-29) could well be in view instead or in addition. Verse 26 indicates that Jesus has intrinsic life. The implication in this context is that – like the Father – Jesus is “the source of life” (GNT) with “the power to give life” (CEV).



In the end, all Jesus Christ's enemies will be made his footstool – totally conquered

See also:

- [1Cor 15:26](#) ↑
- [On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed](#), p. 704

Ps 110:1-2 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." ²The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. *Rule in the midst of your enemies!*

These verses are messianic, speaking of the Messiah's enemies being subjugated to him and his rule over them. In speaking of the Messiah's enemies being made his footstool (v. 1), David portrays them as being conquered and either destroyed or in full submission to the Messiah. As shown below, v. 1 is applied to Jesus Christ in the NT.

Acts 2:33-35 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, ³⁵until I make your enemies your footstool.'

Peter correlates Jesus being exalted to the right hand of God (v. 33a) with David's prophetic messianic words (v. 34; cf. [Ps 110:1](#) ↑).

Heb 10:12-13 But when Christ^o had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

^o Greek *this one*

1Cor 15:24-25 *Then comes the end*, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father *after destroying every rule and every authority and power*. ²⁵*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*

Ps 72:9 May desert tribes bow down before him, and *his enemies lick the dust!*

This and 132:17-18 below are understood as referring to the Messiah and his conquest of his enemies.

Ps 132:17-18 There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. ¹⁸*His enemies I will clothe with shame*, but on him his crown will shine.

Luke 19:27 *But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.*

Similar to 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 and the verses from Psalms above, this parable extract illustrates that ultimately Jesus Christ's enemies will be destroyed.

✚ God will bring all things together in Jesus Christ:

Eph 1:9-10 ... making known^p to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, *which he set forth in Christ* ¹⁰*as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

^p Or *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known...*

God will bring all things together under the headship of Jesus Christ (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Pray for persecuted Christians



'The Last Things'

I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment

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I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment

See also:

- [c\) *The Antichrist and the Final Persecution*, p. 1992](#)

The history of the world as we know it will culminate in Jesus Christ's dramatic and awesome return. Associated with this is God's final judgment of all people, through Jesus Christ, in which the eternal destiny of each person will be pronounced.

Note that the section cross-referenced above also deals with events of the end times – in its case, events that precede Jesus Christ's second coming. As such it is a further aspect of the biblical teachings that are often referred to as "The Last Things".

a) Prologue: Judgments Preceding Jesus Christ's Return

The passages in this section are largely extracts from visions that the apostle John received. Bear in mind that they are from Revelation, chapters 6-18, which contain apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature is prophetic and largely symbolic. It mostly speaks of events of the end times. Many of these events involve great destruction, but show God's emphatic control and justice. As such apocalyptic literature provides great encouragement to God's people.

Commentators differ in their interpretation of a number of aspects of the three series of seven judgments below. Such points of difference include: to what extent each of the judgments are symbolic or literal; the timing of the judgments; and whether the three sets describe the same events, although probably most commentators think that they do not even though there are parallels.

Subsections

- [The first series of judgments: The seven seals](#)
- [The second series of judgments: The seven trumpets](#)
- [The third series of judgments: The seven bowls](#)
- [The guilt and consequent judgment of "Babylon the Great"](#)

The first series of judgments: The seven seals

See also:

- [Rev 8:1-2](#) ↓

Quite possibly the seven seals represent events leading up to the end of the age, although it is open to conjecture as to whether these take place just prior to the end or over a longer period. The latter two sets of judgments certainly appear to be among the events of the end of the age, with the bowl judgments – the most severe – taking place immediately prior to Jesus Christ's return.

Note that there are parallels between the seals and the signs of the end times that Jesus spoke of (Matt 24:1-35; Mark 13:1-31; Luke 21:5-33) – as well as with the later two more harsh series of judgments.

Rev 6:1-8 Now I watched when *the Lamb opened one of the seven seals*, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" ²And I looked, and *behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.* ³When he opened *the second seal*, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" ⁴And out came *another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.* ⁵When he opened *the third seal*, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and *behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.* ⁶And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "*A quart^a of wheat for a denarius,^b and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!*" ⁷When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸And I looked, and *behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.* 📖

^a Greek *choenix*, a dry measure equal to about a quart

^b A *denarius* was a day's wage for a laborer

There is debate over the identity of the rider on the white horse (v. 2), with both Jesus Christ (on his return) and the antichrist among the suggestions. The description may however simply be portraying increased attempts at conquest, with the associated warfare possibly signified by the following judgment (vv. 3-4). The pair of scales in the hand of the third horseman (v. 5) is explained in v. 6, which appears to point to inflated food prices and famine.

Rev 6:12-14 *When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became*



black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.¹⁴ The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 

As alluded to earlier, the physical terminology describing judgments in these subsections may in fact be symbolic. If it is meant to be taken literally, this would appear to be speaking of the devastation associated with “the day of the LORD” and God’s final judgment on the wicked.

✦ **The sealing of God’s people, protecting them from following judgments:**

Rev 7:1-4 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.² Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea,³ saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants^c of our God on their foreheads.”⁴ And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: ... 

^c Greek *bondservants*

The tribes “of the sons of Israel” – here sealed for protection against forthcoming judgments – may be symbolic of the whole church as the new, spiritual Israel. Alternatively actual Jewish believers may be in view.

The second series of judgments: The seven trumpets

Rev 8:1-2 When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. 

Rev 8:7-13 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.⁸ The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.⁹ A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.¹⁰ The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.¹¹ The name of the star is Wormwood.^d A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it

had been made bitter.¹² The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.¹³ Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!” 

^d Wormwood is the name of a plant and of the bitter-tasting extract derived from it

Rev 9:1-6 And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.^e He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.³ Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth.⁴ They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.⁵ They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone.⁶ And in those days people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. 

^e Greek *the abyss*; also verses 2, 11

The “star” (v. 1) appears to depict an angel, in view of what it does (v. 2).

Rev 9:13-18 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,¹⁴ saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”¹⁵ So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind.¹⁶ The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.¹⁷ And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire^f and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions’ heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths.¹⁸ By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. 

^f Greek *hyacinth*

The four angels (vv. 14-15) apparently control the mounted troops (vv. 16-17), who implement the three devastating



plagues (v. 18). The mounted troops may be demonic – which is possibly also the case with the four angels who were “bound” (v. 14).

✦ The seventh trumpet acclaiming the advent of God’s kingdom:

Rev 11:15, 19 *Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”* ☞ ...¹⁹*Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings,^g peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.* ☞

^g Or voices, or sounds

Verse 19 – with the appearance of “the ark of his covenant” and the awesome signs – is possibly symbolically affirming the advent of God’s consummated kingdom along with the manifestation of God’s presence and the fulfillment of his covenant promises to his people.

The third series of judgments: The seven bowls

Rev 15:1, 5-8 *Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.* ☞ ...⁵*After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent^h of witness in heaven was opened,⁶and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.⁷And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever,⁸and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.* ☞

^h Or tabernacle

Some commentators raise the possibility that the fact that “no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues ... were finished” (v.8) may indicate that the time for intercession will have passed; the judgments must take place.

Rev 16:1-4, 8-11 *Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”²So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.³The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.⁴The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water,*

and they became blood. ☞ ...⁸*The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire.⁹They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursedⁱ the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.¹⁰The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish¹¹and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.* ☞

ⁱ Greek blasphemed; also verses 11, 21

The “throne of the beast” (v. 10) appears to refer to the heart of the authority of the first beast – often thought to be a final antichrist. The “darkness” into which his kingdom was plunged, may not be physical darkness. It quite possibly depicts major problems besetting the beast’s reign with its false worship.

Rev 16:12-16 *The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.¹³And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.¹⁴For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.¹⁵(“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”)¹⁶And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.* ☞

The “dragon” (v. 13) is Satan. Likely the “three unclean spirits like frogs” (v. 13) will perform supposedly miraculous signs leading world rulers to believe they can successfully and/or ought to fight against people or forces of God, not realizing that they will be overwhelmed by the Messiah and his forces. For further comment on this passage see [On Jesus Christ’s return evil powers will be crushed](#), p. 704.

Rev 16:17-21 *The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “It is done!”¹⁸And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings,^j peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake.¹⁹The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.²⁰And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.²¹And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds^k each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.* ☞



^j Or *voices, or sounds*

^k Greek *a talent in weight*

The guilt and consequent judgment of "Babylon the Great"

See also:

▪ [Rev 16:19](#) ↑

There are differing views as to what Babylon represents in Revelation. The most prominent are: Rome, with its decadence and oppression of Christians; an actual rebuilt city of Babylon, characterized by the power and ungodliness of the original; and all worldly political and religious opposition to the true God.

Note that Revelation 16:17-21 in the previous subsection, speaks of "Babylon the Great" suffering the judgment of the seventh bowl.

Rev 17:1-6, 15-18 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, *I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters,* ²*with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.*" ³And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and *I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.* ⁴*The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.* ⁵*And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."* ⁶*And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.*¹ When I saw her, I marveled greatly. ☞ ... ¹⁵And the angel^m said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. ¹⁶And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. *They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,* ¹⁷for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. ¹⁸And *the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.*" ☞

¹ Greek *the witnesses to Jesus*

^m Greek *he*

The beast (vv. 3, 16) is probably the same as the one in the preceding chapters – quite possibly a final antichrist. The

ruining of the prostitute by the beast and the ten horns shows division amongst the forces of evil. It also illustrates God's power over evil, by his using evil forces to accomplish his purposes (v. 17).

Rev 18:1-10 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. ²And he called out with a mighty voice, "*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.* ³*For all nations have drunkⁿ the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.*" ⁴Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, *lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues;* ⁵*for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.* ⁶*Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.* ⁷*As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.'* ⁸*For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.*" ⁹And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. ¹⁰*They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come."* ☞

ⁿ Some manuscripts *fallen by*

Note that earlier in 14:8 an angel uses similar terminology to v. 2 in prophesying Babylon's fall: 'Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.'"

Rev 18:20-24 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for *God has given judgment for you against her!*" ²¹*Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;* ²²*and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more,* ²³*and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of*



bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. ²⁴And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth." 

Rev 19:1-3 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; for *he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*"^o ³Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever." 

^o Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Timing of Jesus Christ's Return

See also:

- *The gospel will be preached to all nations before the end*, p. 1777

Subsections

- God has set times for the end of the age and related events . . .
- . . . God has set times for Jesus Christ's return and subsequent events
- Jesus Christ's return will be at an unexpected time, while people are living as usual
- Jesus Christ's return will be preceded by distressful events
- Awesome cosmic events will occur just prior to Jesus Christ's return
- Jesus Christ's return is spoken of as being imminent
- Note: The time of Jesus Christ's return is referred to as "the day of the Lord"

God has set times for the end of the age and related events . . .

See also:

- *God appoints times for events affecting the nations* + ref., p. 283
- *"Three and a half years" is given for the rule of the antichrist and intense persecution*, p. 1998

Dan 11:35 ... and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until *the time of the end*, for it still awaits the appointed time. 

Dan 12:4, 9 But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, *until the time of the end*. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."  ... ⁹He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed *until the time of the end*." 

The expression "the time of the end" (vv. 4, 9) may have in view an appointed time, hence the inclusion of these verses in this subsection. Note that the book contained prophecies of events of the end time.

Rev 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep *what is written in it, for the time is near*. 

This suggests that there are times set by God for events of the end times prophesied in Revelation (cf. [Rev 9:15](#) ↓).

Rev 9:15 *So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind*. 

Dan 9:27 *And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week,^p and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering*. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. 

^p Or *seven*; twice in this verse

A number of commentators consider that the antichrist of the end of the age is most likely in view here – particularly if the one in view in the first sentence is involved in what is described in the second sentence. The "week" (cf. vv. 25-26) or "seven" (cf. text note) denotes a period of time, sometimes interpreted as seven years (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV). This verse shows that the times of key activities of the identity in the first sentence have been predetermined by God – as has the end of "the desolator" in the second sentence.



... God has set times for Jesus Christ's return and subsequent events

See also:

- [1Thes 5:1](#) ↴

Matt 24:36-37 But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,^a but the Father only. ³⁷For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 

^a Some manuscripts omit *nor the Son*

In v. 36, "that day" most likely refers to the day of Jesus Christ's return (v. 37). As such, the verse indicates that God has set a time for it.

1Cor 7:29a This is what I mean, brothers: *the appointed time has grown very short.* 

1Tim 6:14-15 ... to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until *the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ¹⁵*which he will display at the proper time*—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ... 

Here "proper time" probably refers to an appointed time for Jesus Christ's return – a time "that God has already decided" (CEV).

Acts 1:6-7 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 

The disciples' question implies that God would restore Israel's kingdom through Jesus Christ. Jesus' reply indicates that God had set a time for this – presumably following Jesus' return – and times for other events of the end. (Regarding Israel's restored kingdom or state, see *II. God's Plans for Israel*, p. 981.)

Acts 3:20-21 ... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and *that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,* ²¹*whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things* about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 

Acts 17:31 ... because *he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed;* and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. 

Matt 8:29 And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? *Have you come here to torment us before the time?*" 

The term "the time" may well speak of an "appointed time" (NIV®, NLT). As such the second question indicates that God has appointed a future time for the judgment and punishment of demons – as he has for judgment of all the world (cf. [Acts 17:31](#) ↑).

Hab 2:3 For still *the vision awaits its appointed time;* it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. 

Initially this referred to the destruction of Babylon in 539 B.C. In Hebrews 10:37 the writer adapted the second statement of this verse to Jesus Christ's return – 'For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay ..." In doing this the writer of Hebrews may well have viewed the first part of the verse to likewise apply to Jesus Christ's return and "the end" of the age. If this is the case, then one could infer that it alludes to an "appointed time" for Christ's return.

✚ **God has determined the length of the tribulation of the end times:**

Mark 13:20 And *if the Lord had not cut short the days,* no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, *he shortened the days.* 

The reference here is to God shortening the time of the tribulation of the end days. Arguably this suggests that God has determined the length of other such events of the end times.

Jesus Christ's return will be at an unexpected time, while people are living as usual

See also:

- *As we do not know when Jesus Christ will come, "stay awake" and be ready,* p. 1805

2Pet 3:3-4, 10a ... knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."  ... ¹⁰*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief ...* 

1Thes 5:1-3 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers,^r you have no need to have anything written to you. ²*For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.* ³*While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will*



come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 

^r Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 4, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27

Matt 24:37-41 *For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.* 

The separation of the pairs of people in vv. 40-41 is indicative of the suddenness of Jesus Christ's return. In speaking of people being "taken", this may well be referring to a rapture – believers being taken away to be with Jesus Christ, with unbelieving partners being left behind to face a perilous future and/or judgment. Alternatively the verses could be speaking of one being taken in judgment – paralleling the flood coming and taking people away (v. 39a) – while the other is spared.

Luke 17:28-30 *Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, ²⁹but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all— ³⁰so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.* 

✦ No one knows when Jesus Christ's return will be, except God:

Mark 13:32-33 *But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Be on guard, keep awake.^s For you do not know when the time will come.* 

^s Some manuscripts add *and pray*

Jesus Christ's return will be preceded by distressful events

See also:

- *a) Prologue: Judgments Preceding Jesus Christ's Return*, p. 692
- *c) The Antichrist and the Final Persecution*, p. 1992

Matt 24:3-14 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and *what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?*" ⁴And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, 'I

am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for *this must take place, but the end is not yet.* ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away^t and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." 

^t Or *stumble*

In v. 8 "birth pains" denotes the time of distress which leads into – or "gives birth" to – the advent of the Messiah and what will follow. Note that in addition to the distressful events, Christ's return will be preceded by the gospel reaching all nations (v. 14).

Luke 21:9-11 *And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once." ¹⁰Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.* 

This is from Luke's parallel passage to Matthew 24 immediately above. In addition to what is mentioned there, note that this speaks of "tumults" along with war (v. 9), "great" earthquakes and "pestilences" along with famines (v. 11a) and "terrors and great signs from heaven" (v. 11b). The "tumults" may involve revolutions (cf. GNT, NIV). (The "great signs from heaven" are further discussed below in the following subsection.)

2Thes 2:1-10 *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,^u ²not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³Let no one deceive you in any way. For *that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness^v is revealed, the son of destruction,^w ⁴who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.* ⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶And you know what is*



restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 

^u Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 13, 15

^v Some manuscripts *sin*

^w Greek *the son of perdition* (a Hebrew idiom)

This “man of lawlessness” (v. 3) appears to be a final antichrist, quite possibly the first beast of Revelation 13. Presumably he will be the prime instigator of this momentous “rebellion” (v. 3) against God. There are a number of theories as to who or what is “restraining him now” (vv. 6-7) – including the Holy Spirit, and the archangel Michael.

Dan 9:26b And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its^x end shall come with a flood, and *to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.* 

^x Or *His*

This may be speaking of widespread war and desolations continuing, even increasing, until the end of the age – hence the verse’s inclusion here. Alternatively, Jerusalem may be view, in particular her “end” or destruction at the hand of the Romans in A.D. 70, which is likely the subject of the first sentence.

Awesome cosmic events will occur just prior to Jesus Christ's return

See also:

- [Luke 21:11](#) 

Matt 24:29-30 Immediately after the tribulation of those days *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.* ³⁰*Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* 

Luke 21:25-26 *And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,* ²⁶*people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.* 

As the moon affects the tides, “the roaring of the sea and the waves” (v. 25b) may well be a reflection of the lunar and other cosmological changes spoken of here.

Acts 2:19-20 *And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;* ²⁰*the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.* 

Here “the day of the Lord” definitely refers to Jesus Christ’s return. However, it is not clear how Peter envisaged the “signs on the earth below” mentioned in quoting this prophecy of Joel. The “blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke” (v. 19) could be part of the cosmological wonders that God will show as a precursor to his impending judgment. The devastating effects of warfare are another possibility.

Rev 6:12-17 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and *the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,* ¹³*and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.* ¹⁴*The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.* ¹⁵*Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave^y and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”* 

^y Or *servant*; Greek *bondservant*

There is debate as to whether this passage is literal or figurative. The terminology is similar to descriptions above of the cosmological events immediately preceding Jesus Christ’s coming and so may in fact be speaking of this, as also suggested by v. 17 saying that “the great day of their wrath has come”. However as it is part of the first of the three series of seven judgments of the end times, Christ’s return and the climax of God’s judgment may not be in view.

Jesus Christ's return is spoken of as being imminent

Obviously as these verses were written nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ’s return was not near in terms of our perception of time. One explanation of this is that as with the



Lord "a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2Pet 3:8 ↓), Christ's return can be spoken of in a sense as "near" from any point in time. Another view is that in some of these verses at least, the writers are asserting the certainty of Christ's return rather than its nearness in time.

1Cor 7:29a This is what I mean, brothers: *the appointed time has grown very short.* ☞

Phil 4:5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. *The Lord is at hand; ...* ☞

Heb 10:25, 37 ... not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more *as you see the Day drawing near.* ☞ ...³⁷For, "*Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ...*" ☞

James 5:8-9 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord is at hand.* ⁹Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, *the Judge is standing at the door.* ☞

As with v. 8b, v. 9b is referring to Jesus Christ and his impending entry or return to the world.

1Pet 4:7 *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.* ☞

1Jn 2:18 Children, *it is the last hour*, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now *many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.* ☞

Rev 22:7, 10, 12, 20 "*And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.*" ☞ ... ¹⁰And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for *the time is near.*" ☞ ... ¹²"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. ☞ ... ²⁰He who testifies to these things says, "*Surely I am coming soon.*" Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! ☞

Matt 16:28 Truly, I say to you, *there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.* ☞

Especially with the clear reference to his return in the preceding verse (cf. v. 27), it would appear on face value that Jesus was speaking of his second coming occurring in the lifetime of some of those who were there with him. But as this obviously did not happen, generally commentators do not consider that "coming" is here referring to Christ's second coming. Although many see this verse as alluding to his subsequent transfiguration (cf. 17:1-8), it possibly refers

instead to Jesus Christ's resurrection and the ensuing phase of the kingdom.

✦ Insights regarding God's apparent slowness:

2Pet 3:8-9 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that *with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* ⁹*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,^z not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* ☞

^z Some manuscripts *on your account*

Note: The time of Jesus Christ's return is referred to as "**the day of the Lord**"

See also:

- *Note: "The day of the LORD" will bring God's judgment, with its destruction of the wicked,* p. 458
- *Prelude: There will be a final "day" of God's judgment,* p. 706

The phrase "the day of the Lord" alludes to the OT usage of the phrase "the day of the LORD". The latter is a phrase with eschatological connotations, speaking of God's decisive intervention to crush the wicked and enforce his rule.

1Cor 5:5 ... you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so *that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.*^a ☞

^a Some manuscripts add *Jesus*

1Thes 5:2 For you yourselves are fully aware that *the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.* ☞

² Peter 3:10a similarly says, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief."

2Thes 2:2 ... not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that *the day of the Lord* has come. ☞

1Cor 1:8 ... who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in *the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ☞

This and the following references do not use the exact term "the day of the Lord", but they do similarly make reference to the "day" of Christ's return.

2Cor 1:14 ... just as you did partially acknowledge us—that on *the day of our Lord Jesus* you will boast of us as we will boast of you. ☞



Phil 1:6, 9-10 And I am sure of this, that *he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*  ... ⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and *so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,* ... 

Phil 2:16 ... holding fast to the word of life, so that *in the day of Christ* I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 

Heb 10:25 ... not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more *as you see the Day drawing near.* 

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for *the day of redemption.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Jesus Christ's Return

See also:

- *On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done . . .*, p. 712
- *e) Be Ready for Jesus Christ's Return*, p. 1804

Subsections

- Jesus Christ will return with his angels
- Jesus Christ will come in great glory
- On Jesus Christ's return believers who have died will be resurrected . . .
- . . . and all his followers will be gathered to him
- On Jesus Christ's return his followers will be rewarded
- On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed

Jesus Christ will return with his angels

See also:

- [Matt 25:31](#) ; [Luke 9:26](#) 

Matt 16:27 For *the Son of Man is going to come with his angels* in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. 

1Thes 3:13 ... so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at *the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.* 

Here "saints" probably is at least inclusive of angels, quite possibly referring also to Christians who have died. See also the comment on Rev 19:14 below.

2Thes 1:7 ... and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, *when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels* ... 

Jude 1:14 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "*Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones,* ... 

Rev 19:14 And *the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.* 

Note that rather than simply referring to angelic hosts, some commentators consider that the "armies of heaven" following Christ may be speaking of believers, or at least be inclusive of them – particularly with the description of them being dressed "in fine linen" which is what believers had been given to wear in v. 8.

1Thes 4:16 For *the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God.* And the dead in Christ will rise first. 

As the archangel is the leader of God's angels (cf. NCV text note), quite possibly "the voice of an archangel" may signify the summoning of heavenly forces to accompany Christ on his return. The "sound of the trumpet of God" may well also be – in part at least – a signal to the angels, with Matthew 24:31 saying, "And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect ..."

Alternatively their focus may be the raising of "the dead in Christ". This is more of a possibility in the case of the trumpet call, with Matthew 24:31 being applicable to it and 1 Corinthians 15:52 saying, "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." However the prime purpose of the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call may simply be to resoundingly announce Jesus Christ's return.



Zec 14:5 And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. *Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.* 

Jesus Christ's return appears to be what is ultimately in view here.

Jesus Christ will come in great glory

See also:

- [Matt 16:27](#) ; [2Thes 1:7](#) 

On his return Jesus Christ's awesome intrinsic glory will be manifested. In conjunction with this and other factors, his return will be wonderfully glorious.

Matt 25:31 *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.* 

Luke 9:26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed *when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.* 

Luke 21:27 *And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* 

Acts 2:20 ... the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before *the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.* 

This speaks of the day of Christ's return as a "glorious day" (GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Titus 2:13 ... waiting for our blessed hope, *the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ...* 

1Pet 4:13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad *when his glory is revealed.* 

Matt 24:27 *For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.* 

The main point of the simile is to indicate that Jesus Christ's return will be obvious to all, but it also implies that his return will be stunning and glorious.

Matt 26:64 Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, *from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.*" 

The phrase "coming on the clouds of heaven" – a reference to Daniel 7:13, part of a messianic prophecy – is often understood to be alluding to Jesus Christ's return (cf. NLT; [Luke 21:27](#) ). As such this verse points to Jesus Christ's glory or at least the gloriousness of his return, with him being seen at the right hand of God and "coming on the clouds of heaven". Another view supported by its original context in Daniel is that it is referring to Jesus Christ's enthronement, rather than to his return. (cf. NBC) If this view is the case, then the verse is not applicable to this subsection.

2Thes 1:10 ... *when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.* 

Allied with the manifestation of his actual glory on his return, Jesus Christ will receive glory "in his saints" who have believed – presumably because of what they are (cf. NCV) and/or in their praise (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). His glory is also reflected in the fact that they shall marvel at him – no doubt with a sense of joy and delightful anticipation.

Heb 1:6 And again, *when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."* 

The reference may be to Jesus Christ's second coming, when God "again brings the firstborn into the world" (NASB, NKJV; cf. AMP). As such it would speak of Jesus Christ being glorified on his return (cf. [2Thes 1:10](#) ).

✦ **Angels spoke of Jesus Christ returning in the same way that he went into heaven:**

Acts 1:9-11 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, *he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.* ¹⁰*And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,* ¹¹*and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."* 

On Jesus Christ's return believers who have died will be resurrected . . .

See also:

- *On Jesus Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ*, p. 734

1Cor 15:22-23 For as in Adam all die, so also *in Christ shall all be made alive.* ²³*But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* 



1Cor 15:51-52 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For *the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* 📖

1Thes 4:13-16 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, *God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord,^b that *we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ¹⁶*For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* 📖

^b Or *by the word of the Lord*

Some understand the use of “bring” (v. 14) to speak of believers who have died returning from heaven with Jesus. However their resurrection on his return is in view in the subsequent verses. As such, in v. 14 Paul may be referring to these believers joining Jesus prior to believers who have not died (cf. v. 16; v. 17 ↴).

John 6:39-40, 44, 54 And this is the will of him who sent me, that *I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.* ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and *I will raise him up on the last day.* 📖 ... ⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And *I will raise him up on the last day.* 📖 ... ⁵⁴Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and *I will raise him up on the last day.* 📖

Particularly in view of the above verses from Paul's letters, in these verses and in 11:24 below, “the last day” would appear to refer to the day of Christ's return. It could also be taken to refer to the day of judgment, particularly if the two “days” are understood to coincide.

John 11:24 Martha said to him, *“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”* 📖

... and all his followers will be gathered to him

Matt 24:31 And *he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* 📖

Luke 17:30, 34-35 ... *so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.* 📖 ... ³⁴*I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left.* ³⁵*There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.”*^c 📖

^c Some manuscripts add verse 36: *Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left*

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^d ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* 📖

^d Or *In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you*

Jesus Christ will come back and take his people to be with him in his Father's house, i.e. heaven.

1Thes 4:17 *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.* 📖

2Thes 2:1-2 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,^e ²not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 📖

^e Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 13, 15

Rev 14:14-16 *Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.* ¹⁵*And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.”* ¹⁶*So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.* 📖

The one “like a son of man” (v. 14) quite probably refers to Jesus Christ. The angel in v. 15 appears to be passing on instructions – that are presumably from God – to begin “harvesting” what appears to be the righteous from the earth. As such this may well be speaking primarily of the harvesting or gathering of believers by Christ on his return, particularly with the subsequent verses (cf. vv. 17-20) referring to the judgment of the wicked.



On Jesus Christ's return his followers will be rewarded

See also:

- *Jesus Christ will bring believers' salvation to completion on his return*, p. 611

Matt 24:45-47 Who then is the faithful and wise servant,^f whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶*Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.* ⁴⁷*Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.*

^f Greek *bondservant*; also verses 46, 48, 50

Although the servant referred to is in charge of other servants in the master's household, the application of this teaching is not limited to leaders.

Luke 12:37 *Blessed are those servants^g whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.*

^g Greek *bondservants*

The final statement suggests that in the afterlife Jesus Christ will in some sense again condescend to serving his people, in rewarding them.

Col 3:4 *When Christ who is your^h life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

^h Some manuscripts *our*

Quite possibly "appear with him in glory" refers to – or at least involves – sharing in Jesus Christ's glory (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

2Tim 4:8 Henceforth *there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

The "crown of righteousness" could allude to being pronounced right with God or being made completely righteous. Alternatively it may be speaking of a reward for a righteous life, even an actual crown. Not that the last phrase appears to refer to longing for Christ's return (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV). As such the verse appears to associate "Day" with both the day of judgment and the day of Christ's return, linking the two.

1Pet 1:7 ... so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—*may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

1Pet 5:4 *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

Similar to "the crown of righteousness" (cf. **2Tim 4:8** ↑), this "crown of glory" is most likely figurative, alluding to the glory that will be bestowed on believers.

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that *when he appearsⁱ we shall be like him*, because we shall see him as he is.

ⁱ Or *when it appears*

For comment, see the comment on **735** – under *On Jesus Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ*, p. 734.

‡ **In contrast, Jesus Christ's return will cause widespread mourning amongst unbelievers:**

Rev 1:7 *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail^j on account of him.* Even so. Amen.

^j Or *mourn*

Similarly Matthew 24:30a says, "Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn ..." On Jesus Christ's return, unbelievers will realize too late the errors of their ways. In the light of their rejection of Jesus Christ and the persecution of his people by many of them, they will mourn deeply – particularly in anticipation of the judgment that awaits them.

On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed

See also:

- *Note: Satan stands condemned*, p. 187
- *In the end, all Jesus Christ's enemies will be made his footstool – totally conquered*, p. 690
- ... *The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God's judgment of the wicked*, p. 727

1Cor 15:23-27a But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then *at his coming* those who belong to Christ. ²⁴*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.* ²⁵*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* ²⁶*The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* ²⁷*For "God^k has put all things in subjection under his feet."*

^k Greek *he*

This age will end when Jesus Christ has come (v. 23) and destroyed all his enemies (vv. 24-26). In v. 25 "reign" could



be referring to Christ's present reign as Lord, climaxing with the defeat of his enemies on his return. Alternatively "reign" may be speaking of a Millennium reign of Jesus Christ following his return (cf. Rev 20:4-6), during which he will crush all opposing powers (vv. 24-27).

2Thes 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. 

Rev 16:14-16 For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") ¹⁶And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. 

Verse 15 appears to link Jesus Christ's return with the final defeat of evil powers in the battle "on the great day of God the Almighty" (v. 14), at "Armageddon" (v. 16). There is a place in Israel that many identify with "Armageddon" (but this identification is not without its critics). Others see the usage of "Armageddon" as symbolic, simply signifying the event of God's final defeat of evil (cf. [Rev 19:19-21](#) ↓), rather than its geographical location.

Rev 17:14 They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful. 

"They" refers to ten future kings (cf. v. 12) who may well be amongst the kings allied with the beast on Jesus Christ's return (cf. [Rev 16:14, 16](#) ↑; [Rev 19:19](#) ↓), whom he will consequently destroy (cf. [Rev 19:21](#) ↓).

Rev 19:11-21 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in^l blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their

riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave,^m both small and great." ¹⁹And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. ²⁰And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presenceⁿ had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. 

^l Some manuscripts sprinkled with

^m Greek bondservant

ⁿ Or on its behalf

The rider on the "white horse" (vv. 11, 19, 21) is Jesus Christ, on his second coming. Diadems (v. 12) are crowns signifying sovereignty.

✦ The final defeat of Satan and evil:

Rev 20:7-10 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven^o and consumed them, ¹⁰and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. 

^o Some manuscripts from God, out of heaven, or out of heaven from God

In Revelation, Jesus Christ's return and the subsequent crushing of evil forces (cf. [Rev 19:11-21](#) ↑) is separated from Satan's final defeat here by the period of the "thousand years" (cf. 20:1-6) commonly known as "The Millennium" (cf. [f\) Jesus Christ's Universal Rule](#), p. 717).

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes

See also:

- *II. The Afterlife*, p. 726

As reflected by the above cross reference (and some of the cross references under the following subsection headings) the outcomes of the final judgment are further discussed in the second half of this chapter.

Subsections

- Prelude: There will be a final “day” of God’s judgment
- God will judge every person, for all they have done . . .
- . . . All that is hidden will be revealed and judged
- The dead will rise . . .
- . . . They will rise to be judged, and either rewarded with eternal life or be condemned
- Eternal life will be the reward for godliness
- God’s wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness

Prelude: There will be a final “day” of God’s judgment

See also:

- Matt 12:36 ↓
- *Note: “The day of the LORD” will bring God’s judgment, with its destruction of the wicked*, p. 458
- *Note: The time of Jesus Christ’s return is referred to as “the day of the Lord”*, p. 700

Matt 10:15 Truly, I say to you, *it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.* 📖

2Pet 2:9 ... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^p and *to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,* ... 📖

^p Or *temptations*

2Pet 3:7, 10-12 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist *are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.* 📖 ...¹⁰*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,* and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies^q will be

burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.^r ¹¹*Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,* ¹²*waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!* 📖

^q Or *elements*; also verse 12

^r Greek *found*; some manuscripts *will be burned up*

1Jn 4:17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for *the day of judgment*, because as he is so also are we in this world. 📖

Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, *he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—* 📖

Matt 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²*On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’* ²³*And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’* 📖

John 12:48 *The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.* 📖

Rom 2:5, 16 But because of your hard and impenitent heart *you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.* 📖 ...¹⁶*on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.* 📖

2Tim 1:18 ... *may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!*—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus. 📖

2Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which *the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day,* and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. 📖

James 5:5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. *You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* 📖

The term the “day of slaughter” may in part at least be a reference to God’s final day of judgment.



1Pet 2:12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, *they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*



The phrase "the day of visitation" may well mean "when he comes to judge" (NLT, NIV, NRSV).

Rev 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave^s and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

^s Or *servant*; Greek *bondservant*

God will judge every person, for all they have done . . .

See also:

- [Eccl 12:14](#) ↴
- [God judges and repays people according to what they have done](#), p. 430
- [God has appointed Jesus Christ judge and will judge all people through him](#), p. 711
- [On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done . . .](#), p. 712

Rom 14:10 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For *we will all stand before the judgment seat of God*; ...

The context suggests Paul is primarily referring to all believers, but even so this is certainly applicable to all people.

Heb 4:13 And *no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

Heb 9:27 And just as *it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment*, ...

Heb 12:23 ... and to the assembly^t of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to *God, the judge of all*, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ...

^t Or *church*

Jude 1:14-15 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes

with ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵*to execute judgment on all* and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Eccl 3:17 I said in my heart, *God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.*

In saying "there is a time for every matter and for every work" the author means either that at God's time every activity and deed will be judged; or that just as God has a time for everything, he also has a time set for judgment. Note also that this verse, 11:9 below and 12:14 in the following subsection are not necessarily referring exclusively to God's final judgment.

Eccl 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that *for all these things God will bring you into judgment.*

The writer tempers his advice by warning his readers to bear in mind that God will assess all that they do, giving fitting reward or punishment.

Matt 12:36 I tell you, *on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak*, ...

One aspect of being judged for all we have done, is that we will be judged for all we have said.

. . . All that is hidden will be revealed and judged

1Cor 4:5 Therefore *do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.* Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

1Tim 5:24 The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, *but the sins of others appear later.*

This speaks of how some people's sins are well known, long before they will face judgment on the great day. In contrast, the sins of others will not be known until that day, when hidden sins will be revealed.

Luke 12:1-3 In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²*Nothing is*



covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ³*Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.* 

Following on from v. 1, v. 2 and quite possibly v. 3 are teaching that nothing which is hidden, in particular sin hidden by hypocrisy (v. 1), will fail to be revealed – on the day of judgment if not before. Note that, alternatively, v.3 may have a positive thrust (cf. Matt 10:26-27).

Eccl 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with^u every secret thing, whether good or evil. 

^u Or into the judgment on

Rom 2:16 ... on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. 

The dead will rise . . .

See also:

- *As God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, God will also raise his people,* p. 733

Luke 20:37-38 But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. ³⁸*Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.* 

To God even the physically dead exist. And they will be raised to conscious existence at the end of the age.

John 11:24 Martha said to him, *"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."* 

Acts 24:15 ... having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that *there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.* 

Acts 24:21b 'It is with respect to *the resurrection of the dead* that I am on trial before you this day.' 

Rev 20:4-5 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. *They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.* ⁵*The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.* 

Verse 4b may be referring only to martyrs spoken of earlier in the verse, but possibly the raising to life of all dead believers is in view. The fact that this occurrence is termed "the first resurrection" (v. 5b) supports the assertion that there will be another resurrection, in which all others will be raised from death (v. 5a).

. . . They will rise to be judged, and either rewarded with eternal life or be condemned

Dan 12:2, 13 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.  ... ¹³But go your way till the end. And you [Daniel] shall rest and *shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.* 

The phrase "your allotted place" speaks of Daniel's allotted inheritance or reward (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

John 5:28-29 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when *all who are in the tombs will hear his voice* ²⁹*and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.* 

Rev 11:18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and *the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants,^v the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.* 

^v Greek *bondservants*

Rev 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹²*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.* ¹³*And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.* ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵*And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* 



Eternal life will be the reward for godliness

See also:

- [John 5:28-29](#) ↑; [Rev 11:18](#) ↑
- [Jesus Christ's "name" signifies him in his attainment of salvation and eternal life](#), p. 109
- [We have eternal life](#) [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1051
- [Obedience and doing God's will lead to eternal life](#), p. 1066

Matt 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold^w and will inherit eternal life. 

^w Some manuscripts *manifold*

Matt 25:46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. 

John 12:25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 

One who forsakes his or her life in order to live for God and follow Christ will be given eternal life.

Rom 2:7 ... to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ... 

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 

Gal 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 

1Tim 4:8 ... for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 

Godliness gives hope of sharing in God's promises of both this present life and the eternal life to come.

1Tim 6:12, 18-19 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.  ... ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. 

References to "eternal life" (v. 12) can include the abundant, spiritual life that Christians experience now – as well as life after death. However – like the references generally in this subsection – here the latter is probably primarily in view, as with the expression "that which is truly life" (v. 19). Note that "the good confession" (v. 12) probably refers to a formal confession of belief in Jesus Christ, most likely on the occasion of Timothy's baptism.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. 

The "the crown of life" (cf. Rev 2:10) is most likely an allusion to eternal life – "life forever" (NCVTM).

1Jn 2:17, 24-25 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.  ... ²⁴Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵And this is the promise that he made to us^x—eternal life. 

^x Some manuscripts *you*

Verse 24a speaks of the teaching they had been given. It was to remain or abide in them; they were to keep it in their hearts (cf. GNT), reflecting on it and applying it to their lives. As such, it speaks of godliness, which is also reflected in remaining in one's relationship with Jesus Christ and God (v. 24b). The outcome of this is eternal life (v. 25), the reward for "whoever does the will of God" (v. 17).

Dan 12:3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above;^y and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. 

^y Hebrew *the expanse*; compare Genesis 1:6-8

The "wise" are those who have acted wisely in God's eyes. The rewards mentioned refer to the eternal glorification of these believers.

God's wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness

See also:

- [Matt 25:46](#) ↑; [John 12:25](#) ↑; [Gal 6:8](#) ↑
- [Sin makes one subject to God's wrath](#), p. 379
- [God's wrath against sinners is manifested in punishment](#), p. 380
- [The ungodly face God's wrath . . .](#), p. 749
- [. . . The ungodly face destruction](#), p. 750



Rom 2:5, 8 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ... ⁸but for those who are self-seeking^z and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

^z Or contentious

Col 3:5-6 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^a sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming.^b

^a Greek therefore your members that are on the earth

^b Some manuscripts add upon the sons of disobedience

This probably primarily refers to the wrath of God associated with the final judgment.

2Thes 1:8-9 ... in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from^c the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ...

^c Or destruction that comes from

2Pet 2:4-6, 9 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell^d and committed them to chains^e of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;^f ... ⁹then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^g and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ...

^d Greek Tartarus

^e Some manuscripts pits

^f Some manuscripts an example to those who were to be ungodly

^g Or temptations

The phrase "under punishment" (v. 9) could mean that God persistently punishes the unrighteous even prior to judgment day. Alternatively, it may simply refer to them being kept for their ultimate punishment pronounced on judgment day.

2Pet 3:7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Rev 11:18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants,^h the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.

^h Greek bondservants

The unbelieving nations vented their anger at God (cf. NLT), raging against him. The result of this is that they face God's wrath – primarily at the time of the final judgment, when "the destroyers of the earth" will themselves face destruction.

Luke 6:49 But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.

Although certainly also applicable to any torrential "stream" of this life, God's final judgment may be primarily in view, with the complete destruction it brings on the ungodly who do not put Jesus' words into action.

✚ **The bleak prospects of the ungodly in the face of God's judgment:**

1Pet 4:17-18 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"ⁱ

ⁱ Greek where will the ungodly and sinner appear?

The "judgment" beginning with the family of God quite possibly refers to the hardships God's people suffer now as a form of purifying judgment. If they experience such judgment, the prospects of the ungodly are bleak indeed.

Pray for persecuted Christians



e) The Final Judgment (II): The Process

See also:

- *On Jesus Christ's return his followers will be rewarded*, p. 704

As this section shows, there will be two prominent factors in the final judgment: people's deeds; and people's response to Jesus Christ (i.e. whether one has believed in or has rejected him). This has led many theologians to conclude that people's eternal destiny (i.e. heaven or hell) will be determined by their response to Jesus Christ, with their deeds then determining the degree of their reward or punishment.

However bear in mind that there is also a correlation between godly deeds and belief in Jesus Christ, and likewise between ungodly deeds and rejection of Jesus Christ. As such, there may well be a strong correlation between judgment on the basis of one's deeds and judgment on the basis of one's response to Jesus Christ. (See also the introductory comment on *Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned*, p. 715.)

Subsections

- God has appointed Jesus Christ judge and will judge all people through him
- On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done . . .
- . . . God's people will be judged and rewarded according to what they have done
- People will have to give an account of themselves
- Those who have believed in Jesus Christ will be saved and have eternal life
- Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned
- What people have known will be taken into account

God has appointed Jesus Christ judge and will judge all people through him

See also:

- [2Thes 1:6-7](#) ↓

John 5:22-23, 27 *The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,*²³that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.  ...²⁷And *he has given him*

authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.



In saying that God has given him authority to judge "because he is the Son of Man" (v. 27), Jesus may be meaning that it is because he is the one spoken of in Daniel 7:13-14 as "one like a son of man" to whom was given "dominion and glory and a kingdom".

Acts 10:42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that *he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.* 

Acts 17:31 ... because he has fixed a day on which *he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed*; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. 

In the second part of the verse Paul's point may be that by raising Jesus Christ, God validated Christ's claims that God would judge the world through him (cf. [John 5:22-23, 27](#) ↑). For in raising Christ, God firstly validated Christ's claim that he would rise from the dead, and consequently gave credence to all Christ's other claims.

Rom 2:16 ... on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. 

2Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 

2Tim 4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of *Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead*, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ... 

Matt 3:12 *His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.* 

Here John the Baptist speaks of Jesus. The reference to Jesus sorting out the righteous "wheat" from the condemned "chaff" may be applicable to his ministry in his first coming, but taken as a whole the statement appears to primarily at least have in view his role in the final judgment.



On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done . . .

See also:

- 1Cor 4:4-5 ↴; 2Cor 5:10 ↴; Col 3:23-25 ↴; 1Pet 1:17 ↴; Rev 2:23 ↴
- *God judges and repays people according to what they have done*, p. 430
- *Eternal life will be the reward for godliness*, p. 709
- *God's wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness*, p. 709
- *Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned*, p. 715
- *What people have known will be taken into account*, p. 716

Matt 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. 📖

Rev 22:12 Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. 📖

Matt 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' 📖

Those who do God's will "will enter the kingdom of heaven" (v. 21); those who do evil will be turned away (v. 23).

Matt 25:31-46 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰And the King will answer

them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,ⁱ you did it to me.' ⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." 📖

ⁱ Or brothers and sisters

When Jesus Christ returns and judges people according to what they have done, he will take into account the things they have not done that they should have done (vv. 41-46).

Rom 2:5-10, 16 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸but for those who are self-seeking^k and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 📖 ... ¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. 📖

^k Or contentious

2Thes 1:6-7 ... since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ... 📖

Jude 1:14-15 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." 📖

Rev 20:12-13 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead



were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 📖

... God's people will be judged and rewarded according to what they have done

See also:

- *Good deeds are critical for salvation and eternal life*, p. 1069
- *You will be rewarded for your work . . .*, p. 1399
- *Whoever does not produce good "fruit" will be cut off from God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1400

1Cor 3:8, 12-15 He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. 📖 ... ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. 📖

Here Paul speaks of the work of building the church (v. 12), and he probably has church teachers primarily in view. The builders need to be careful to build with quality materials – symbolized by the gold, silver and costly stones. (Such materials would include correct doctrine, complemented by a godly lifestyle.) Quality work – as with poor work – will be shown for what it is when tested on the Day of Judgment (vv. 13-15).

1Cor 4:4-5 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. *It is the Lord who judges me.* ⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before *the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.* 📖

The context and the reference to receiving "commendation from God" (v. 5b), suggests that Paul may well have primarily in view judgment and reward of Christian service.

2Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 📖

A number of commentators understand this to be referring primarily to evaluation of what believers have done – for

determining their reward, rather than their eternal destiny (which is secured by faith in Jesus Christ). However Paul could more generally be referring to Christ's judgment of all people.

Eph 6:8 ... knowing that *whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.* 📖

For whatever good we do, we "will receive back from the Lord" repayment which is in accordance with it. Note that here Paul is addressing Christian slaves (cf. **Col 3:23-25** ↓).

Col 3:23-25 *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. ²⁵For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.* 📖

Particularly given the context, v. 25 provides a sobering warning for professing believers.

James 2:12 *So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.* 📖

Christians are freer to please God, being under a "law" and covenant that gives freedom from encumbering regulations and sin. As such, more will be expected of them in the judgment of their words and actions.

1Pet 1:17 *And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ...* 📖

As with a number of the other verses in this subsection, this is not necessarily confined to just the "work" of Christians – nor to just the final judgment.

Rev 2:23 ... and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that *I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.* 📖

The immediate context is the judgment of a false prophetess and her "children" or followers. However Christ's second statement here is a general truth, applicable to all his judgments – on churches and their members, as well as other people – including of course the final judgment.

Rev 14:13 *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"* 📖

The first statement makes it clear that deeds of believers are being spoken of in the second statement. The latter implies that their godly deeds will bring them reward in the afterlife.



‡ **Supposed servants of Jesus Christ who do evil will be doomed:**

Luke 12:45-46 But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and *begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk,* ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and *will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.* 📖

The final clause appears to refer to the punishment in store for unbelievers, which will be shared by supposed servants of Christ who have been unfaithful. Note that Matthew 7:21-23 in the previous subsection has a similar theme.

People will have to give an account of themselves

Rom 14:11-12 ... for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess¹ to God." ¹²So then *each of us will give an account of himself to God.* 📖

¹ Or *shall give praise*

The fact that everyone will have to bow before and acknowledge God (v. 11) points to the assertion that all will have to give an account of themselves to God (v. 12). Given the context of the passage, in v.12 the writer is probably primarily referring to Christians. However v. 11 may be implying a more general application, which is also valid.

Heb 4:13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of *him to whom we must give account.* 📖

1Pet 4:5 ... but *they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.* 📖

Luke 19:15 When he returned, having received the kingdom, *he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business.* 📖

The parable from which this is taken (cf. vv. 11-27) is illustrative of judgment day and the accompanying requirement to give an account for what we have been entrusted with. Believers may primarily be in view.

‡ **We will have to give account of careless words, for by our words we will be acquitted or condemned:**

Matt 12:34-37 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil

treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶*I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.* 📖

Although words and deeds are often distinguished, to say something is itself an action or a deed – so these verses correlate well with the previous subsections' teaching of deeds being a critical aspect of judgment. But probably what Jesus has primarily in mind is that one's words are fitting as a basis of judgment because they are indicative of what is in one's heart (vv. 34-35). As such, this reflects a further correlation between one's words and one's deeds.

Those who have believed in Jesus Christ will be saved and have eternal life

See also:

- [John 3:18](#) ↴
- [e\) Belief in Jesus Christ \(III\): Outcomes](#), p. 1049

Acts 16:30-31 Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, *what must I do to be saved?*" ³¹*And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."* 📖

Rom 10:9 ... because, *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* 📖

The confession "Jesus is Lord" is a statement of one's belief.

2Tim 3:15 ... and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for *salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* 📖

Mark 16:16 *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.* 📖

Note that baptism is an affirmation of one's faith, rather than an additional requirement of salvation.

Heb 10:39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of *those who have faith and preserve their souls.* 📖

John 3:14-16, 36 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵*that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*^m ¹⁶*"For God so loved the world,ⁿ that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* 📖 ... ³⁶*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.* 📖



^m Some interpreters hold that the quotation ends at verse 15

ⁿ Or *For this is how God loved the world*

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.* 

Believing what God spoke through Jesus primarily involves believing in Jesus Christ, the focus of God's message.

John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that *everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* 

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" ^o *Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* 

^o Some manuscripts omit *and the life*

Those who believe in Jesus Christ will live even though they die physically (v. 25b); in a spiritual sense they will never die (v. 26a).

John 20:31 ... but these are written so *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* 

Believers have spiritual, eternal life. It begins on belief and continues forever.

1Tim 1:16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to *believe in him for eternal life.* 

✚ By faith, through Jesus Christ people have peace with God:

Rom 5:1 Therefore, *since we have been justified by faith, we^p have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 

^p Some manuscripts *let us*

In conjunction with being saved, by faith in Jesus Christ one is justified and at peace with God.

Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned

See also:

- [Mark 16:16](#) ; [John 3:36](#) 
- [Matt 11:20-24](#) ; [Matt 12:41-42](#) ; [John 15:22, 24](#) 
- *Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are condemned and do not have life . . .*, p. 1054

The following passages reflect an association between not believing in Jesus Christ and disobedience (or acting wickedly). These two things parallel the need for people to both believe and repent, and reflect the fact that at the last judgment both what people have believed in and what they have done will be critical factors.

John 3:18-21 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* ¹⁹*And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.* ²⁰*For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.* ²¹*But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.* 

The phrase "this is the judgment" (v. 19) essentially means: "Their judgment is based on this fact" (NLT; cf. GNT, NCV). One's acceptance or rejection of the "light" that came in Jesus Christ – here associated with one's deeds (vv. 19-21) – forms the basis of one's judgment.

John 12:47-48 *If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.* ⁴⁸*The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.* 

In v. 47a, "does not keep them" appears to refer to not obeying Jesus' words (v. 47a; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT), but could also or instead refer to not believing them (cf. NKJV). Verse 48 teaches that those who have rejected Jesus and his words will be condemned in the light of and in accordance with his words. Note that in saying that he did not come to judge (v. 47), Jesus is speaking of his first advent.

2Thes 1:7b-9 ... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸*in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* ⁹*They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from^a the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ...* 



^q Or *destruction that comes from*

Not obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 8b) involves rejecting him. Additionally, rejecting Jesus Christ and not obeying the gospel is symptomatic of not knowing God (v. 8a).

Heb 10:26-31 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 

Deliberately continuing to sin (v. 26) will bring God's judgment (v. 27). This is because it is in effect doing the things listed in v. 29, which amount to rejecting Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for sin – as the comparison with rejecting the law of Moses (v. 28) implies. Such rejection of Jesus Christ necessitates God's judgment (vv. 30-31).

Jude 1:14-15 It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." 

This speaks of the ungodly as both acting in an "ungodly way" and rejecting Jesus Christ with the harsh words they have spoken against him. Consequently they will be convicted.

2Thes 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 

The references to perishing (v. 9) speak of eternal destruction and punishment. Loving the truth (v. 10) and believing the truth (v. 12) involve adhering to and believing the truth about Jesus.

‡ In contrast to those who acknowledge him, whoever disowns Jesus Christ will be disowned by him:

Matt 10:32-33 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. 

What people have known will be taken into account

See also:

- [John 12:48](#) 
- [God's creation of the world and heavens perpetually evidence and reveal God to all people . . .](#), p. 241
- [. . . God's ongoing control over nature likewise testifies to him](#), p. 242

What people have known of Jesus Christ and of God's will, will be taken into account in their judgment.

Matt 10:7-8, 14-15 And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,^r cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.  ... ¹⁴And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. 

^r Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Those who have heard the message of the kingdom and witnessed the accompanying signs that authenticate it (vv. 7-8), are more accountable than those who have not (vv. 14-15). This will be reflected in the judgments of both groups. Note that for the disciples to shake the dust off their feet (v. 14), would be indicative of the unclean state of the place and alluded to the judgment that awaited it.

Matt 11:20-24 Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you." 



Matt 12:41-42 *The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴²The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*



As the people of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba had responded to lesser revelations from God, Jesus' generation will be all the more accountable for not responding to the revelation that came through him.

Luke 12:47-48 *And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.*



John 9:41 Jesus said to them, *"If you were blind, you would have no guilt;^s but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.*

^s Greek *you would not have sin*

Jesus appears to be implying that if the Pharisees were ignorant of spiritual things, they would not be guilty – at least not to such an extent (cf. comment on [John 15:22, 24 ↓](#)). But as they claimed knowledge of such matters, their guilt was confirmed.

John 15:22, 24 *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin,^t but now they have no excuse for their sin. ... ²⁴If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.*

^t Greek *they would not have sin*; also verse 24

The phrase "they would not have been guilty of sin" (vv. 22, 24) does not mean that they had never sinned, but rather that if they did not have the revelation made known to them through Jesus, they would not be guilty of such deliberate, defiant sin; now they were without excuse for their sin (v. 22). Verse 24 implies that in particular they were now guilty of the decisive sin of rejecting Jesus in spite of what they had seen.

Rom 2:12-15 *For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to*

themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ...

Gentiles without knowledge of the Mosaic Law, by nature have a grasp of its requirements (vv. 14-15) and will be judged as such (v. 12a). Those who know the law have a clearer understanding of what God requires, and so their judgment will be more exacting (v. 12b).

† **All people have at least known of God through his creation – and so have no excuse:**

Rom 1:18-20 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

This passage is not talking specifically about God's final judgment, but its teaching is certainly applicable to it.

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) Jesus Christ's Universal Rule

See also:

- *II. God's Plans for Israel*, p. 981

The subject of Jesus Christ's universal rule and a messianic age has different interpretations. One view is that they should primarily be correlated with the present form of God's kingdom, over which Jesus Christ rules as Lord and where people from among the nations have turned to God. Another view is that there will be a period of widespread righteousness at the end of the age prior to the consummation of God's kingdom and the afterlife (as per "The Millennium", see below). A further possibility is that verses speaking of the Messiah's universal rule are portraying the afterlife. (Additionally, some of the passages may have different stages of fulfillment, and so be relevant to more than one of these scenarios.)

Accordingly, it is debatable whether chronologically this section – or particular subsections in it – should be placed:



before the earlier sections on Jesus Christ's return; before the above sections on the last judgment; or even in the second half of this chapter.

Note that while most of the subsections' themes are open to interpretation, some of the verses that they contain quite clearly have a particular one of the above three scenarios in view.

Subsections

- [Prelude: The thousand years](#)
- [God will establish the Messiah as ruler over all, forever](#)
- [The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace](#)
- [All nations will turn to God](#)
- [All nations will worship God](#)
- [All people will acknowledge and submit to Jesus Christ](#)
- [God's people will reign with Jesus Christ](#)

Prelude: The thousand years

Revelation 20:1-6 below is critical to the significant concept of "The Millennium". Each verse in vv. 2-6 refers to a thousand-year period – a millennium. This millennium is also arguably referred to by numerous OT prophetic passages and possibly a few NT ones. As well as in the following subsections, many such OT passages are found in *II. God's Plans for Israel*, p. 981. This section (*Jesus Christ's Universal Rule*) and *God's Plans for Israel* cover most of the concepts involved in the doctrine of "The Millennium".

There are three major views of this "Millennium". Amillennialists view the reign of deceased believers with Christ (cf. [Rev 20:4, 6](#) ↓) to refer to a present reign in heaven. They see this reign as having been introduced by Jesus Christ's first coming, with him being pronounced Lord of all (cf. introductory comment on *d) Jesus Christ as Lord of All*, p. 684). They believe that Jesus Christ will return, and then the general resurrection will occur, followed by the final judgment. Following this would be the reign of Jesus Christ over the new earth in the afterlife.

Postmillennialists believe that Christianity will become dominant in the world through the spread of the gospel, resulting in a long lasting era of righteousness – i.e. the millennium. This would be followed by Christ's return, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment. Premillennialists believe that Christ's return will be followed by a first resurrection of believers, who will reign with Christ in a literal thousand-year rule of righteousness on earth. This would then be followed by the final resurrection and then the final judgment.

The use of "post" and "pre" in the names of the latter two positions refers to their view of when Christ will return in relation to the millennium. The Amillennialist and Premillennialist viewpoints are probably the most popular today.

Rev 20:1-6 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit^u and a great chain. ²And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. ⁴Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. *They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.* ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. *This is the first resurrection.* ⁶Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! *Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.* ☰

^u Greek *the abyss*; also verse 3

The clause "those to whom the authority to judge was committed" (v. 4a) most likely refers to believers, though angels are a possibility. They are not necessarily the martyrs subsequently spoken of, although they could be at least inclusive of them. Furthermore, the clause may not be speaking of only believers who remain faithful during the severe persecution of the end times, but may symbolically encompass all believers. Premillennialists understand "the first resurrection" (v. 6) to be the physical raising to life of all dead believers, to reign with Christ upon the earth for a thousand years.

God will establish the Messiah as ruler over all, forever

See also:

- [Heb 1:8](#) ↓; [Isa 11:10](#) ↓
- [God will impose his absolute rule on all](#), p. 253

God's implementation of his authority through Jesus Christ's rule will not only be universal but also everlasting. Note that some commentators understand the Millennium to be an initial stage in Christ's rule.



Gen 49:10 *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him;^v and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.* 

^v By a slight revocalization; a slight emendation yields (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Targum) *until he comes to whom it belongs; Hebrew until Shiloh comes, or until he comes to Shiloh*

Particularly in view of the text note (cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NLT), this is commonly understood to refer to a descendant of Judah who would rule not only Israel but have "the obedience of the peoples". It may have had an initial fulfillment in David, but probably ultimately refers to the Messiah (or Christ).

Ps 2:6-9 "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."⁷ *I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you."* ⁸*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.* ⁹*You shall break^w them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."* 

^w Revocalization yields (compare Septuagint) *You shall rule*

This and the following two references (72:8-11; 89:25-29) are from psalms concerning Davidic kings, with messianic applications. Installed by God as King in Zion (v. 6), the Messiah – God's Son (v. 7) – will assert his authority over the nations (vv. 8-9; cf. Rev 19:15). Once his rule is established, as the following subsection shows, it will be one of righteousness and peace.

Ps 72:8-11 *May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River^x to the ends of the earth!* ⁹*May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust!* ¹⁰*May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!* ¹¹*May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!* 

^x That is, the Euphrates

Ps 89:25-29 *I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers.* ²⁶*He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'* ²⁷*And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.* ²⁸*My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm^y for him.* ²⁹*I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens.* 

^y Or *will remain faithful*

The term "firstborn" (v. 27) is indicative of being in a position above all others in God's kingdom, as reflected in the subsequent clause.

Isa 55:4 *Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.* 

This is either referring to the Messiah or back to David (cf. v. 3) as "one (One) who shall testify of salvation" to the peoples (AMP). Even if David is primarily in view, the prophecy is ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah.

Dan 7:13-14 *I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.* ¹⁴*And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* 

1Cor 15:25 *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* 

For comment, see the comment on **1Cor 15:25** – under **On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed**, p. 704.

Eph 1:9-10 ... *making known^z to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ* ¹⁰*as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.* 

^z Or *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known . . .*

The latter part of v. 10 – key to these verses being pertinent to this subsection – may be speaking more of God unifying and consummating creation in Christ (cf. AMP), rather than primarily of Christ's rule over them. However, even so, arguably the latter is implied (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Heb 2:5 *Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.* 

There are different interpretations of this verse. The time period in view with the phrase "the world to come" has been interpreted as referring to the millennium, the afterlife and even the present age (cf. NCV). The phrase "it was not to angels" quite possibly refers to Jesus Christ, although it may allude to believers in their participation in Christ's reign. In either case, the verse is indicative of the subjection of this "world" to Jesus Christ.

Dan 2:44 *And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ...* 

This is considered by some scholars to be referring to the introduction of the kingdom of God on Christ's first coming, while others think that it is speaking of the setting up of a



millennial kingdom on Christ's return. Another possibility is that the first alternative is initially in view, with the prophecy to be consummately fulfilled on Christ's return by either a millennial kingdom or the consummation of God's kingdom on the commencement of the afterlife.

✦ **On his return, Jesus Christ will assume his throne:**

Matt 25:31 *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.* 📖

This points to Jesus Christ asserting his ultimate authority over the entire world on his return. Note that in 19:28 Jesus similarly speaks of: "... the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne ..."

The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace

See also:

- *The OT promises that such a one would arise as a great ruler of Israel*, p. 484
- *The OT says the ruler will bring justice and salvation to the nations*, p. 485
- *The Messiah will rule forever over Israel, in righteousness and peace*, p. 997

Heb 1:8 But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, *the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.* 📖

Isa 11:1-10 *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.* ²And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. ⁶The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters

cover the sea. ¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. 📖

The "shoot" and "branch" (v. 1) signify the Christ, who will be from the line of David the son of Jesse (vv. 1, 10). Verses 6-8 portray the ultimate peace that will characterize the Christ's reign. Although this peace is spoken of in v. 9a as occurring on God's "holy mountain", vv. 9b-10 appear to imply that such conditions will extend over all the earth. In v. 10, "a signal for the peoples" appears to speak of the Messiah rallying the nations to himself (cf. NIV, NLT), in submission to him and possibly also as the one who provides them with salvation. His "resting place" refers to where he dwells (cf. AMP, NCV, NLT) – in effect the place from where he rules (cf. NlrV).

Isa 42:1-4 *Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.* ²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; *he will faithfully bring forth justice.* ⁴*He will not grow faint or be discouraged^a till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.* 📖

^a Or bruised

Most of this passage is quoted in Matthew 12:18-21 in reference to Jesus Christ. Particularly in light of this, the unassuming and gentle nature portrayed in vv. 2-3 may well have his first advent primarily in view (cf. **Zec 9:9** ↓), while v. 4 – not included in the Matthew quotation – seems to look to Christ's second coming.

Mic 4:3-4 *He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; ⁴but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid,* for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. 📖

"He" (v. 3) refers to the LORD (cf. v. 1), but many understand this prophecy as being fulfilled through the Messiah. As with v. 3, v. 4 reflects the peaceful state of his kingdom.

Zec 9:9-10 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! *Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.* ¹⁰*I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.* 📖



Similar to Isaiah 42:1-4 above, v. 9 has Jesus Christ's first advent primarily in view (cf. Matt 21:1-11), while v. 10 probably looks towards Christ's second coming.

✦ God promises to bring justice to the nations:

Isa 51:4-5 Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law^b will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. ⁵My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. 

^b Or for teaching; also verse 7

The last clause in v. 4 suggests that God's justice will become a "guiding light" (NirV[®]) to the nations, possibly in part due to the prevalence of God's aforementioned law. Additionally, God's salvation (cf. v. 5) may be in view as securing the nations' welfare, turning the darkness of their circumstances to light.

All nations will turn to God

See also:

- [Isa 11:10](#) ↑
- [Ps 22:27](#) ↓; [Isa 19:22](#) ↓; [Dan 7:27](#) ↓; [Zeph 2:11](#) ↓; [Rev 15:4](#) ↓

As with the other subsections in this chapter section, the verses in this and the following subsection appear to have in view the time of the Messiah's reign. Under the Messiah's universal reign of righteousness, all nations will turn to God.

Ps 65:2 O you who hear prayer, *to you shall all flesh come.* 

Ps 68:31 *Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.* 

Isa 2:3 ... and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law,^c and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 

^c Or teaching

The "mountain" is Mount Zion. It is part of Jerusalem, which it is often used to represent – as is implied by the latter part of the verse. In conjunction with the submission of the nations to God, this portrays God's law and word as emanating from Jerusalem, teaching all the nations.

Isa 66:18 For I know^d their works and their thoughts, and *the time is coming^e to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, ...* 

^d Septuagint, Syriac; Hebrew lacks *know*

^e Hebrew *and it is coming*

This speaks of God leading the nations to turn to him.

Jer 16:19 O LORD, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble, *to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth* and say: "Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit." 

Zec 2:11a *And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people.* 

Zec 8:20-21 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities.* ²¹*The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.'* 

Acts 15:16-18 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, ¹⁷*that the remnant^f of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things* ¹⁸*known from of old.'* 

^f Or rest

Here Amos 9:11-12 is quoted by James as being fulfilled in part at least in the turning to God by significant numbers of Gentiles following Jesus Christ's mission (cf. vv. 13-19). (As such a similar application or interpretation could be applied to a number of other verses in this and other subsections in this section.) Some scholars consider that it also speaks of a more comprehensive turning to God by the Gentiles at the end of the age.

Mic 7:15-17 As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them^g marvelous things. ¹⁶The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall lay their hands on their mouths; their ears shall be deaf; ¹⁷they shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth; *they shall come trembling out of their strongholds; they shall turn in dread to the LORD our God, and they shall be in fear of you.* 

^g Hebrew *him*

In v. 16, "they shall lay their hands on their mouths" appears to indicate "awe" (NLT) of God and "dismay" (GNT, cf. AMP). As a result of God's wonderful acts (v. 15), the nations will understand their relative lack of power and be in awe of God



(v. 16). Consequently they will humbly turn in fear to God (v. 17).

† Prophecy of peoples coming to join God's people:

Isa 45:14 Thus says the LORD: "*The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: 'Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.'*" 

In conjunction with coming to God, this speaks of peoples coming to Jerusalem – aligning themselves with God's people – and acknowledging that he is the only God. Furthermore, earlier Isaiah says that all people will have knowledge of the LORD: "... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (11:9)

All nations will worship God

See also:

- *The nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God . . .*, p. 1013

Ps 22:27-29 *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.* ²⁸For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. ²⁹*All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive.* 

Verse 29b is speaking of "all mortals— those born to die" (NLT, cf. GNT, NCV).

Ps 66:4 *All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.*" Selah 

A number of other translations use a future tense (cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV, NLT), suggesting that this has a future fulfillment.

Ps 86:9 *All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.* 

Isa 19:18-25 *In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts. One of these will be called the City of Destruction.^h ¹⁹In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. ²⁰It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt. When they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and deliver them. ²¹And the LORD will make himself known to the*

Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them. ²²And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and *they will return to the LORD*, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them. ²³In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and *the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.* ²⁴In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "*Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.*" 

^h Dead Sea Scroll and some other manuscripts *City of the Sun*

As part of the Gentiles turning to God and worshiping him, this passage also speaks of the Gentiles being incorporated into God's people and kingdom. In saying that the Egyptians will "speak the language of Canaan", v. 18 points to the Egyptians identifying themselves with God's people – which they will do more emphatically when they "swear allegiance" to God. The reference to both Egypt and Assyria (v. 23-25), two of Israel's most notable enemies, may well signify the Gentiles in general joining Israel in devotion to and worship of God, and sharing equally with her in God's blessings.

Isa 45:23 By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: "*To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.*"ⁱ 

ⁱ Septuagint *every tongue shall confess to God*

Bowing before God and swearing allegiance (v. 23) are acts of worship.

Isa 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so *the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.* 

The "righteousness and praise" may refer to the righteousness and praise of God of all nations (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) – hence the verse's inclusion here. Israel's righteousness and praise of God is also a possibility.

Isa 66:23 *From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD.* 

Dan 7:27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and *all dominions shall serve and obey them.*ⁱ 



^j Or *his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him*

If the rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. AMP, CEV, NASB, NIV, NKJV), then this verse would be indicative of all nations worshiping God, with serving God being associated with worship of him.

Zeph 2:11 The LORD will be awesome against them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and *to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations.*

Zeph 3:9-10 For *at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.* ¹⁰*From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.*

In v. 9 “peoples” refers to all nations. Similarly “my dispersed ones” (v. 10) may be speaking of those among other nations who worship God, although the scattered remnant of Israel may be in view.

Mal 1:11 *For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be^k great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.*

^k Or *is* (three times in verse 11; also verse 14)

Rev 15:4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. *All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.*

† All nations will fear God:

Ps 102:15 *Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory.*

That all nations will fear God is reflected above in Revelation 15:4 and also in Micah 7:15-17 in the previous subsection.

All people will acknowledge and submit to Jesus Christ

As the Messiah, under his reign all people will acknowledge Jesus Christ's identity and authority – and consequently submit to him. The following verses reflect this, speaking of people's words and deeds which are indicative of these things.

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹*and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,* to the glory of God the Father.

The implication is that every knee “will bow” (CEV, NASB, NCV, NIRV, NLT) in submission as all people and spiritual beings acknowledge Jesus Christ's lordship.

Rev 5:13 *And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

Ps 72:11 *May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!*

The suggestion is that this will happen (cf. AMP, GNT, NIV, NKJV, NLT). The Messiah is ultimately in view.

Dan 7:14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, *that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;* his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Isa 49:7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, *to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: “Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”*

The Messianic servant is likely in view here. Note that “his Holy One” refers to the LORD as Israel's Holy One.

† People will come to understand who Jesus Christ is:

Isa 52:13-15 Behold, my servant shall act wisely;¹ he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. ¹⁴As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind— ¹⁵*so shall he sprinkle^m many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.*

¹ Or *shall prosper*

^mOr *startle*

Jesus Christ's return and subsequent reign may well be in view in v. 15 – and possibly alluded to or encompassed with the earlier reference to him being “exalted”. Such will be the exaltation of the messianic servant that kings will be “speechless with amazement” (GNT) when they see his exaltation and understand who he is and what he has accomplished. Note that “startle” – the alternative rendering in the text note (cf. NLT, NRSV; cf. AMP, NCV, NIRV), points more strongly to Christ's return being in view.



God's people will reign with Jesus Christ

Dan 7:18, 21-22, 27 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.' ⁿ ... ²¹As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, ²²until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. ... ²⁷And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.ⁿ

ⁿ Or his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him

2Tim 2:12 ... if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; ...

Rev 2:26-27 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

The quotation in v. 27 is from Psalm 2, a psalm with messianic applications. It is used here to underscore the stern authority that believers will have in conjunction with the supreme authority of Jesus Christ, who is the speaker here and in 3:21 immediately below.

Rev 3:21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Rev 5:10 ... and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.

The use of "you" refers to "the Lamb" (v. 8), Jesus Christ.

Rev 20:4-6 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

For comment, see both the comment on [Rev 20:1-6](#) and the introductory comment for the subsection it is under – *Prelude: The thousand years*, p. 718.

Rev 22:5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

This refers to the time after the "thousand years" and the final judgment, showing that believers will continue to reign throughout eternity, not just during the "thousand years" (cf. [Rev 20:4-6](#) ↑).

Matt 24:46-47 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

Here and in 25:21 below, Jesus Christ is speaking of himself as the "master", with faithful believers as the faithful servants. Being put in charge of "all his possessions" and "much" ([Matt 25:21](#) ↓) appears to point to their roles in reigning with Jesus Christ.

Matt 25:21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

^o Greek *bondservant*; also verses 23, 26, 30

Luke 22:29-30 ... and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

In v. 29 Jesus appears to speak of granting his kingdom – with "the right to rule" (CEV, GNT) – to his twelve disciples. (For an alternative interpretation see the comment on [Luke 22:28-30](#) – under ... and God's people will inherit the kingdom, p. 739.) The latter part of v. 30 appears to speak of a future role assigned to the twelve disciples in particular, and as such would not be so readily applicable to believers in general.

1Cor 6:2-3 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

This is perhaps meaning that believers will play a role in the final judgment. Otherwise it is referring to judging as one aspect of their role in ruling with Christ.



Rom 5:17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness *reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ*.



The phrase "reign in life" possibly refers to the future reign that believers will participate in through Jesus Christ,

although the context indicates that it may primarily be referring to their "triumph over sin and death" (NLT).

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. The Afterlife

See also:

- *II. God's Plans for Israel*, p. 981

The believer's hope is largely based on God's wonderful promises for his people concerning the afterlife, the life begun by their resurrection from death. At the center of these promises is the final, everlasting phase of God's relationship with his people. In contrast to these wonderful promises are the teachings about the horrific eternity that the ungodly face.

a) The New Creation

The Bible speaks of the present heavens and earth passing away. Correspondingly, the Bible says that God will create new heavens and a new earth – a key part of which appears to be the new Jerusalem, where God and Jesus Christ will dwell with their people. In association, God will renew all things. See also the introductory comments below on: . . . *The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God's judgment of the wicked*, p. 727; and *God's people will live in the new Jerusalem*, p. 729.

Subsections

- The present heavens and earth will pass away . . .
- . . . The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God's judgment of the wicked
- God will create new heavens and a new earth
- God will renew all things
- God's people will live in the new Jerusalem
- Description of the new Jerusalem
- Note: The new Jerusalem is linked with the renewed Jerusalem prophesied in the OT . . .
- . . . This association is seen in the descriptions of the two cities

The present heavens and earth will pass away . . .

See also:

- [2Pet 3:7, 10-12](#) ↓

Matt 5:18 For truly, I say to you, *until heaven and earth pass away*, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. [📖](#)

Matt 24:35 *Heaven and earth will pass away*, but my words will not pass away. [📖](#)

1Cor 7:31b *For the present form of this world is passing away.* [📖](#)

Note that possibly this is referring primarily to the material and transitory things of this world passing away, rather than referring in particular to the earth itself. (See also the comments on 1 John 2:17 and Revelation 21:4 below.)

Heb 1:10-12 And, "You, Lord, *laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹²like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed.*"^a But you are the same, and your years will have no end." [📖](#)

^a Some manuscripts omit *like a garment*

Heb 12:26-27 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more *I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.*" ²⁷*This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.* [📖](#)

Note that "the things that cannot be shaken" alludes to God's kingdom – the "kingdom that cannot be shaken" (v. 28).

1Jn 2:17 And *the world is passing away* along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. [📖](#)

Here "the world" may here be primarily a reference to the realm of sin, but arguably it is also inclusive of the physical world; it is at least applicable to it.

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. *From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.* [📖](#)

This may not necessarily be referring to heaven and earth passing away, but it does seem the most likely meaning.

Rev 21:1, 4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, *for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.* [📖](#) . . . ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their



eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for *the former things have passed away*. 

Some commentators consider that “the sea was no more” (v. 1) to allude to the absence of evil. The latter part of v. 4 indicates that the “old world and its evils” (NLT) will be gone.

Isa 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for *the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment*, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;^b but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed. 

^b Or *will die like gnats*

... The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God’s judgment of the wicked

See also:

- [Isa 51:6](#) 
- [God’s anger and its consequences are awesome . . .](#), p. 67
- [. . . This has been and will be evident upon all nations and the whole earth](#), p. 67

Quite possibly the removal of the old heavens and earth can be correlated with their devastation in association with God’s eschatological judgment of the wicked, as discussed here. However this is debatable. Note also that not all of the following references are necessarily meaning that the earth will be completely destroyed. (See also the comment at the start of the following subsection.)

2Pet 3:7, 10-12 But by the same word *the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly*.  ...¹⁰*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies^c will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*^d ¹¹*Since all these things are thus to be dissolved*, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²*waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!* 

^c Or *elements*; also verse 12

^d Greek *found*; some manuscripts *will be burned up*

The phrase “be exposed” (v. 10) either refers to being exposed “for what they are” (CEV; cf. NRSV) and “exposed to judgment” (NLT; cf. NIV), or to being emptied, with everything being “burned up” (AMP, NASB, NCV, NIV text note, NKJV).

Isa 13:9-13 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. ¹⁰*For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.* ¹¹*I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.* ¹²*I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir.* ¹³*Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.* 

Isa 24:1-6, 19-20 Behold, the LORD will empty the earth^e and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. ²And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the slave, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. ³*The earth shall be utterly empty and utterly plundered*; for the LORD has spoken this word. ⁴*The earth mourns and withers; the world languishes and withers; the highest people of the earth languish.* ⁵The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. ⁶*Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.*  ... ¹⁹*The earth is utterly broken, the earth is split apart, the earth is violently shaken.* ²⁰*The earth staggers like a drunken man; it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again.* 

^e Or *land*; also throughout this chapter

Note that possibilities for the meaning of “the everlasting covenant” (v. 5) include the covenant made through Noah (cf. Gen 9:16) or that made with David (cf. 2Sam 23:5), both of which have applications to all mankind.

Isa 34:1-5 Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. ²*For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host; he has devoted them to destruction,^f has given them over for slaughter.* ³*Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood.* ⁴*All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.* ⁵*For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.* 



^f That is, set apart (devoted) as an offering to the Lord (for destruction); also verse 5

Some commentators consider "Edom" (v. 5) to be symbolic of all the enemies of God's people.

Joel 3:15-16 *The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.* ¹⁶*The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake.* But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.

Mic 7:13 *But the earth will be desolate because of its inhabitants, for the fruit of their deeds.*

Zeph 1:2-3, 18 *"I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.* ³*"I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble^g with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.* ... ¹⁸*Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.*

^g Or *stumbling blocks* (that is, idols)

Being followed by what appears to be a prophecy of the Babylonian destruction of Judah, it is somewhat debatable as to whether vv. 2-3 refers to God's eschatological definitive judgment of the wicked. But its universal scope and the latter description of the "great day of the LORD" (vv. 14-18) make it likely to be the case, or at the very least applicable to it.

✦ **A further reference to God's eschatological judgment of the wicked:**

Isa 66:15-16 *For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.* ¹⁶*For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many.*

God will create new heavens and a new earth

See also:

- **Matt 19:28**

Commentators differ on whether the verses in this subsection refer to the creation of an entirely different heaven and earth, or a renewal of the old heaven and earth. The former seems the more likely, with the previous subsections seemingly supporting this view. However some verses in the following subsection could be interpreted to support the latter. In

either case, this new creation will be free of any corruption – moral or otherwise – and will exist in harmony with God.

2Pet 3:13 But according to his promise *we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

Righteousness will characterize the new heavens and earth and all who are there – to the exclusion of everything that is not righteous.

Isa 65:17 *For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.*

Isa 66:22 *For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.*

Rev 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.*

✦ **The meek will inherit "the earth":**

Matt 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for *they shall inherit the earth.*

Here "the earth" appears to be speaking of a new or renewed earth at the consummation of the messianic kingdom. This is quite possibly also the meaning of "the world" in Romans 4:13, which refers to "... the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world ..."

God will renew all things

See also:

- *b) Physical Renewal* [of Israel], p. 985

Matt 19:28 Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, *in the new world,*^h when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

^h Greek *in the regeneration*

As the text note indicates, the Greek speaks of "the regeneration" (NASB, NKJV), i.e. "the renewal of all things" (NIV®, NRSV).

Acts 3:21 ... whom heaven must receive until *the time for restoring all the things* about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

This tells of the time when God will make "all things new" (CEV, cf. GNT). The prophecies referred to in the latter part of



the verse may well include the prophecies given in the verses from Isaiah in the previous subsection and the numerous OT prophecies referring primarily to the restoration of Israel (cf. [a\) Return to the Land](#), p. 981).

Rom 8:19-22 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that *the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.* ²²For we know that *the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.*

The “freedom” (v. 21) would appear to encompass freedom from decay and anything harmful. It is also very much applicable to – and may even have largely in view – freedom from sin, sin’s consequences and all evil influences.

Rev 21:5 *And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”* Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

✦ God will unite all creation in Christ:

Eph 1:9-10 ... making knownⁱ to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰*as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

ⁱ Or *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known . . .*

Here “heaven” may well denote “the heavens” (NASB) – rather than referring to or being limited to the spiritual realm of heaven. In conjunction with this, “all things” appears to refer to “all creation” (GNT). At the end of the age God will “unify all things and head them up and consummate them in Christ” (AMP). To what extent this includes aspects of creation other than people is open to conjecture.

God’s people will live in the new Jerusalem

See also:

- *The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ – shut out from the holy city,* p. 751

The new Jerusalem is associated with the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21:1-2 (cf. Isa 65:17-18). It is the central aspect of the domain of the kingdom of God in its final form. It is spoken of as “coming down out of heaven” ([Rev 3:12 ↓](#); [Rev 21:2 ↓](#), [Rev 21:10 ↕](#)) but also appears to be closely connected with heaven, perhaps in some sense a manifestation of it. For like heaven, it is said to be the

dwelling place of God and where his people will dwell with him and Jesus Christ throughout eternity.

Rev 3:12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and *I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.*

Writing on believers “the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem” implies that Jesus Christ will mark believers as belonging to the new Jerusalem, in effect citizens of it.

Rev 21:1-3, 7, 27 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* ³*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place^l of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^k and God himself will be with them as their God.^l ... ⁷The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ... ²⁷But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*

^l Or *tabernacle*

^k Some manuscripts *peoples*

^l Some manuscripts omit *as their God*

Verses 2-3 suggest that God’s people will dwell with God in the new Jerusalem. In v. 7, presumably “this heritage” encompasses the new Jerusalem, reflecting that God’s people will dwell there – in contrast to the ungodly (cf. vv. 8, 27). Note that with the likening of the new Jerusalem to a bride (v. 2) – “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb” (v. 9 ↕) – some see a correlation between it and the church or God’s people, spoken of as Jesus Christ’s or God’s bride a number of times elsewhere in Scripture.

Rev 22:14 *Blessed are those who wash their robes,^m so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.*

^m Some manuscripts *do his commandments*

Gal 4:26 *But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.*

The heavenly Jerusalem is the “mother” of believers in at least two senses. Firstly, they are born again of what she represents – a faith that is free of slavery to the law (cf. vv. 24-25). Secondly, they belong to her. This second point is indicative of the heavenly Jerusalem being where believers belong – their ultimate home.



Heb 11:10, 16 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.  ... ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. 

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ... 

In a spiritual, positional sense, believers now partake in the heavenly Jerusalem and what it signifies, assured of the realization of this.

Heb 13:14 For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. 

Description of the new Jerusalem

Rev 21:9-26 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— ¹³on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia.ⁿ Its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, 144 cubits^o by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. ²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of

God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 

ⁿ About 1,380 miles; a *stadion* was about 607 feet or 185 meters

^o A *cubit* was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

Possibly "the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel" (v. 12) and "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (v. 14) allude to the new Jerusalem of the afterlife being inclusive of both the people of God throughout the OT and the NT church. There will be no need for any temple, signifying God's presence amidst unholy people, for not only will there will be no impurity but God and Jesus Christ will themselves be present (v. 22). "By its light will the nations walk" (v. 24) may be speaking of the nations being drawn to it (cf. [Isa 60:3](#) ↓).

Rev 22:1-5 Then the angel^p showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life^q with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants^r will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. 

^p Greek *he*

^q Or the Lamb. In the midst of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life

^r Greek *bondservants*; also verse 6

The "tree of life" (v. 2) probably parallels the tree of life in Genesis 2, and likewise the mention of things having been "accursed" (v. 3) alludes to the curse pronounced in Genesis 3:14-19. These verses imply that the relationship between God and his people will be restored in a sense to what it was like before the fall (cf. [Rev 2:7](#) ↓). The "healing of the nations" (v. 2b) appears to speak of the renewal of all peoples who share in God's kingdom, with the removal of all that is harmful and/or evil.

✦ God's people will be restored to an Eden-like paradise:

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers *I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.* 

The Greek word for "paradise" comes from a Persian word meaning "park" or "garden". As such, particularly with the reference to the tree of life, this appears to allude to the



Garden of Eden. Jesus similarly speaks of being in “paradise” after death, in saying to the repentant thief on the cross: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Note that Paul also uses the term in reference to heaven, speaking of being “caught up into paradise” (2Cor 12:3).

Note: The new Jerusalem is linked with the renewed Jerusalem prophesied in the OT . . .

The relationship of the new Jerusalem of the afterlife (primarily depicted in Revelation 21 and 22) and the renewed Jerusalem prophesied in the OT is the subject of no small debate. A good number of commentators see them as separate things, but often differ as to the degree and to the ways in which they are associated. Some of these commentators see the renewed Jerusalem prophesied in the OT as literal, something of an archetype of and leading into the new Jerusalem of the eternal state. Other commentators see it as symbolic of the new Jerusalem. See also the introductory comment on *II. God's Plans for Israel*, p. 981.

The references in this and the following subsection are arranged in pairs. The first of each pair is a reference from Revelation 21 or 22 speaking of the new Jerusalem. The second of each pair is from one of the OT prophets, speaking of the future renewed Jerusalem. Each pair demonstrates at least one thing common to the two cities. The fact that there are so many striking parallels suggests a correlation between the two cities.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, *the dwelling place^s of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^t and God himself will be with them as their God.^u* ☞

^s Or *tabernacle*

^t Some manuscripts *peoples*

^u Some manuscripts omit *as their God*

Zec 2:10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and *I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.* ☞

Rev 21:4 *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.* ☞

Isa 25:7-8 And *he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.* ☞

The “mountain” (v. 7) is Mount Zion and the “covering” or “veil” (v. 7) is death (v. 8a). Note that similar to v. 8b and also paralleling Revelation 21:4 above, 65:19b says of Jerusalem: “... no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.”

Rev 21:24, 26 *By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ☞ ... ²⁶They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.* ☞

Isa 60:3, 5 And *nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. ☞ ... ⁵Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult,^v because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.* ☞

^v Hebrew *your heart shall tremble and grow wide*

Rev 21:25 ... and *its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.* ☞

Isa 60:11 *Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.* ☞

Rev 21:27 But *nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.* ☞

Isa 52:1 Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for *there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean.* ☞

Rev 22:3 *No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants^w will worship him.* ☞

^w Greek *bondservants*; also verse 6

Zec 14:11 And it shall be inhabited, for *there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction.^x Jerusalem shall dwell in security.* ☞

^x The Hebrew term rendered *decree of utter destruction* refers to things devoted (or set apart) to the Lord (or by the Lord) for destruction

The Hebrew of the second clause can be rendered as “there will no longer be a curse” (NASB; cf. AMP), reflecting what Revelation 22:3a above says of the new Jerusalem.



... This association is seen in the descriptions of the two cities

Rev 21:2 And I saw *the holy city, new Jerusalem*, coming down out of heaven from God, *prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*. 

This parallels Isaiah 52:1a below in both describing Jerusalem as the holy city and speaking of its splendor.

Isa 52:1a Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; *put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city ...* 

Rev 21:11 ... *having the glory of God, its radiance* like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 

Isa 60:1-2 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ²For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but *the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you*. 

Rev 21:12 It had a great, high wall, *with twelve gates*, and at the gates twelve angels, and *on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—* 

Ezek 48:30-34 These shall be the exits of the city: *On the north side*, which is to be 4,500 cubits by measure, ³¹*three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel*. ³²*On the east side*, which is to be 4,500 cubits, *three gates, the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan*. ³³*On the south side*, which is to be 4,500 cubits by measure, *three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun*. ³⁴*On the west side*, which is to be 4,500 cubits, *three gates,^y the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali*. 

^y One Hebrew manuscript, Syriac (compare Septuagint); most Hebrew manuscripts *their gates three*

Rev 21:18-21 *The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass*. ¹⁹*The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst*. ²¹*And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass*. 

Isa 54:11-12 O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted, behold, *I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires*.^z ¹²*I will make your pinnacles of agate,^a your gates of carbuncles,^b and all your wall of precious stones*. 

^z Or *lapis lazuli*

^a Or *jasper, or ruby*

^b Or *crystal*

Rev 21:23 *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb*. 

Isa 60:19 *The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light;^c but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory*.^d 

^c Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint, Targum add *by night*

^d Or *your beauty*

Rev 22:1-2 *Then the angel^e showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life^f with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*. 

^e Greek *he*

^f Or *the Lamb. In the midst of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life*

Ezek 47:1, 5-9, 12 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, *water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar*.  ... ⁵Again he measured a thousand, and *it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen. It was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through*. ⁶And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river. ⁷As I went back, *I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other*. ⁸And he said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea;^g when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh.^h ⁹And wherever the river goes,ⁱ every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea^j may become fresh; so *everything will live where the river goes*.  ... ¹²*And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their*



fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.” 

g That is, the Dead Sea

h Hebrew *will be healed*; also verses 9, 11

i Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, Targum; Hebrew *the two rivers go*

j Hebrew lacks *the waters of the sea*

The river beginning from the temple (v. 1) parallels the river of Revelation 22:1-2 beginning from the throne, with both the temple and the throne being indicative of God’s presence. Note that Zechariah 14:8 speaks of a river flowing out from Jerusalem – “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.”

‡ In the new Jerusalem there will be no temple:

Rev 21:22 *And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.* 

In the new Jerusalem, God’s presence amongst his people will be such that there will be no temple. This appears to be a difference between the new Jerusalem and the renewed Jerusalem prophesied in the OT (cf. **Ezek 47:1 †**; *Note: References to a temple of God in Jerusalem in the future*, p. 1009).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Eternal Life

See also:

- *b) Life through Jesus Christ*, p. 611
- *Eternal life will be the reward for godliness*, p. 709
- *We have eternal life* [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1051
- *Obedience and doing God’s will lead to eternal life*, p. 1066

Subsections

- As God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, God will also raise his people
- On Jesus Christ’s return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ
- God’s people will be given eternal life
- Eternal life transcends physical death and precludes eternal spiritual death . . .
- . . . There will be no more death for God’s people
- God’s people will have the right to the tree of life and the water of life
- God’s people will have accompanying eternal blessings

As God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, God will also raise his people

See also:

- *On Jesus Christ’s return believers who have died will be resurrected . . .*, p. 702
- *The dead will rise . . .*, p. 708
- *. . . They will rise to be judged, and either rewarded with eternal life or be condemned*, p. 708

Rom 8:11 *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* 

1Cor 6:14 *And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.* 

2Cor 4:14 *... knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.* 

By referring to believers being raised “with Jesus”, Paul may have in view Jesus Christ’s resurrection as the prototype and guarantee of their resurrection (cf. **1Cor 15:20-23 ↓**). He could also or alternatively have in view each believer’s union with Jesus Christ, they being “in him” (cf. **1Cor 15:22 ↓**; **1Thes 4:14, 16 ↓**).

1Cor 15:12-13, 15-16, 20-23, 29-32 *Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.*  *... ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he*



did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ... ²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ... ²⁹Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? ³⁰Why are we in danger every hour? ³¹I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³²What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

The "firstfruits" (vv. 20, 23) alludes to the firstfruits of the harvest which were offered to God. As well as preceding the rest of the harvest, they were viewed as a confirmation that the rest of the harvest would come to fruition. Here the term is applied to Christ as, like the firstfruits of the harvest, his resurrection precedes and is an assurance of the resurrection of all believers. In vv. 29-32 Paul gives further reasons to support his argument for the resurrection of the dead. These are: the practice of baptizing people for the dead (v. 29), of which little is known or understood; and Paul and his companions frequently exposing themselves to death in their ministry (vv. 30-32), attesting to their utmost confidence that the dead will be raised.

1Thes 4:13-17 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord,^k that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

^k Or by the word of the Lord

Acts 26:23 ... that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.

This suggests that the "light" – the "light of salvation" (GNT) – which Jesus Christ would proclaim as "the first to rise from

the dead", would involve the hope of resurrection in the light of his own resurrection.

Ps 49:15 But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah

Isa 26:19 Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

This appears to speak of the resurrection of the dead, primarily that of God's people, in the context of the future restoration of Israel. Note that in speaking of God raising the dead, the last statement refers to the moisture of the morning dew giving life.

On Jesus Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ

See also:

- [1Thes 4:16](#) ↑; [1Cor 15:23](#) ↑
- [God's people will share in God's and Jesus Christ's glory](#), p. 747

Note that the above cross references to verses in the previous subsection have been included as the verses make reference to God's people being raised on Jesus Christ's return. But the verses do not speak of their resurrection bodies.

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Being "conformed to the image of his Son" would appear to include, in addition to a moral conformity, the bodies of believers being conformed to the likeness of the body of the risen Christ.

1Cor 15:35-38, 42-54 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ... ⁴²So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being";[!] the last Adam became a life-giving



spirit. ⁴⁶*But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.* ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and *as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.* ⁴⁹*Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall^l also bear the image of the man of heaven.* ⁵⁰I tell you this, brothers: *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.* ⁵¹Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but *we shall all be changed,* ⁵²*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* ⁵³*For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴*When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

^l Greek *a living soul*

^mSome manuscripts *let us*

In vv. 36-41 Paul lays a foundation for his description of the resurrection bodies of believers. In vv. 36-38 he draws a parallel between the dead being resurrected with a different body and how a seed dies before it comes to life as a plant, the different body that God has determined for it. Then in vv. 39-41 Paul gives examples of how God gives different things different bodies – before arguing that the case is the same with the resurrection of the dead (v. 42). In v. 45 Jesus Christ is described as “the life-giving Spirit” for as from Adam (a natural, living being) came natural bodies, from Jesus Christ (a heavenly, spiritual being) will come spiritual bodies (vv. 45-49). The changing of our bodies will take place on his return, heralded by the sounding of the trumpet (vv. 51-52).

2Cor 5:1, 4 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, *we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* ... ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but *that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*

In v. 1, the earthly “tent” denotes the earthly body, whereas the “building from God ... eternal in the heavens” appears to refer to the believer’s imperishable resurrection body – which is in view in v. 4b. The use of “life” (v. 4b) alludes to the imperishable nature of this future body – and possibly also its spiritual nature.

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, *the Lord Jesus Christ,* ²¹*who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body,* by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but *we know that when he appearsⁿ we shall be like him,* because we shall see him as he is.

ⁿ Or *when it appears*

The phrase “we shall be like him” is probably referring to our beings being like Christ’s, but could also be referring to our characters – or both. The last clause seems to be saying that it will be through seeing him (on his return) that we shall become like him. Alternatively in the final sentence John may simply be meaning that we will see that we have become like him when we actually see him.

✦ **Believers will experience the “redemption” of their bodies:**

Rom 8:23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as *we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

Believers will in effect experience the redemption of their bodies in gaining their new or renewed bodies.

God’s people will be given eternal life

Matt 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold^o and *will inherit eternal life.*

^o Some manuscripts *manifold*

John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him *should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as *were appointed to eternal life* believed.

Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a servant^p of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²*in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began^q ...*

^p Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

^q Greek *before times eternal*

Titus 3:7 ... so that being justified by his grace *we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Regarding “heirs”, Paul may be saying that believers have the hope of eternal life, a hope which involves the promise of being heirs of God. Alternatively, he may have in view that



believers will inherit eternal life (cf. AMP, GNT, NLT; **Matt 19:29** ↑; **1Pet 3:7** ↓), the object of their hope.

Jude 1:21 ... keep yourselves in the love of God, *waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.* ☞

1Pet 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since *they are heirs with you^r of the grace of life*, so that your prayers may not be hindered. ☞

^r Some manuscripts *since you are joint heirs*

The eternal life to come appears to be in view (cf. GNT, NlrV), particularly with "life" being spoken of as something which believers are heirs to.

1Thes 4:17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so *we will always be with the Lord.* ☞

Ps 23:6 Surely^s goodness and mercy^t shall follow me all the days of my life, and *I shall dwell^u in the house of the LORD forever.*^v ☞

^s Or *Only*

^t Or *steadfast love*

^u Or *shall return to dwell*

^v Hebrew *for length of days*

The latter part of this verse is possibly referring to living forever, although "forever" may instead have the sense "as long as I live" (GNT).

Ps 133:3 It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For *there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.* ☞

This is not necessarily referring to eternal life, though presumably at least an application can be made to it.

Eternal life transcends physical death and precludes eternal spiritual death . . .

See also:

- **Luke 20:35** ↓

In the above heading, "eternal spiritual death" refers to conclusive separation from God in hell. It appears to be spoken of below in: John 11:26; John 8:51; 10:28; Rev 2:11.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.^w *Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.* Do you believe this?" ☞

^w Some manuscripts omit *and the life*

In v. 25 "die" refers to physical death, whereas in v. 26 "never die" speaks of never being subject to eternal spiritual death.

Ps 16:9-11 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^x rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. ¹⁰*For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.*^y ¹¹*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* ☞

^x Hebrew *my glory*

^y Or *see the pit*

Although v. 10 is spoken of in Acts as being consummately fulfilled in Jesus Christ's resurrection (cf. Acts 2:24-32; 13:35-37), David appears to initially be speaking of himself. With the references to "life" and "eternal pleasures" in v. 11, David is possibly speaking of eternal life following physical death, with God not leaving him in the grave (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT, NlrV). Alternatively he may simply be speaking of God protecting him in the face of the threat of death.

1Cor 15:36b, 42 *What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.* ☞ ... ⁴²*So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.* ☞

God's people who have died physically will be raised to life – eternal life, with them being imperishable.

1Pet 4:6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to *those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.* ☞

This appears to be referring either to Jesus Christ preaching to the dead (cf. 3:19-20) or to the gospel being preached to believers who had since died (cf. CEV text note). Particularly if the second interpretation is correct, the latter part probably means that God's people will be judged like all people in that their physical bodies will die, but they will live like God does in their spiritual existence (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

John 8:51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, *he will never see death.* ☞

John 10:28 *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ☞

Rev 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers *will not be hurt by the second death.* ☞



... There will be no more death for God's people

Luke 20:35-36 ... but *those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage,*³⁶ *for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons^z of the resurrection.* ☞

^z Greek *huioi*; see Preface

Rev 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and *death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.* ☞

Isa 25:7-8 And *he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.* ⁸*He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.* ☞

As noted earlier, the "mountain" (v. 7) is Mount Zion and the "covering" or "veil" (v. 7) probably signify death (v. 8a).

1Cor 15:26, 54-55 *The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* ☞ ... ⁵⁴*When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."* ⁵⁵*"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"* ☞

Rev 20:14 *Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.* This is the second death, the lake of fire. ☞

God's people will have the right to the tree of life and the water of life

The "tree of life" was one of the trees in the Garden of Eden from which Adam and Eve could eat. But after their fall into sin, they were banished from the garden so that they could not eat from the tree and so live forever (cf. Gen 3:22-24). That God's people are said to be given access to this tree (cf. **Rev 2:7 ↓**; **Rev 22:2, 14 ↓**) signifies them being given life forever. As referred to below, being enabled to drink from "the water of life" (cf. **Rev 7:17 ↓**; **Rev 21:6 ↓**; **Rev 22:17 ↓**) likewise signifies being given eternal life.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. *To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.* ☞

Rev 7:16-17 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷*For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.* ☞

The "springs of living water" (v. 17; cf. **Rev 21:6 ↓**) are "springs of the water of life" (NASB, NRSV).

Rev 21:6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. *To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.*" ☞

Rev 22:1-2, 14, 17 Then the angel^a showed me *the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb* ²*through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life^b with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* ☞ ... ¹⁴*Blessed are those who wash their robes,^c so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.* ☞ ... ¹⁷*The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.* ☞

^a Greek *he*

^b Or *the Lamb. In the midst of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life*

^c Some manuscripts *do his commandments*

‡ The life-giving river in Ezekiel's vision:

Ezek 47:9, 12 And *wherever the river goes,^d every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea^e may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.* ☞ ... ¹²*And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.* ☞

^d Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, Targum; Hebrew *the two rivers go*

^e Hebrew lacks *the waters of the sea*

Some scholars raise the possibility of this life-giving river being associated with the river of Revelation 22 (cf. ... *This association is seen in the descriptions of the two cities*, p. 732), pointing to similarities between the two rivers. Another interpretation is that the temple in Ezekiel's vision (ch. 40-48) most likely refers to a Millennium temple, the river then also being of the Millennium. It remains open to debate as to whether the temple and this river are symbolic or actual.



God's people will have accompanying eternal blessings

See also:

- *Note: God gives his people blessings that last*, p. 1291

Luke 12:33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

Luke 16:9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth,^f so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

^f Greek *mammon*, a Semitic word for money or possessions; also verse 11; rendered *money* in verse 13

1Cor 9:25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

The "wreath" is likely a metaphor for the wonderful blessings that will be bestowed on believers.

2Tim 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Heb 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ...

Heb 9:15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.^g

^g The Greek word means both *covenant* and *will*; also verses 16, 17

Heb 10:34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that *you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one*.

The "better possession" may denote all that God's people have or will have. Being an "abiding" one, it is a lasting one; it will last forever (cf. CEV, GNT).

Heb 12:28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ...

That which "cannot be shaken" will remain forever (cf. v. 27).

1Pet 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ...

1Pet 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

As with "wreath" (cf. 1Cor 9:25 ↑), the "crowns" spoken of in the NT as being rewards for believers are probably symbolic, metaphors for the wonderful blessings that will be bestowed on believers.

Rev 3:12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

Being made "a pillar in the temple of my God" appears to point to the permanence of the believer's place in the new Jerusalem or God's kingdom – which they never will leave.

Ps 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Heavenly State of God's People

See also:

- *On Jesus Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ*, p. 734
- *d) Epilogue: Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution*, p. 2018

Subsections

- God's people will enter the kingdom of God . . .
- . . . and God's people will inherit the kingdom
- God's people will be in heaven . . .
- . . . Heaven is where their reward is kept
- God's people will be made perfect



- God's people will have glory
- God's people will have great joy . . .
- . . . There will be no more sorrow
- Note: The salvation and redemption of God's people will be fully realized

God's people will enter the kingdom of God . . .

See also:

- [Luke 22:30](#) ↓
- [Those who will enter the kingdom of God . . .](#), p. 681
- Note: [The feast in the kingdom of God](#), p. 748

Similar to the concept of the coming of the kingdom of God, entering and receiving the kingdom of God have both a present (cf. Col 1:13) and a future dimension – the latter being shown in this and the following subsection. See also the above cross references. Note also the introductory comment to the following subsection, which is also pertinent here.

Matt 13:43 *Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.* 📖

The afterlife is in view here.

Acts 14:22 ...strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must *enter the kingdom of God.* 📖

1Thes 2:12 ... we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of *God, who calls you into his own kingdom* and glory. 📖

The coupling of "kingdom" with "glory" suggests that the future consummate form of the kingdom is being referred to here.

2Thes 1:5 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, *that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God*, for which you are also suffering— 📖

Note that although this may be speaking of being counted worthy "to enter God's kingdom" (NirV®), it can also be applied to being counted worthy of inheriting God's kingdom (as per the following subsection).

2Tim 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and *bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.* To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 📖

2Pet 1:10-11 Therefore, brothers,^h be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹For in this way *there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* 📖

^h Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

. . . and God's people will inherit the kingdom

See also:

- [2Thes 1:5](#) ↑
- [Those who will enter the kingdom of God . . .](#), p. 681
- . . . [Those to whom the kingdom of God belongs](#), p. 682

Believers will inherit the kingdom of God. As such they will partake of it (as reflected in the previous subsection) in a fuller sense than they do now, and it will be their domain.

Matt 5:3, 10 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for *theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* 📖 ... ¹⁰"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for *theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* 📖

The expression "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" quite probably refers primarily to future inheritance of the kingdom. However there may also be a present application intended, to sharing in the blessings of the kingdom in its present form.

Matt 25:34 *Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'* 📖

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock, for *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* 📖

Jesus appears to be speaking of his vulnerable "little flock" of disciples inheriting the future form of the kingdom.

Luke 22:28-30 You are those who have stayed with me in my trials,²⁹and *I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom,*³⁰that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 📖

Some consider that Jesus is principally speaking of passing on to his disciples the privilege and responsibility of building the kingdom, but the context (v. 28 and particularly v. 30)



arguably suggest that the future form of the kingdom is primarily in view. Moreover, some translations indicate that Jesus may more specifically be speaking of conferring the right to do what he subsequently refers to in v. 30 (cf. AMP, NASB, NLT). What Jesus says here to his disciples is largely applicable to all believers.

1Cor 15:50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 

Believers will be changed and raised imperishable (cf. vv. 51-52) to inherit the kingdom of God.

Heb 12:28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ... 

Note that this could be speaking of receiving the kingdom in a present sense (cf. CEV).

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 

Dan 7:18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever. 

God's kingdom in its final form may be in view here, although some think a millennial earthly kingdom is the subject. With the second possibility, "the saints of the Most High" would not necessarily refer to believers in general.

Rev 21:7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 

This "heritage" refers in part at least to the new heavenly Jerusalem, the prime domain of the future form of God's kingdom.

✦ The meek will inherit "the earth":

Matt 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 

As noted earlier, this appears to be speaking of the new or renewed earth at the consummation of the messianic kingdom, as quite possibly is also the case in Romans 4:13 which speaks of: "... the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world ..."

God's people will be in heaven . . .

See also:

- [God's people will live in the new Jerusalem](#), p. 729
- [Description of the new Jerusalem](#), p. 730

As discussed earlier, God's people will live in the new Jerusalem. Although this is spoken of as "coming down out of heaven" (Rev 3:12; 21:2, 10) it also appears to be closely connected with heaven, perhaps in some sense a manifestation of it. For the verses in this and the following subsection would appear to indicate that in the afterlife God's people will be in heaven.

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?²³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 

ⁱ Or *In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you*

In v. 2, "my Father's house" is generally understood to be a reference to heaven.

2Cor 5:1 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 

The phrase "the heavens" presumably can be correlated with "heaven" (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). Note that the use of "house" is different here to John 14:2 above. Here it refers to the believer's spiritual resurrection body.

Luke 10:20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. 

Like Hebrews 12:23 below, this suggests that believers are "registered as citizens of heaven" (NLT; cf. [Phil 3:20](#) ↓).

Phil 3:14, 20 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.  ... ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ... 

In v. 14 Paul seems to refer to "the prize of being called to heaven" (CEV). In v. 20 he appears to indicate that even now believers have citizenship of heaven. As such it suggests that heaven is believers' ultimate place of residency.

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers,^j you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ... 

^j Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12



The “heavenly calling” may have in view a call to heaven (cf. NLT; Phil 3:14 †) – hence the verse’s inclusion here. Alternatively it may simply mean a call from God in heaven (cf. GNT, NCV) to follow him.

Heb 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to *the assembly^k of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven*, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ...

^k Or *church*

... Heaven is where their reward is kept

In saying that believers’ reward/s are in heaven, the suggestion is that their rewards will be obtained through the believers being taken into heaven.

Matt 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, for *your reward is great in heaven*, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matt 6:20 ... but *lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

As indicated in Luke 12:33 below, rewards for righteous acts are in view.

Luke 12:33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. *Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail*, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

Eph 2:6-7 ... and raised us up with him and *seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, ⁷*so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*.

In v. 6, what is true of Christ now, is applied to believers in a secondary, spiritual sense. Being “in him” they participate with him in his risen life and are in a sense positioned with him in heaven (cf. CEV). The consummation of this will take place in the future (v. 7) when “in Christ” they will experience the “immeasurable riches” of God’s grace – which the context suggests will be in heaven. Note that “seated us with him” (v. 6) is generally understood to be speaking of Jesus Christ rather than God (cf. CEV).

Col 1:5 ... because of *the hope laid up for you in heaven*. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ...

Here “the hope” is that for which we hope for – the blessings waiting for believers in heaven (cf. AMP).

1Pet 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴*to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ...*

† The unparalleled, inconceivable reward for God’s people:

1Cor 2:9 But, as it is written, “*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him*”—

Note that the phrase “what God has prepared” is probably inclusive of – or at least applicable to – blessings of both the present and future ages (cf. NSB).

God’s people will be made perfect

1Cor 13:9-10 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but *when the perfect comes*, the partial will pass away.

Quite likely “when the perfect comes” refers to the perfection of believers in the afterlife – or at least encompasses it; but there are also other interpretations.

Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained this *or am already perfect*, but I press on to make it my own, because *Christ Jesus has made me his own*.

This implies that believers will be made perfect.

Heb 11:39-40 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had provided something better for us, *that apart from us they should not be made perfect*.

All faithful people of God, of all eras, will together share in the sinless perfection of the afterlife. Possibly the perfection of their resurrection bodies may also be in view.

Heb 12:23 ... and to the assembly¹ of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to *the spirits of the righteous made perfect*, ...

¹ Or *church*

The last clause refers to the spirits of righteous people who had died (cf. NLT), pointing to the assertion that God’s people will be made perfect in the afterlife. Note that some commentators think that it may refer in particular to people of God from OT times, whose righteousness is now complete following Jesus Christ’s death.



God's people will have glory

See also:

- *On Jesus Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ*, p. 734
- *God's people will share in God's and Jesus Christ's glory*, p. 747

Rom 2:9-10 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,¹⁰ but *glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good*, the Jew first and also the Greek. 📖

Rom 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified *he also glorified*. 📖

The use of the past tense in referring to the glorification of believers, is generally understood to be indicative of the certainty of their glorification, as if it had already taken place.

Rom 9:22-23 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, *which he has prepared beforehand for glory*— 📖

Verse 23 suggests that the glory that will be bestowed upon believers will be a product of the riches of God's own glory.

1Cor 15:42-43 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is *raised in glory*. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 📖

2Cor 4:17 For this light momentary affliction *is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*, ... 📖

1Pet 1:7 ... so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found *to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. 📖

1Pet 5:1, 4 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as *a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed*: 📖 ... ⁴And when the chief Shepherd appears, *you will receive the unfading crown of glory*. 📖

Ps 73:24 You guide me with your counsel, and *afterward you will receive me to glory*. 📖

The final clause can be translated "receive me with honor" (GNT, NRSV; cf. NCV, NLT). The use of "with" would suggest

that it is speaking of the honor or glory to be bestowed upon God's people.

Dan 12:2-3 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³And *those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above;*^m and *those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever*. 📖

^m Hebrew *the expanse*; compare Genesis 1:6-8

Shining "like the brightness of the sky above ... like the stars" (cf. **Matt 13:43** ↓) depicts or evidences the glory that believers will have.

Matt 13:43 Then *the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. He who has ears, let him hear. 📖

John 12:26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, *the Father will honor him*. 📖

This probably refers primarily to honor given in the afterlife, associated with the glory to be received.

Rom 8:20-21 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of *the glory of the children of God*. 📖

‡ God's "glorious inheritance in the saints":

Eph 1:18 ... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are *the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints*, ... 📖

The expression "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints" probably refers to the glorious inheritance that God has for his people (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), which presumably involves the glory to be theirs. Alternatively it could instead be speaking of the saints as God's own glorious inheritance – which also alludes to the glory of believers.

God's people will have great joy . . .

See also:

- *Joy will accompany God's renewal of Israel . . .*, p. 989

Jude 1:24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and *to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy*, ... 📖



Matt 25:21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ⁿ You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. *Enter into the joy of your master.*

ⁿ Greek *bondservant*; also verses 23, 26, 30

Heb 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in *festal gathering*, ...

One can infer from this verse that believers will share in this “joyful assembly” (NIV®, NLT).

1Pet 4:13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, *that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*

Ps 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; *in your presence there is fullness of joy*; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The final clause suggests that this verse has an application to the afterlife.

... There will be no more sorrow

See also:

- *Promises of God replacing sorrow with joy*, p. 893
- ... *Israel’s sorrow will be no more*, p. 990

Isa 65:17, 19 For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and *the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.* ...¹⁹I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; *no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.*

The “former things” (v. 17) encompasses all that arouses weeping and crying (v. 19). Note that Premillennialists see these verses as primarily referring to a Millennium kingdom, as well as being applicable to the afterlife. Some Premillennialists, but not all, have a similar view of 25:8 below.

Rev 7:16-17 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*

Note that v. 16 points to the fact that in heaven believers will not lack anything, nor will there be anything to cause concern or trouble.

Rev 21:4 *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*

Isa 25:8 He will swallow up death forever; and *the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces*, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

↳ Promise of rest:

Heb 4:1-3, 9-11 Therefore, while *the promise of entering his rest still stands*, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. ⁹For *we who have believed enter that rest*, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest,” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ...⁹*So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,* ¹⁰*for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.* ¹¹*Let us therefore strive to enter that rest*, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

⁹ Some manuscripts *it did not meet with faith in the hearers*

The “rest” spoken of here is primarily the eternal rest that believers will have in heaven, paralleled with God’s rest on the seventh day following six days of creative work. Verse 3a may possibly be meaning that believers in one sense experience this rest now. The phrase “his works” (v. 10) probably refers to good works done in Christ, although some think it may refer instead to or be inclusive of attempts to work for salvation, from which believers are “at rest”. Note that Revelation 14:13b also speaks of rest for God’s people in the afterlife: “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

Note: The salvation and redemption of God’s people will be fully realized

See also:

- *Jesus Christ will bring believers’ salvation to completion on his return*, p. 611

In accordance with the teachings in the subsections above and in the previous section – *Eternal Life* – it is apparent that the salvation and redemption of God’s people will come to fulfillment in the afterlife, at the end of this age. The following



section – *Being with God* – further reflects on what will be involved in this.

Heb 9:28 ... so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, *will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.* 

1Pet 1:5, 8-9 ... who by God's power are being guarded through faith *for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*  ... ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹*obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.* 

Rom 13:11 Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. *For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.* 

This implies that the salvation of God's people will be fully realized at the end of the age.

Phil 1:28 ...and not frightened in anything by your opponents. *This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.* 

Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of *those who are to inherit salvation?* 

Luke 21:28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because *your redemption is drawing near.* 

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom *you were sealed for the day of redemption.* 

Eph 1:14 ... who is the guarantee^p of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,^q to the praise of his glory. 

^p Or *down payment*

^q Or *until God redeems his possession*

The alternative rendering in the second text note speaks of the consummation of the redemption of God's people and is strongly supported by other translations (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

‡ The salvation of God's people is eternal:

Heb 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the source of *eternal salvation to all who obey him, ...* 

Note that similarly 9:12 refers to Jesus having secured "an eternal redemption".

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Being with God

Subsections

- God will dwell with his people
- God's people will see God
- God's people will be with Jesus Christ
- God's people will have God's and Jesus Christ's names written on them
- God's people will share in God's and Jesus Christ's glory
- God's people will praise God – and serve him
- Note: The feast in the kingdom of God

God will dwell with his people

See also:

- *God will dwell in Jerusalem, living among his people forever,* p. 1008

Rev 21:3, 22 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, *the dwelling place^r of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^s and God himself will be with them as their God.^t*"  ... ²²And I saw no temple in the city, for *its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.* 

^r Or *tabernacle*

^s Some manuscripts *peoples*

^t Some manuscripts omit *as their God*

The fact that God and Jesus Christ are the city's temple (v. 22) is indicative of their presence being in the city (cf. **Rev 2:3** ↓), the new Jerusalem. With them being with their people, in a consummate sense, there will be no need for a temple. Note that v. 3b speaks of the ultimate fulfillment of one of the fundamental aspects or aims of God's relationship with his people throughout history – that they be his people and he be their God.

Rev 22:3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but *the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants^u will worship him.* 

^u Greek *bondservants*; also verse 6



God's and Jesus Christ's presence with believers in the new Jerusalem is referred to here with the reference to their throne.

Rev 7:15 Therefore *they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.* 

Note that this is speaking of believers who have come out of the "great tribulation" (v. 14). Although not speaking of life in the new Jerusalem, the presence of God with these believers appears to reflect the reality of God dwelling with his people throughout the afterlife.

Ps 23:6 Surely^v goodness and mercy^w shall follow me all the days of my life, and *I shall dwell^x in the house of the LORD forever.^y* 

^v Or *Only*

^w Or *steadfast love*

^x Or *shall return to dwell*

^y Hebrew *for length of days*

More likely David is speaking of experiencing God's presence at the earthly temple in Jerusalem throughout his life, but possibly this also alludes to – or at least can be applied to – dwelling with God in the afterlife.

Ps 49:15 But *God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.* Selah 

God's people will see God

See also:

- [1Jn 3:2](#) 

Job 19:26-27 And *after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in^z my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!* 

^z Or *without*

The text note further suggests that the afterlife is in view.

Ps 11:7 For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; *the upright shall behold his face.* 

The phrase "shall behold his face" is often understood to mean "live in his presence" (GNT), but some commentators think it may also refer to actually seeing God's face in the afterlife – the reason for the verse's inclusion here.

Ps 17:15 As for me, *I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.* 

The phrase "when I awake" may simply denote waking from sleep, but it is seen by a number of scholars to be referring to resurrection. Such an interpretation more comfortably matches the literal meaning of the surrounding phrases that speak of seeing God.

Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for *they shall see God.* 

The final phrase may have a spiritual application to the believer's life of faith in the present, but it would appear that seeing God in the age to come is the primary reference.

1Cor 13:12 For *now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.* 

In saying "then I shall know fully" Paul is speaking of fully knowing God, being in fellowship with him in his presence and seeing him "face to face".

Heb 12:14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for *the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* 

The implication here is that God's holy people will see the Lord. Note that here "Lord" may be referring to God rather than to Jesus Christ.

Jude 1:24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and *to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ...* 

Presumably being presented before his glorious presence will mean that one will be able to see God.

Rev 22:4 *They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.* 

God is in view here.

God's people will be with Jesus Christ

See also:

- [God's people will reign with Jesus Christ](#), p. 724
- [God's people are with Jesus Christ even in death](#), p. 808

The Bible speaks of believers living with Jesus Christ both during this life and in the afterlife following his return. But the verses in this subsection (and in the following one) generally indicate that in the afterlife they will be with him in a deeper, more tangible sense.

John 12:26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and *where I am, there will my servant be also.* If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. 



In saying "where I am, there will my servant be also" Jesus may be alluding to believers being with him in the afterlife – hence the verse's inclusion here – as well as to following him in their lives on earth.

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^a ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again and will take you to myself; that where I am you may be also.*

^a Or *In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you*

John 17:24 Father, *I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me* because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Jesus is speaking of his followers being with him in the afterlife, where they will see his glory.

Rom 6:5, 8 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, *we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.* ... ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that *we will also live with him.*

Some commentators point to the future tenses as meaning that these verses are referring to the believer's resurrection and life with Christ following the end of the age. However others claim that the context indicates that one's spiritual resurrection and life on becoming a believer is in view, with a future tense only used to indicate certainty. The latter view appears more plausible, although one could still claim that as such the verses are also applicable to believers being with Jesus Christ in the afterlife.

Col 3:4 When Christ who is your^b life appears, then *you also will appear with him in glory.*

^b Some manuscripts *our*

1Thes 4:16-17 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so *we will always be with the Lord.*

2Tim 2:11 The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, *we will also live with him;* ...

Similar to Romans 6:5, 8 above, commentators differ on whether "we will also live with him" refers to living with Christ in heaven (cf. vv. 10, 12) or to the Christian's life in him now.

Rev 3:4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and *they will walk with me* in white, for they are worthy.

✦ **God's people shall see Jesus Christ:**

1Jn 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears^c we shall be like him, because *we shall see him as he is.*

^c Or *when it appears*

On Jesus Christ's return all people will see him, but this verse may be implying that believers will in some sense see him more clearly.

God's people will have God's and Jesus Christ's names written on them

See also:

- *God's people are called and identified by his name and Jesus Christ's name*, p. 768

Having God's and Jesus Christ's names written on them will identify believers as belonging to God and Jesus Christ – forever. As such, it is also indicative of the fact that believers will forever be with God and Jesus Christ.

Rev 3:12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and *I will write on him the name of my God*, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, *and my own new name.*

Rev 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and *with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.*

Rev 22:4 They will see his face, and *his name will be on their foreheads.*

✦ **They will be God's – his treasured possession:**

Mal 3:17 *They shall be mine*, says the LORD of hosts, *in the day when I make up my treasured possession*, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.



God's people will share in God's and Jesus Christ's glory

See also:

- *God's people will have glory*, p. 742

1Thes 2:12 ... we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of *God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory*. 

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, *in bringing many sons to glory*, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 

This appears to speak of God bringing believers “to share in his glory” (CEV, NIV; cf. GNT, NCV), usually understood as referring to the age to come.

1Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, *the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ*, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 

2Thes 2:14 To this he called you through our gospel, so *that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*. 

Rom 8:17-18 ... and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order *that we may also be glorified with him*.¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with *the glory that is to be revealed to us*. 

Particularly in light of the final clause of v. 17, the final clause of v. 18 may well refer to “the glory that is about to be revealed to us *and* in us *and* for us *and* conferred on us!” (AMP; cf. NIV, NLT).

Col 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. 

Jesus Christ's indwelling of his people gives them the hope of glory. Quite possibly it is sharing in his glory that is in view. Note that the relationship between “the riches of the glory of this mystery” of God and the “hope of glory” for the believer appears similar to that between “the riches of his glory” and the latter occurrence of “glory” in Romans 9:23. See **Rom 9:22-23** and the comment on it in *God's people will have glory*, p. 742.

Col 3:4 *When Christ who is your^d life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory*. 

^d Some manuscripts *our*

Probably “appear with him in glory” refers to – or at least involves – sharing in his glory (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Phil 3:21 ... *who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body*, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. 

This points to believers sharing in Jesus Christ's glory – or at least a glory that mirrors his.

1Pet 4:13 But rejoice *insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed*. 

Particularly with the earlier reference to sharing in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, in the second half of the verse Peter may have in view “the wonderful joy of sharing his glory” (NLT).

✦ **Even in the present believers increasingly share in Christ's glory:**

2Cor 3:18 *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^e are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another*. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 

^e Or *reflecting the glory of the Lord*

Believers reflect Jesus Christ's glory, with their characters being transformed into his likeness, increasingly reflecting (cf. text note) even manifesting Christ's glory. Note that John 17:22 speaks of the disciples being given Jesus Christ's glory – “The glory that you have given me I have given to them ...” This possibly refers to eternal glory that will be consummated in heaven, but alternatively the present life could be in view, or partially in view.

God's people will praise God – and serve him

The examples in the following verses of people praising God in his presence are largely in response to events at the end of this age and the beginning of the new. Presumably such praise of God and Jesus Christ will continue throughout eternity.

Rev 5:13 *And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”* 

Rev 7:10 ... and *crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”* 



Those praising God and Jesus Christ are believers who have come out of "the great tribulation" (v. 14; cf. v. 15 ↓; Rev 19:1-3, 5-7 ↓) of the end times.

Rev 15:2-4 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³*And they sing the song of Moses, the servant^f of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!^g ⁴Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."* ☞

^f Greek *bondservant*

^g Some manuscripts *the ages*

Rev 19:1-3, 5-7 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."^h ³*Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."* ☞ ... ⁵And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."⁶*Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ...* ☞

^h Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

The "great multitude" (v. 1) could denote primarily angelic beings, but more likely believers – as appears to be the case in v. 6 – possibly in particular those who had come out of the great tribulation (cf. chs 7, 14).

Rev 22:3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and *his servantsⁱ will worship him.* ☞

ⁱ Greek *bondservants*; also verse 6

Rev 5:10 ... and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth. ☞

"You" refers to "the Lamb" (v. 8), Jesus Christ. As "priests to our God", God's people will "serve God as priests" (CEV; cf. GNT, NIV, NRSV).

Rev 7:15 Therefore *they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.* ☞

Note: The feast in the kingdom of God

The Bible speaks of a feast that will take place in the consummated kingdom of God, often referred to as the messianic "banquet" or "marriage supper" (cf. Rev 19:9 ↓). This feast or banquet is generally understood to be symbolic of the wonderful existence and blessings that believers will enjoy in the afterlife, in the presence of God and Jesus Christ.

Luke 13:29 And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and *recline at table in the kingdom of God.* ☞

The "feast" (GNT, NIV; cf. AMP, CEV) of the afterlife appears to be in view.

Luke 14:15 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "*Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!*" ☞

Luke 22:15-16, 29-30 And he said to them, "*I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*" ☞ ... ²⁹and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ☞

^j Some manuscripts *never eat it again*

Particularly in light of v. 30, vv. 15-16 possibly imply that the celebration of the Passover meal will be fulfilled in the messianic feast in the consummated kingdom of God.

Rev 19:7-9 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for *the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;* ⁸it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹And the angel said^k to me, "Write this: *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*" And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." ☞

^k Greek *he said*

The "Lamb" is Jesus Christ, and the "Bride" may represent God's people – "the saints" (v. 8b). As such this looks forward to the consummation of Jesus Christ's relationship or union with his people – associated with the consummation of their salvation – at the "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (v. 9).



Isa 25:6 *On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.*

Some think that the setting for this is the Millennium rather than the afterlife. But even so, it still could allude to such a feast in the afterlife.

Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers *I will give some of the hidden manna*, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.

Some commentators see here a reference to the feast to come in the kingdom.

‡ The parable of the wedding feast:

Matt 22:1-3, 8-10 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ²*“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³and sent his servants¹ to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ... ⁸Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’¹⁰And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

¹ Greek *bondservants*; also verses 4, 6, 8, 10

Although this is only a parable illustrating aspects of the kingdom, with it Jesus is quite possibly referring or alluding to a feast in the consummated kingdom.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) The Punishment for the Ungodly

Subsections

- The ungodly face God’s wrath . . .
- . . . The ungodly face destruction
- The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ – shut out from the holy city
- The ungodly will be thrown into fire
- There will be darkness and torment

- The punishment is eternal
- Note: There will be varying degrees of punishment

The ungodly face God’s wrath . . .

See also:

- Rom 9:22
- *God’s wrath against sinners is manifested in punishment*, p. 380

Matt 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, *“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”*

Hardly subtly, John the Baptist refers to the wickedness of the Pharisees and Sadducees – and the wrath of God that they faced as a result of their wickedness.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Because of their sin every person is under God’s wrath. Those who believe in Jesus Christ are saved from God’s wrath. But for those who reject him, God’s wrath remains and will be manifested conclusively in the afterlife.

Rom 2:5, 8 But *because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.* ... ⁸*but for those who are self-seeking^m and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*

^mOr *contentious*

Col 3:5-6 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:ⁿ *sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming.*^o

ⁿ Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*
^o Some manuscripts add *upon the sons of disobedience*

This probably primarily refers to the wrath of God associated with the final judgment.

Rev 11:18 *The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants,^p the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.*

^p Greek *bondservants*



Rev 14:17-20 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." ¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. ²⁰And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.[¶] 

¶ About 184 miles; a *stadion* was about 607 feet or 185 meters

This is probably speaking of the final judgment and the consequences of God's wrath, although some suggest that it may have in view the earlier judgments of the end times.

... The ungodly face destruction

See also:

- [Rev 11:18](#) ; [Rev 14:19-20](#) 
- *God's wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness*, p. 709

Rom 9:22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ... 

For comment on the phrase "prepared for destruction" see [Rom 9:10-24](#) – under *Note: God's mercy and people's destiny*, p. 764.

Gal 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 

The stating of corruption as the outcome of pleasing one's sinful nature and the contrast of corruption with eternal life, suggest that the corruption in view is the eternal destruction of the ungodly – associated with spiritual "death" (AMP, GNT, NLT).

Phil 1:28 ...and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. 

Phil 3:18-19 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 

1Thes 5:2-3 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 

2Thes 1:9a They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction ... 

2Thes 2:10 ... and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 

This is speaking of those who have been deceived by and have succumbed to evil – the ungodly, who refuse to "love the truth". They are "perishing" – "on their way to destruction" (NLT). 1 Corinthians 1:18 likewise refers to "those who are perishing".

2Pet 3:7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 

Matt 7:13 Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy^r that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 

^r Some manuscripts *For the way is wide and easy*

The ungodly are not specifically mentioned, but it is clear that they are in view.

Matt 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.^s 

^s Greek *Gehenna*

Also in alluding to God's destruction of the ungodly, James 4:12 somewhat similarly says of God: "There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy."

John 17:12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 

Here Jesus refers to Judas as "the one doomed to destruction" (NIV®).



The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ – shut out from the holy city

See also:

- [Matt 13:40-42, 47-50](#) ↴; [Matt 25:41](#) ↴

2Thes 1:9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, *away from^t the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ...* 📖

^t Or *destruction that comes from*

Matt 7:21-23 *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* ²²On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' 📖

Matt 22:13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and *cast him into the outer darkness.* In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 📖

This is from the parable of the wedding banquet, which portrays aspects of the consummation of the kingdom and where the king represents God or Christ. Those not worthy will be thrown "out into the outer darkness" (NLT).

Matt 25:41, 46 *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ...* ⁴⁶*And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."* 📖

Luke 13:24-28 Strive to enter through the narrow door. For *many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.* ²⁵When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and *you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,'* then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. *Depart from me, all you workers of evil!*' ²⁸In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets *in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.* 📖

Unrepentant Jews are being addressed here by Jesus – as v. 28 suggests – but the warning is applicable to all.

Luke 16:26 And besides all this, *between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.* 📖

Here Abraham is depicted as speaking to a rich man who was in hell, the scene having been set in the preceding verses (cf. Luke 16:23-25, 27-28 below in *There will be darkness and torment*). Abraham may well be in heaven, but many understand that "Abraham's side" (cf. v. 22) denotes a place where the righteous who have died reside before their final vindication.

Rev 21:27 But *nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.* 📖

As with the following reference, this is clearly referring to the Holy City, the new Jerusalem. It – or at least heaven – also appears to be in view in a number of the above verses.

Rev 22:14-15 Blessed are those who wash their robes,^u so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter *the city* by the gates. ¹⁵*Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.* 📖

^u Some manuscripts *do his commandments*

The ungodly will be thrown into fire

See also:

- [Luke 16:24](#) ↴; [Rev 14:10-11](#) ↴

Matt 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but *the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.* 📖

John the Baptist is speaking figuratively of Jesus Christ assigning the ungodly to "unquenchable fire".

Matt 13:40-42, 47-50 *Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age.* ⁴¹*The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers,* ⁴²*and throw them into the fiery furnace.* In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 📖 ... ⁴⁷"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹*So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous*



⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 

Matt 25:41 Then he will say to those on his left, *'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* 

Heb 10:26-27 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. 

2Pet 2:6 ... if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;^v ... 

^v Some manuscripts *an example to those who were to be ungodly*

2Pet 3:7 But by the same word *the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.* 

Jude 1:7 ... just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,^w serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. 

^w Greek *other flesh*

Rev 20:14-15 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. 

The "second death" (cf. **Rev 21:8** ↓) is eternal "death" – final destruction for the ungodly, the outcome of God's judgment.

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, *their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.* 

Heb 6:8 But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. 

This is quite likely speaking of "worthless" people being "burned" in the fire of hell. Alternatively, some understand it to refer to a temporal judgment or a judgment of works.

Isa 33:14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: *"Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"* 

The "consuming fire" is probably referring to God in his judgment, rather than to the fire of hell. But parallels can be drawn between the fire of hell and the "consuming fire", along with the concept of "everlasting burnings".

⚡ A warning of the punishment of the fire of hell:

Matt 5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother^x will be liable to judgment; whoever insults^y his brother will be liable to the council; and *whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell^z of fire.* 

^x Some manuscripts insert *without cause*

^y Greek says *Raca* to (a term of abuse)

^z Greek *Gehenna*; also verses 29, 30

"You fool!" (v. 22) appears to be an insult spoken in anger.

There will be darkness and torment

See also:

▪ **Jude 1:13** ↓

Matt 22:13 Then the king said to the attendants, *'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'* 

In Matthew's gospel, on six occasions Jesus speaks of the punishment of the ungodly using the expression, "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," (cf. **Matt 13:42**, **50** ↑; **Matt 25:30** ↓). This repetition underlines the prevalence of such torment.

Matt 25:30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 

2Pet 2:17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. *For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.* 

Luke 16:23-25, 27-28 ... and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for *I am in anguish in this flame.*' ²⁵But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and *you are in anguish.*  ... ²⁷And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— ²⁸for I have five brothers^a—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into *this place of torment.*' 

^a Or *brothers and sisters*



Rev 14:9-11 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and *he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.* ¹¹*And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”*

Similarly Revelation 20:10 says of the devil, the beast and the false prophet: “... they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” The reference in both of these verses to “day and night” points to the fact that the punishment is also constant.

Isa 50:11 Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! *This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.*

Quite possibly this refers to the self-sufficient who live by their own “light”, rather than trusting in God (cf. v. 10). Their end will be torment. This might not be speaking directly of the experience of hell, but even so, it is very much applicable to it.

✚ **There will be trouble and distress:**

Rom 2:9 *There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ...*

The punishment is eternal

See also:

▪ [Rev 14:11](#)

Dan 12:2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and *some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

Isa 33:14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: “Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? *Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?*”

Matt 25:41, 46 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘*Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*’ ... ⁴⁶*And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*”

2Thes 1:9 *They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from^b the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ...*

^b Or *destruction that comes from*

Heb 6:2 ... and of instruction about washings,^c the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and *eternal judgment.*

^c Or *baptisms* (that is, cleansing rites)

Jude 1:7 ... just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,^d serve as an example by *undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*

^d Greek *other flesh*

Jude 1:12-13 These are hidden reefs^e at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, *for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.*

^e Or *are blemishes*

Mark 9:43, 47-48 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands *to go to hell,^f to the unquenchable fire.*^g ... ⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes *to be thrown into hell,⁴⁸ where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’*

^f Greek *Gehenna*; also verse 47

^g Some manuscripts add verses 44 and 46 (which are identical with verse 48)

The fact that the fire of hell will be unquenchable (cf. [Luke 3:17](#)) suggests that the punishment is eternal.

Luke 3:17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but *the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.*

Note: There will be varying degrees of punishment

See also:

- [On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done . . .](#), p. 712
- [What people have known will be taken into account](#), p. 716



Matt 11:20-24 Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I tell you, *it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.* ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴But I tell you that *it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.* 📖

Mark 12:40 ...who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. *They will receive the greater condemnation.* 📖

The implication is that such men will be punished more severely than most others will be punished (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Luke 12:45-48 But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female

servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, *will receive a severe beating.* ⁴⁸But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, *will receive a light beating.* Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. 📖

The use of "servant" in the context (cf. vv. 35-44) points to supposed believers, primarily leaders. It would appear that as they do not prove faithful they will be condemned "with the unfaithful" (v. 46). Particularly in the light of the above references, this also appears to support the assertion that there will be varying degrees of punishment of the ungodly.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Unit D

God and His Own People

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The Standing of God's People

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I. Basics

This chapter looks at the standing or position of God's people in relationship to God. Probably the most basic aspect of this is that they belong to God, as his people. As such the relationship between believers and God is both a strong one and a close one. This is underlined by them being his family and also his church.

a) Prologue: God Draws People to Himself

See also:

- *b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ*, p. 646
- *a) God's Invitation*, p. 1026

This section contains some teaching which contrasts with teaching elsewhere in the Bible – and has been the subject of much debate. It teaches that God chooses (or elects) some people to be his, and so to be saved. Yet the Bible also teaches that God desires and provides for the salvation of all people (cf. *God and Jesus Christ invite all people to come to them and be saved* . . . , p. 1026; . . . *For God wants all people to be saved, making salvation open to everyone*, p. 1027) and in conjunction with this that all people have the choice of whether to respond to him or not (cf. *We have the choice of whether or not to respond to God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1028). In coming to terms with this “tension” in Scripture, one should bear in mind that as the Bible teaches both “sides”, the truth lies in both of them, as opposed to a position that is a compromise of both (cf. BBC).

Subsections

- God chooses people (to be his people) . . .
- . . . God chooses people to receive spiritual blessings
- God calls people . . .
- . . . God calls people to the blessings and other aspects of the faith
- God's choice and call were determined before creation
- God's choice and call are in accordance with his purpose
- God enables people to believe
- God enables people to come to him, in repentance
- Note: God's mercy and people's destiny

God chooses people (to be his people) . . .

See also:

- *God chooses and calls people by his grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ – not because of works*, p. 646

Mark 13:20 And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of *the elect, whom he chose*, he shortened the days. 

God's people are in view here as “the elect, whom he chose”. This is similarly the case with the use of like terms in a number of the following verses.

Luke 18:7 And will not God give justice to *his elect*, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 

1Cor 1:26-30 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards,^a not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But *God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being^b might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰And *because of him^c you are in Christ Jesus*, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ... *

^a Greek *according to the flesh*

^b Greek *no flesh*

^c Greek *And from him*

It is because God has chosen them (vv. 27-28a) – even though they may be disregarded by the world – that God's people are in Jesus Christ (v. 30a).

Col 3:12 Put on then, as *God's chosen ones*, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ... 

1Thes 1:4-5a For we know, brothers^d loved by God, that *he has chosen you*,⁵because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. 

^d Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant^e of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of *God's elect* and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ... 



^e Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

1Pet 2:9 But *you are a chosen race*, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1Pet 5:13 *She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen*, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.

"She who is in Babylon" most likely refers to the church in Rome.

2Pet 1:10 Therefore, brothers,^f be all the more diligent to make *your calling and election* sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

^f Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

2Jn 1:1, 13 The elder to *the elect lady* and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ... ¹³The children of *your elect sister* greet you.

Matt 22:14 *For many are called, but few are chosen.*

The invitation into God's kingdom is extended to "many", possibly in fact meaning all people. But the phrase "few are chosen" appears to refer to God choosing only certain people – although it does not detract from the onus on all to respond to his invitation (cf. vv. 11-13). Those who do respond in effect show that they are chosen.

John 13:18 I am not speaking of all of you; *I know whom I have chosen*. But the Scripture will be fulfilled,^g 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'

^g Greek *But in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled*

John 15:16, 19 *You did not choose me, but I chose you* and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ... ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but *I chose you out of the world*, therefore the world hates you.

As per the disciples in v. 16, all believers are likewise chosen and appointed to bear fruit for God's kingdom. Note that in Philippians 3:12 Paul somewhat similarly speaks of Jesus Christ initiating his coming to Christ, saying that "Christ Jesus has made me his own."

Ps 22:9-10 Yet you are he who took me from the womb; *you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.* ¹⁰*On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God.*

David appears to attribute his relationship with God (v. 10) – along with his lifelong trust in God (v. 9) – as originating from God. As such it points to God as having chosen him.

Isa 65:22 They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of *my people* be, and *my chosen* shall long enjoy^h the work of their hands.

^h Hebrew *shall wear out*

Note that the messianic age or millennium appears to be in view.

... God chooses people to receive spiritual blessings

See also:

▪ [Rev 17:14](#)

Ps 65:4 *Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!*

This points to God choosing his people in part to bring them into fellowship with him.

Matt 11:25-27 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that *you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children*; ²⁶*yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.*"ⁱ ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and *no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

ⁱ Or *for so it pleased you well*

The "things" (v. 25) probably primarily refers to the significance of Jesus' mission and matters of the kingdom. That God chose the "little children" to reveal these things to but not "the wise and understanding" (vv. 25-26) is reflected in v. 27 by the parallel act of the Son choosing those to whom he would reveal the Father. Note that similar to v. 27, John 17:6a says, "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world."

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and *as many as were appointed to eternal life* believed.



The use here of "appointed" speaks of God choosing people for eternal life.

Rom 8:29-30 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. 

Some understand the reference to God's foreknowledge (v. 29; cf. **1Pet 1:2** ↓) to indicate that v. 29 teaches that God predestined or chose those whom he knew beforehand would come to faith. However "foreknew" is understood by a number of commentators to mean more than just prior knowledge, but also to imply foreordination. The term "predestined" (vv. 29, 30) means "destined from the beginning [foreordaining them]" (AMP). Note that in v. 30, the use of the past tense in referring to the glorification of believers is generally understood to be indicative of the certainty of their glorification, as if it had already taken place.

Eph 1:4a ... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. 

1Thes 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruitsⁱ to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 

ⁱ Some manuscripts chose you from the beginning

Salvation and sanctification are two associated blessings for which God's people are chosen.

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? 

1Pet 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 

Those "who are elect" (v. 1) have been chosen in part for obedience to Jesus Christ and the blessing of being cleansed by his blood (v. 2).

God calls people . . .

See also:

- **Rom 8:30** ↑
- *God chooses and calls people by his grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ – not because of works*, p. 646

Acts 2:39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. 

Particularly with the phrase "calls to himself", this verse clearly supports the assertion that those who are God's people have been called to be by God.

Rom 1:6-7 ... including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 

Rom 9:23-24 ... in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? 

Gal 1:15-16 But when he who had set me apart before I was born,^k and who called me by his grace,¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to^l me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;^m ... 

^k Greek set me apart from my mother's womb

^l Greek in

^m Greek with flesh and blood

This speaks of God both choosing Paul – in setting him apart from birth – and calling Paul. 2 Peter 1:10a and Revelation 17:14 below also speak of God both choosing and calling his people.

1Thes 4:7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. 

1Thes 5:24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. 

1Pet 1:15 ... but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ... 

1Cor 1:24, 26 ... but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.  ...²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards,ⁿ not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 

ⁿ Greek according to the flesh



Heb 9:15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that *those who are called* may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.^o 

^o The Greek word means both *covenant* and *will*; also verses 16, 17

2Pet 1:10 Therefore, brothers,^p be all the more diligent to make *your calling and election* sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 

^p Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

Jude 1:1b *To those who are called*, beloved in God the Father and kept for^q Jesus Christ: ... 

^q Or *by*

Rev 17:14 They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and *those with him are called and chosen and faithful*. 

Joel 2:32 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and *among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls*. 

... God calls people to the blessings and other aspects of the faith

See also:

- [Heb 9:15](#) ↑
- [Eph 1:4](#) ↓; [2Tim 1:9](#) ↓

1Cor 1:9 *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son*, Jesus Christ our Lord. 

Eph 1:17-18 ... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is *the hope to which he has called you*, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ... 

Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as *you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call*— 

Phil 3:14 I press on toward the goal for *the prize of the upward call of God* in Christ Jesus. 

1Thes 2:12 ... we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of *God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory*. 

2Thes 2:13-14 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits^r *to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth*. ¹⁴*To this he called you* through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 

^r Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

This indicates that God calls people to salvation.

1Tim 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of *the eternal life to which you were called* and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers,^s *you who share in a heavenly calling*, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ... 

^s Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

Similar to Philippians 3:14 above, the “heavenly calling” may have in view a call to heaven (cf. NLT) – hence the verse’s inclusion here. Alternatively it may refer to the call from God in heaven (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) to be of his people – which would make the verse more applicable to the previous subsection.

1Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of *him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*. 

1Pet 2:20-21 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and *suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God*. ²¹*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps*. 

God’s people are called in part to endure any suffering that they may experience for doing good.



1Pet 3:9 *Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.*

The clause "to this you were called" refers to what precedes it, but can be construed to be inclusive of the subsequent "blessing".

1Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, *the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ,* will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

2Pet 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of *him who called us to^t his own glory and excellence,^u ...*

^t Or by

^u Or virtue

✦ **God's gifts and his call are irrevocable:**

Rom 11:29 *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

God's choice and call were determined before creation

Eph 1:4a ... even as *he chose us in him before the foundation of the world,* that we should be holy and blameless before him.

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because *God chose you as the firstfruits^v to be saved,* through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

^v Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

If the rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV), then this verse is pertinent to the theme of this subsection.

2Tim 1:8-9 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of *God,⁹ who saved us and called us to^w a holy calling,* not because of our works but *because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^x ...*

^w Or with

^x Greek *before times eternal*

Rev 13:8 ... and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been *written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.*

This indicates that the names that have been written in the book of life, were written before creation.

Matt 25:34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit *the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*'

This verse and 1 Corinthians 2:7 below are not necessarily meaning that individual believers themselves have been chosen for these things since creation, with the emphasis being on these things being prepared or destined since creation. However, the verses may be implying that it is the case; hence their inclusion here.

1Cor 2:7 But *we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.*

The "secret and hidden wisdom of God" is the gospel of salvation.

God's choice and call are in accordance with his purpose

See also:

▪ [2Tim 1:8-9](#)

Rom 9:10-12 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in *order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—¹²she was told, "The older will serve the younger."*

God's purpose in his election of Jacob rather than Esau would become clear in the creation of the nation of Israel (from Jacob) and God's dealings with it (cf. vv. 4-5).

Eph 1:4b-5 In love ⁵*he predestined us^y for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ...*

^y Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

Eph 1:11 *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ...*

Rom 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^z *for those who are called according to his purpose.*



^z Some manuscripts *God works all things together for good, or God works in all things for the good*

John 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also *the Son gives life to whom he will.* 

The fact that Jesus Christ “gives life to whom he will” points to the role of his will and purpose – even possibly his choice – in people receiving eternal life.

God enables people to believe

See also:

- [Acts 11:21](#) ↴
- *God gives his people faith*, p. 881
- *c) God and the Gospel's Effectiveness*, p. 1770

God and Jesus Christ enable people to respond to God’s call, by enabling them to believe and to turn to God in repentance (the latter being discussed in the following subsection).

John 6:60, 64-65 *When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”*  ... ⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” 

Verse 65 appears to refer back to vv. 60, 64. This would indicate that Jesus was meaning that the teaching of faith in him is not easy to accept (v. 60) and so people do not naturally accept or believe it (vv. 60, 64a); they do so only on the Father’s initiative (v. 65). Note that in the preceding passages (cf. vv. 25-59) Jesus had spoken in figurative terms of the need to believe in him, referring to the need to “eat” of him, the “the bread of life” (v. 35). The inability or unwillingness of many of his listeners to look beyond the figurative expressions – reflecting the need for God’s enablement (v. 65) – would have contributed to such teaching being hard to accept.

Acts 16:14-15 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. *The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.* ¹⁵And after *she was baptized*, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged *me to be faithful to the Lord*, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us. 

These verses imply that Lydia believed Paul’s message, with the Lord opening her heart to the message and her subsequent baptism; in the context, the expression “faithful to the Lord” (v. 15) also suggests this (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT,

NCV, NIV). The Lord enabled Lydia to respond to Paul’s message of the gospel in believing it and acting accordingly. Note that the reference to “God” earlier in the verse makes it likely that “Lord” is referring to Jesus Christ.

Acts 18:27b When he arrived, he greatly helped *those who through grace had believed*, ... 

For more discussion of the role of God’s grace in people responding to him (cf. [Eph 2:8](#) ↴; [Acts 1:20-23](#) ↴) see *b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ*, p. 646.

1Cor 3:5-7 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? *Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.* ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only *God who gives the growth.* 

The final clause of v. 5 is generally understood to be referring to the Lord assigning to each believer – here Apollos and Paul in particular – the work he has for them (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). However, it could be speaking of the Lord assigning belief to each of those who had believed (cf. CEV) – as per the theme of this subsection. In vv. 6-7, the references to God giving growth are quite possibly speaking of God’s pivotal role (v. 6b) in people coming to believe (v. 5b), enabling his word that has been planted in people to grow into faith. Alternatively, God’s role in the subsequent growth or maturing of believers may instead be primarily in view.

Eph 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* ... 

The “gift of God” may be referring to faith or to the whole process of salvation. If the latter is in view it would still be inclusive of faith. This and the following two references portray faith as a gift from God.

Phil 1:29 *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,* ... 

1Jn 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God*, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 

This may well be implying that people can only believe because they have first been born of God – i.e. people can only come to belief because of God’s work in them.



God enables people to come to him, in repentance

See also:

- *God chooses and calls people by his grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ – not because of works*, p. 646
- *God leads people to respond to him by his grace*, p. 647

John 6:37, 44-45 *All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ...⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—*

Verse 37 implies that it is only because God gives a person to Jesus that they can "come to" him – which is consistent with the teaching in the latter verses. Verse 45b points to the individual's part and responsibility in coming to Christ, in conjunction with the essential role of God (vv. 44-45a).

Acts 11:20-23 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^a also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²²The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ...

^a Or *Greeks* (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)

The people's belief and turning to the Lord (v. 21b) is attributed to neither how the message was presented nor the people's own initiative, but to the "the hand of the Lord" (v. 21a) – evidencing "the grace of God" (v. 23a).

Rom 2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that *God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

Arguably this suggests that God's kindness enables people to repent, without which at least some people would not.

2Tim 2:24-25 And the Lord's servant^b must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵correcting his opponents with gentleness. *God may perhaps grant them repentance* leading to a knowledge of the truth, ...

^b Greek *bondservant*

‡ **Only with God is salvation possible:**

Mark 10:24-27 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is^c to

enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him,^d "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

^c Some manuscripts add *for those who trust in riches*

^d Some manuscripts *to one another*

No one can enter God's kingdom and be saved through their own efforts – only God can accomplish this. The fact that it is God who brings about salvation is also reflected in Acts 2:47 – "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Note: God's mercy and people's destiny

Rom 9:10-24 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— ¹²she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." ¹⁴What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶So then it depends not on human will or exertion,^e but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. ¹⁹You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" ²⁰But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? ²²What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

^e Greek *not of him who wills or runs*

The basic thrust of this passage is that God has mercy on who he wants or chooses to, which he has the right to do. Thus God's purpose for people and their destiny – in this life (vv. 11-12, 17) and the next (vv. 22-23) – depends on God's mercy. In illustrating this in the case of Jacob and Esau,



“hated” (v. 13) is used in a relative sense (cf. AMP, CEV), to emphasize God’s choice of Jacob over Esau. In v. 21, the illustration of the potter and the clay is used to set forth the principle that God as the creator of people has the right to have mercy on whom he wants; this is further illustrated in vv. 22-23.

Note that commentators generally qualify the phrase “prepared for destruction” (v. 22). It is not necessarily saying that it is God who does the preparation – in contrast to those who are prepared for glory (v. 23) – although this does fit the context. Some think that Paul means that such people prepare themselves for destruction by their actions. Another possibility is that it means that such people’s lives deem them fit for destruction, for which God prepares them. Whatever the case it certainly should not be interpreted in such a way as to diminish either God’s sovereignty over people’s lives and destiny, or people’s responsibility for their own actions.

1Pet 2:7-10 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”^f and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” *They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* 

^f Greek *the head of the corner*

The term “stumble” (v. 8) quite possibly alludes to condemnation. Verse 8 speaks of those who disobey God’s gospel and are thus condemned, as being destined for this. In contrast, those who are of God have been chosen (v. 9), having received God’s mercy (v. 10).

‡ **Further reference to people being destined for condemnation:**

Jude 1:4 For *certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation*, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God’s People Belong to God

Subsections

- God’s people belong to him
- They are God’s people . . .
- . . . and God is their God
- God’s people belong to Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . The Father gives his people to Jesus Christ
- God’s people are called and identified by his name and Jesus Christ’s name

God’s people belong to him

See also:

- *God’s people have been bought by Jesus Christ’s death . . .*, p. 597

Lev 20:26 You shall be holy to me, for *I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.* 

Verses which speak of Israel belonging to God and/or being his people are readily applicable to believers.

Deut 26:18 And the LORD has declared today that *you are a people for his treasured possession*, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, ... 

Ps 100:3 Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and *we are his;*^g *we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* 

^g Or *and not we ourselves*

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

Isa 44:5 *This one will say, ‘I am the LORD’s,’ another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, ‘The LORD’s,’ and name himself by the name of Israel.* 

This may well be alluding to the conversion of people from among the Gentiles. The clause “another will call on the name of Jacob” appears to speak of aligning oneself with Israel, as per the final clause. These two clauses are indicative of becoming God’s people – as clearly are the other parts of the verse.



John 17:9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for *they are yours*.

Acts 27:23 For this very night there stood before me an angel of the *God to whom I belong* and whom I worship, ...

Eph 1:14 ... who is the guarantee^h of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,ⁱ to the praise of his glory.

^h Or *down payment*

ⁱ Or *until God redeems his possession*

Most other modern translations support the alternative rendering in the ESV text note, which refers to God's people as "his possession".

Col 3:12 Put on then, as *God's chosen ones*, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ...

1Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, *a people for his own possession*, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

They are God's people . . .

See also:

- [1Pet 2:9](#) ↑
- [Jer 31:33](#) ↓; [Zec 8:8](#) ↓
- . . . *If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God*, p. 333
- *The people of Israel will be God's people and he will be their God*, p. 1007

Heb 4:9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for *the people of God*, ...

1Pet 2:10 Once you were not a people, but now *you are God's people*; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Here and in Romans 9:25-26 immediately below, Paul refers to passages from Hosea to show how God has now taken people from among the Gentiles to make them also his people, bringing them into a covenant relationship with him.

Rom 9:25-26 As indeed he says in Hosea, "*Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'*"²⁶ "*And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'*"

Ex 6:7 *I will take you to be my people*, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Here God promises to make Israel his own people, the fulfillment of which is attested to in the following verses.

Deut 27:9 Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, "Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day *you have become the people of the LORD your God*."

1Ki 8:43 ... hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do *your people Israel*, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

Isa 51:16 And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing^j the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and *saying to Zion, 'You are my people.'*

^j Or *planting*

Isa 63:8 For he said, "*Surely they are my people*, children who will not deal falsely." And he became their Savior.

2Ki 11:17 And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people, *that they should be the LORD's people*, and also between the king and the people.

Here Jehoiada the priest in effect renews the Mosaic covenant between God and the people (and the king), signifying their commitment to be faithful to God as his people.

. . . and God is their God

See also:

- [Ex 6:7](#) ↑
- . . . *If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God*, p. 333
- *The people of Israel will be God's people and he will be their God*, p. 1007



Num 15:41 *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD your God.* 📖

Deut 29:5-6 I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet. ⁶You have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink, *that you may know that I am the LORD your God.* 📖

God showed himself to be the LORD their God by his miraculous preservation of the Israelites in their forty-year desert journey, bereft of many of life's basics.

Ps 50:7b *I am God, your God.* 📖

Isa 40:9 Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news;^k lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news;^l lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "*Behold your God!*" 📖

^k Or *O herald of good news to Zion*

^l Or *O herald of good news to Jerusalem*

Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And *I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* 📖

Zec 8:8 ... and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and *I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.* 📖

Heb 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore *God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.* 📖

Ex 15:2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; *this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.* 📖

2Chr 13:10a *But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him.* 📖

Ps 31:14 But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "*You are my God.*" 📖

Ps 22:10 On you was I cast from my birth, and *from my mother's womb you have been my God.* 📖

Ps 48:14 ... that *this is God, our God forever and ever.* He will guide us forever.^m 📖

^mSeptuagint; another reading is (compare Jerome, Syriac) *He will guide us beyond death*

✦ **Blessed are those whose God is the LORD:**

Ps 144:15 Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! *Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!* 📖

Similarly Psalms 33:12a says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD ..."

God's people belong to Jesus Christ . . .

Mark 9:41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because *you belong to Christ* will by no means lose his reward. 📖

Rom 1:6 ... including *you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ...* 📖

Rom 7:4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so *that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.* 📖

Rom 14:8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, *whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.* 📖

2Cor 10:7 Look at what is before your eyes. *If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.* 📖

1Cor 3:23 ... and *you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* 📖

Note that most other modern translations render the clause in question as "you belong to Christ".

Titus 2:14 ... who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself *a people for his own possession* who are zealous for good works. 📖

. . . The Father gives his people to Jesus Christ

One could infer from this subsection that God's people belong to Jesus Christ (as per the previous subsection) in part at least due to God giving his people to Jesus Christ.

John 6:37-39 *All that the Father gives me* will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of *all that he has given me*, but raise it up on the last day. 📖



As reflected in v. 37, "all that he has given me" (v. 39) refers – primarily at least – to all those people whom God has given to Jesus (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

John 10:29 *My Father, who has given them to me,ⁿ is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.* 📖

ⁿ Some manuscripts *What my Father has given to me*

John 17:1-2, 6, 9, 24 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to *all whom you have given him.* 📖 ... ⁶"I have manifested your name to *the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me,* and they have kept your word. 📖 ... ⁹I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for *those whom you have given me, for they are yours.* 📖 ... ²⁴Father, I desire that *they also, whom you have given me,* may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 📖

Jesus Christ is the speaker throughout this passage, including in vv. 1-2 where he speaks of himself in the third person. Note that in v. 9 Jesus makes the point that those whom God has given him are still in a real sense God's.

Heb 2:13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and *the children God has given me.*" 📖

Here OT passages are applied to Christ.

✦ Jesus Christ makes them his own:

Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because *Christ Jesus has made me his own.* 📖

God's people are called and identified by his name and Jesus Christ's name

See also:

- *God's people will have God's and Jesus Christ's names written on them,* p. 746
- *c) God's People Are His Family,* p. 769

Verses which refer to being called (i.e. named or identified) by God's name may simply be speaking of being called "God's" – or "the LORD'S" (cf. *Isa 4:5* ↓) – or "God's people".

Being called by God's name identifies God's people as his, showing their unique relationship with him and is reflective

of them being part of his family (cf. *c) God's People Are His Family,* p. 769). Possibly it also indicates that they uniquely reflect characteristics of God. See also the comment below on Numbers 6:22-27.

Deut 28:10 *And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.* 📖

2Chr 7:14 ... if *my people who are called by my name* humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 📖

Isa 43:6-7 I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; *bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth,* ⁷*everyone who is called by my name,* whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. 📖

Isa 44:5 This one will say, 'I am the LORD'S,' another will call on the name of Jacob, and *another will write on his hand, 'The LORD'S,'* and name himself by the name of Israel. 📖

Writing "The LORD'S" on one's hand appears to be in imitation of the practice of a master's mark being branded on a slave's hand. Being identified as such by God's name underlines the fact that one belongs to him.

James 2:7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme *the honorable name by which you were called?* 📖

The "name by which you were called" appears to refer to Jesus Christ's name being invoked over them (cf. NRSV), typically in baptism (cf. AMP). As such believers bear Christ's name (cf. GNT, NLT)

Rev 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and *with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.* 📖

Rev 22:4 They will see his face, and *his name will be on their foreheads.* 📖

✦ **With the Aaronic blessing, the priests "put" God's name on the Israelites:**

Num 6:22-27 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, ²⁴The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶the LORD lift up his countenance^o upon you and give you peace. ²⁷*So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel,* and I will bless them." 📖

^o Or face



Here the placing of God's name on the Israelites (v. 27) appears to designate them as God's people (cf. NLT), showing that they were identified with him, belonged to him and were in a close relationship with him. However there is a different interpretation. Instead of speaking of putting God's name on the people, v. 27 may be referring to invoking God's name on the people (cf. NASB). As such – bearing in mind that a person's name was often used to signify the person themselves – the meaning may simply be that in so blessing the people (vv. 23-26), the priests would invoke God's presence accompanied by his blessing on the people.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God's People Are His Family

See also:

- *God's people are called and identified by his name and Jesus Christ's name*, p. 768

Subsections

- Each believer belongs to the household of God
- God is their Father
- God's people are his children
- As God's children, they are heirs of God
- God's people are Jesus Christ's brothers and sisters
- God's people are brothers and sisters of each other
- Some of God's people have parent-child relationships

Each believer belongs to the household of God

See also:

- *The church is God's temple or house, in which God dwells by his Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 775

John 8:34-36 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave^p to sin. ³⁵*The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.* ³⁶*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.* ☞

^p Greek *bondservant*; also verse 35

Jesus implies that those he – "the Son" (v. 36) – sets free from being slaves to sin become members of God's "house" or household – a "son" (v. 35) – forever.

Gal 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to *those who are of the household of faith.* ☞

The term "household of faith" is akin to "God's family" (AMP).

Eph 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,^q but *you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ...* ☞

^q Or *sojourners*

Note that similar to being "members of the household of God" or family, God's people are "citizens" of God's kingdom.

1Tim 3:15 ... if I delay, *you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.* ☞

Heb 3:6 ... but *Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house* if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.^r ☞

^r Some manuscripts insert *firm to the end*

1Pet 4:17 For it is time for judgment *to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us*, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ☞

Note that Peter is referring to persecution that believers experience (cf. v. 16) as a form of disciplinary or purifying judgment.

God is their Father

See also:

- **Matt 5:45** ↓; **Rom 8:15** ↓; **Gal 4:6** ↓; **2Cor 6:18** ↓

As creator, God is the father of all people (cf. *God is the Father of all things, notably of all people*, p. 216). But he is also the Father of Christians in a spiritual, more personal sense (cf. *God's people are spiritually reborn of God . . .*, p. 857).

Matt 6:8-9 Do not be like them, for *your Father* knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this: "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*"^s ☞

^s Or *Let your name be kept holy*, or *Let your name be treated with reverence*

Matt 6:26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet *your heavenly Father* feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ☞



Matt 13:43 Then *the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. He who has ears, let him hear.

Matt 23:9 And call no man your father on earth, for *you have one Father, who is in heaven*.

Note that the instruction to not call anyone “father” is part of an exhortation against the seeking of titles of authority and status (cf. vv. 8-12).

John 20:17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘*I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*’”

Gal 1:4 ... who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of *our God and Father*, ...

Rom 1:7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from *God our Father* and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The phrase “God our Father” occurs eleven times in the ESV, nine of them in the clause “Grace to you and peace from God our Father”. Similarly the phrase “our God and Father” (cf. **Gal 1:4** ↑) occurs five times.

Heb 12:9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to *the Father of spirits* and live?

The expression “the Father of spirits” is generally understood to be speaking of God as “our spiritual Father” (CEV, GNT), pointing to him as the one who gives us spiritual life.

Deut 32:6b, 18 *Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?* ... ¹⁸You were unmindful of *the Rock that bore^t you*, and you forgot *the God who gave you birth*.

^t Or *fathered*

This is speaking primarily of God fathering Israel as a nation, but it is applicable to him being the spiritual father of each of his people. A similar comment could be made regarding the following references from Isaiah, though arguably they more likely also have in view God's role as the spiritual Father of his people, particularly 64:8.

Isa 63:16 For *you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father*, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

Even if their human fathers – or ancestors – would disown them, God would still remain their Father (cf. NLT).

Isa 64:8 But now, *O LORD, you are our Father*; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Heb 2:11 For *he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.*^u That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,^v ...

^u Greek *all are of one*

^v Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verse 12

This refers to the fact that God's people – and Jesus Christ – “have the same Father” (GNT, NLT; cf. AMP, NASB, NRSV).

✦ God's fatherly nurturing and care of Israel:

Hos 11:1, 3-4 *When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.* ... ³Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. ⁴I led them with cords of kindness,^w with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

^w Or *humaneness*; Hebrew *man*

God's people are his children

See also:

- *God's people are spiritually reborn of God* . . . , p. 857
- *God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves*, p. 875
- . . . and imitate God, as children of God, p. 1194

Deut 14:1 *You are the sons of the LORD your God*. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead.

Isa 43:6 I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; *bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth*, ...

Isa 63:8 For he said, “*Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely.*” And he became their Savior.

Matt 5:44-45 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so *that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven*. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.



Luke 6:35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and *you will be sons of the Most High*, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 📖

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, *he gave the right to become children of God*, ¹³*who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*. 📖

Those who accept Jesus Christ and believe in him (v. 12a) are enabled to become God's children (v. 12b) – born of God (v. 13) into spiritual life.

Rom 8:14-16 For *all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons^x of God*. ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but *you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"* ¹⁶*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*, ... 📖

^x See discussion on "sons" in the Preface

This passage – particularly vv. 14, 15b – associate being God's children with having God's Spirit (cf. [Gal 4:6 ↓](#)), "the Spirit of adoption as sons" (v. 15b). As such they suggest even imply that believers are God's children because they have his Spirit – somewhat akin to having a key hereditary "trait" from God, distinguishing one as being God's offspring.

Gal 4:4-6 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so *that we might receive adoption as sons*. ⁶*And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"* 📖

Verse 6 implies that as the Spirit who calls out "Father" is in the hearts of believers, they participate in calling on God as "Father" (cf. [Rom 8:15b ↑](#)) – reflecting that they are God's children.

Rom 9:26 "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there *they will be called 'sons of the living God.'*" 📖

2Cor 6:18 ... and I will be a father to you, and *you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty*. 📖

Eph 1:5 ... *he predestined us^y for adoption as sons* through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ... 📖

^y Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

Eph 5:1 Therefore *be imitators of God, as beloved children*. 📖

1Jn 3:1a See what kind of love the Father has given to us, *that we should be called children of God; and so we are*. 📖

1Jn 5:18-19 We know that *everyone who has been born of God* does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. ¹⁹*We know that we are from God*, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 📖

In saying that Christians are "from God" (v. 19a), John appears to be referring to them being "born of God" (v. 18a), reborn spiritually of him.

Luke 20:36 ... for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and *are sons of God, being sons^z of the resurrection*. 📖

^z Greek *huioi*; see Preface

Particularly given the context (cf. vv. 27-38), this most likely is meaning that after being raised to life by God at the resurrection believers "will be God's children" (CEV), with him having given them life. But note that the present tense may mean that it also alludes to the present status of believers as "God's children" – in view of the fact that God will give them life at the resurrection.

‡ **The adoption of believers will be consummated at the end of the age:**

Rom 8:19, 23 For *the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God*. 📖 ... ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as *we wait eagerly for adoption as sons*, the redemption of our bodies. 📖

As God's children, they are heirs of God

See also:

▪ ... *and God's people will inherit the kingdom*, p. 739

Rom 8:17 ... and *if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. 📖

Gal 4:7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and *if a son, then an heir through God*. 📖

Eph 1:11 *In him we have obtained an inheritance*, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ... 📖



Eph 3:6 This mystery is^a that *the Gentiles are fellow heirs*, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 

^a The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

This speaks of Gentile believers sharing in “the riches inherited by God’s children” (NLT), in Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:7 ...so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 

Rev 21:7 *The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.* 

As a child of God – “he will be my son” – each believer who overcomes will “have this heritage”. This appears to refer to inheriting all the blessings of the new Jerusalem in the afterlife.

Gal 3:26, 29 ...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.  ... ²⁹And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise. 

In v. 29 “heirs” speaks primarily of being heirs of Abraham (cf. Heb 6:13-20 – “the heirs of the promise”, v. 17) rather than of God. But in view of the prior reference to “sons of God” in v. 26 – coupled with what is said about Jesus Christ in both verses – one could argue that it may also in part allude to the latter.

God’s people are Jesus Christ’s brothers and sisters

Matt 12:49-50 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” 

John 20:17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” 

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 

Heb 2:11-12 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.^b That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,^c ¹²saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” 

^b Greek *all are of one*

^c Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verse 12

Heb 2:17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 

God’s people are brothers and sisters of each other

See also:

▪ *Love each other as brothers (and sisters)*, p. 1318

Matt 23:8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.^d 

^d Or *brothers and sisters*

Rom 16:1 I commend to you *our sister Phoebe*, a servant^e of the church at Cenchreae, ... 

^e Or *deaconess*

Eph 6:21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, *Tychicus the beloved brother* and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. 

1Thes 3:2 ... and we sent *Timothy, our brother* and God’s coworker^f in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ... 

^f Some manuscripts *servant*

Philem 1:2 ... and *Apphia our sister* and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ... 

Philem 1:15-16 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶no longer as a slave^g but more than a slave, *as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.* 

^g Greek *bondservant*; twice in this verse

1Pet 2:17 Honor everyone. Love *the brotherhood*. Fear God. Honor the emperor. 

The “brotherhood” of believers is composed of “the brothers and sisters of God’s family” (NCV™).



1Pet 5:12 By *Silvanus*, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

2Jn 1:13 The children of *your elect sister* greet you.

The “sister” of John’s readers was elected or chosen by God as such, a “sister” in God’s family.

Some of God’s people have parent-child relationships

1Cor 4:14 I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.

Gal 4:19 ... my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

The term “my little children” (cf. **1Cor 4:14** ↑) alludes to Paul’s role in the Galatians coming to Christ. Paul appears to speak of having again to go through such “pains of childbirth” following their waywardness so as to lead them back, to a greater maturity.

1Thes 2:7, 11-12 But we were gentle^h among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. ... ¹¹For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹²we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

^h Some manuscripts *infants*

Note that here and in Philippians 2:22 below, Paul is not actually calling his readers his children, but the similes involving parent-child terminology suggest this.

Phil 2:22 But you know Timothy’sⁱ proven worth, how as a son^j with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

ⁱ Greek *his*

^j Greek *child*

Titus 1:4 To *Titus*, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

In 1 Timothy 1:2 Paul similarly addresses Timothy as “my true child in the faith”.

Philem 1:10 I appeal to you for my child, *Onesimus*,^k whose father I became in my imprisonment.

^k *Onesimus* means *useful* (see verse 11) or *beneficial* (see verse 20)

1Jn 2:1, 12-13 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have

an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ... ¹²I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake. ¹³I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

“My little children” (v. 1a) is quite possibly a reference to John’s readers being his spiritual children, and so implies that the latter uses of “children” have the same sense. This then suggests that “fathers” is being used to allude to spiritual parents or elders. However “fathers”, “young men” (v. 13a) and “children” may simply denote various stages of spiritual maturity or possibly chronological age groupings – or even just be emphasizing that John is referring to all of his readers.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God’s People Are His Church

See also:

- *c) God’s People Are One Body ‘in’ Jesus Christ*, p. 788
- *a) The Church as One Body*, p. 1296

The term “church” denotes an assembly or body of believers that belong to God. Additionally it can be used more generally of God’s people as a whole – the worldwide church.

Subsections

- God’s people form his and Jesus Christ’s church
- Jesus Christ is the church’s Lord and ruler
- The church is God’s temple or house, in which God dwells by his Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . As such, God’s people meet together in his presence
- Being God’s, the church is holy



God's people form his and Jesus Christ's church

See also:

- ... *The church is in fact the body of Christ*, p. 789

The following verses contain references to groups of believers as God's and/or Jesus Christ's church. References are made both to local churches and to the worldwide church.

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for *the church of God*,¹ which he obtained with his own blood.^m 

¹ Some manuscripts *of the Lord*

^m Or *with the blood of his Own*

God's "own blood" refers to that of his own Son, which thus in a sense is his own. Church members have been bought or redeemed by God with "his own blood" and so they belong to him as his church – "the church of God". But also note the rendering in the text note, with the alternative use of "Lord" suggesting that Jesus Christ is in view.

1Cor 1:2 To *the church of God that is in Corinth*, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ... 

1Cor 11:16 If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do *the churches of God*. 

1Cor 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted *the church of God*. 

1Tim 3:15 ... if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in *the household of God, which is the church of the living God*, a pillar and buttress of the truth. 

1Thes 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To *the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*: Grace to you and peace. 

This reflects the fact that the church in Thessalonica comprised "the people of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (CEV).

Matt 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rockⁿ I will build my church, and the gates of hell^o shall not prevail against it. 

ⁿ The Greek words for *Peter* and *rock* sound similar

^o Greek *the gates of Hades*

Rom 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All *the churches of Christ* greet you. 

Eph 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.^p 

^p Or *holy and blameless*

The clause "that he might present the church to himself" points to the fact that the church belongs to Jesus Christ (cf. CEV, NCV) – and so that God's people are Jesus Christ's church.

Jesus Christ is the church's Lord and ruler

See also:

- *Jesus Christ is the head of the church body*, p. 792
- *Jesus Christ is portrayed as the husband of the church*, p. 792
- ... *Jesus Christ is a shepherd to his people*, p. 950

John 13:13-14 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 

Here Jesus refers to himself as his disciples' "Lord" – which is indicative of the fact that he is the church's Lord.

Eph 5:24 Now as *the church submits to Christ*, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 

Heb 3:6 ... but *Christ is faithful over God's house* as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.^q 

^q Some manuscripts insert *firm to the end*

This speaks of Jesus Christ being "in charge" (CEV, GNT, NLT) of God's house or church – i.e. its ruler.

Heb 13:20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead *our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep*, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ... 

References to Jesus Christ being the "shepherd" (cf. **1Pet 2:25** ↓; **1Pet 5:4** ↓) of God's people are indicative of him being their Lord and ruler.

1Pet 2:25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to *the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls*. 



1Pet 5:4 And when *the chief Shepherd* appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Rev 1:12-13, 16, 20; 2:1-3 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and *in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man*, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ... ¹⁶*In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword*, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. ... ²⁰*As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.* ^{2:1}*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. ²‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.*

The vision showing Jesus Christ as the one who holds the “angels” of the churches (vv. 16, 20; 2:1) and who “walks among” the churches (2:1; cf. 1:13), portrays him as the ruler of the churches. The “sharp two-edged sword” (v. 16) alludes to his power to execute judgment, one aspect of his rule. His role as ruler is further illustrated by his subsequent rebukes and exhortations to the churches (cf. chs 2-3), extracts of which follow below. The Ephesian church’s endurance for Jesus Christ’s sake (2:3; cf. [Rev 3:8](#) ↓) reflects its allegiance to him as Lord.

Rev 2:5, 16, 20-23 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; *repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.* ... ¹⁶*Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.* ... ²⁰*But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants^r to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²²Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.*

^r Greek *bondservants*

Jesus Christ’s authority over the church is underlined here – and in Revelation 3:3, 19 below – with him not only rebuking wayward churches but speaking of executing judgment on unrepentant ones.

Rev 3:3, 19 Remember, then, what you received and heard. *Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.* ... ¹⁹*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*

Rev 3:7-8 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: *‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.’* ⁸*“I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*

As the one who “has the key of David”, Jesus Christ has sole authority over entry into the kingdom of God and so also the church.

† Jesus Christ is pre-eminent among God’s people:

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of *his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

The term “firstborn” is indicative of Jesus Christ’s pre-eminence among God’s people. It also may allude to the fact that he is “the firstborn of the dead” (Rev 1:5).

The church is God’s temple or house, in which God dwells by his Holy Spirit . . .

See also:

- [Each believer belongs to the household of God](#), p. 769

The church is in effect God’s temple or house, in which God dwells by his Holy Spirit. This is true of the universal church and also individual churches, with each church’s members together in effect forming a spiritual building.

1Cor 3:16-17 Do you not know that *you^s are God’s temple* and that *God’s Spirit dwells in you?* ¹⁷*If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.*

^s The Greek for *you* is plural in verses 16 and 17

Here “you” refers to the Corinthian church. God’s Spirit lives in and plays a role in the corporate life of each church. Note that later in 6:19a Paul refers to each individual believer as a temple of the Holy Spirit – “Or do you not know that your



body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"

2Cor 6:16 What agreement has *the temple of God* with idols? For *we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* [E]

Eph 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,^t but *you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*²⁰ *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*²¹ *in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.*²² *In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^u the Spirit.* [E]

^t Or sojourners

^u Or in

As perhaps is suggested by the alternative rendering in the text note, quite possibly v. 22 speaks of the church being a dwelling place "where God lives by his Spirit" (NLT; cf. GNT, NCV, NIV). Note that in vv. 19-21 the universal church appears to be in view. This may also be the case in v. 22, although there Paul may be turning the focus to the Ephesian church in particular.

1Tim 3:15 ... if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in *the household of God, which is the church of the living God,* a pillar and buttress of the truth. [E]

The phrase "the church of the living God" arguably points to God's presence amidst his church (cf. ESB).

Heb 3:6 ... but Christ is faithful over *God's house* as a son. And *we are his house* if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.^v [E]

^v Some manuscripts insert *firm to the end*

Heb 10:21 ... and since we have a great priest over *the house of God,* ... [E]

1Pet 2:5 ... *you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God* through Jesus Christ. [E]

The church is a "spiritual house" – in effect a "spiritual temple" (GNT, NCV, NLT), a term which correlates well with the subsequent description here of church members as "a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God".

1Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers. *You are God's field, God's building.* [E]

Similar to the terms "God's temple" and "God's house", the church is also referred to as "God's building".

1Cor 14:24-25 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all,²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that *God is really among you.* [E]

One can infer from this that the exercising of spiritual gifts in the church (v. 24a) is evidence of the Holy Spirit, indicating that God is present in the church (v. 25b).

Isa 63:11b Where is *he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit,* ... [E]

Although referring to Israel and the Jews rather than the church, this verse and Haggai 2:5b below have been included as further verification that the Holy Spirit is present amongst God's people as a whole – indicative of God's presence – as well as individually (cf. *a) God's Holy Spirit in His People*, p. 831).

Hag 2:5b *My Spirit remains in your midst.* Fear not. [E]

... As such, God's people meet together in his presence

That God's people meet together in his presence reflects the fact that the church is God's temple or house, in which God dwells.

Acts 10:33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. *Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.* [E]

Deut 31:11 ... when *all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God* at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. [E]

The requirement for Israel to meet or come together before God (cf. **Deut 12:18** ↓) is applicable to the life of the church.

Deut 12:7, 18 And *there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households,* in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you. [E] ...¹⁸ *but you shall eat them before the LORD your God* in the place that the LORD your God will choose, *you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your towns. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God* in all that you undertake. [E]



This is speaking of the people being gathered together in the presence of God, celebrating and rejoicing over everything that they had done or worked for (cf. GNT, NCV).

✦ **When believers meet together in his name, Jesus Christ is with them:**

Matt 18:20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. 📖

Being God's, the church is holy

Things belonging to God characteristically are holy (cf. *Things of God are likewise holy*, p. 57). The fact that the church is holy is indicative of it belonging to God. Moreover, it is essential that the church be holy for God in his holiness to dwell in it.

Eph 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*^w 📖

^w Or *holy and blameless*

1Cor 1:2 *To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ...* 📖

The terms “sanctified” and “saints” both speak of being holy, with the latter basically meaning “holy people” (GNT, NCV, NLT).

1Cor 3:17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For *God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* 📖

Eph 2:21 ... in whom the whole structure, being joined together, *grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* 📖

1Pet 2:4-5, 9 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵*you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* 📖 ... ⁹*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* 📖

This speaks of the church as the holy people of God.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ

See also:

- *d) Epilogue: Living 'in' Jesus Christ*, p. 1078

Arguably the most fundamental change in the standing of God's people in relationship to him that followed what Jesus Christ accomplished, is that they are now "in" Jesus Christ. Being "in" Jesus Christ involves the association or correlation of believers with Jesus Christ, by which God views them in association with his Son.

Due to this connection with Jesus Christ, they participate with him in such things as: his victory over sin and death; his life; and other blessings he has secured. As such it has great significance in the relationship of believers to God – and of their relationship to Jesus Christ.

Note that expressions like "in Jesus Christ" sometimes have other meanings, such as "through Jesus Christ". While the great majority of verses in this section quite probably use such expressions to speak of believers being "in" Jesus Christ, in some instances the meaning is debatable.

a) God's People Are 'in' Jesus Christ

Subsections

- God's people are "in" Jesus Christ
- God's people are "in" Jesus Christ because of what God has done
- Jesus Christ identifies himself with God's people
- God's people live with Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . and Jesus Christ is in his people

God's people are "in" Jesus Christ

See also:

- *God's people are baptized in the "name" of Jesus Christ*, p. 1438
- *Baptism into Jesus Christ signifies being united with him – with the corresponding implications*, p. 1439

John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 

Rom 14:14 *I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.* 

Gal 3:27-28 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^a nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 

^a Greek *bondservant*

The expression "have put on Christ" (v. 27), in line with the preceding clause, quite possibly is speaking of immersing oneself in one's union with Christ. As such it refers to surrounding oneself with Christ, acting in line with his purposes and for his glory, and in reliance on him. Alternatively, it may be referring to taking on or adopting Christ's character, and so following his example.

Eph 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful^b in Christ Jesus: ... 

^b Some manuscripts *saints who are also faithful* (omitting in Ephesus)

Col 1:28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present *everyone mature in Christ.* 

Phil 3:8-9 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and *be found in him*, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 

1Thes 2:14a For you, brothers, became imitators of *the churches of God in Christ Jesus* that are in Judea. 

1Thes 4:16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And *the dead in Christ* will rise first. 

Philem 1:15-16 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶no longer as a slave^c but more than a slave, *as a beloved brother*—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and *in the Lord.* 

^c Greek *bondservant*; twice in this verse



Philem 1:23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ... 

1Pet 5:14 Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. 

✦ Believers are joined with Christ, as one spirit with him:

1Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 

God's people are "in" Jesus Christ because of what God has done

1Cor 1:30 And because of him^d you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ... 

^d Greek *And from him*

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. 

Eph 1:4a ... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. 

This is saying that God chose us "to be his through our union with Christ" (GNT). As such it points to believers being in Jesus Christ because of what God has done.

2Cor 1:21 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ... 

Note that this appears to refer to God's part in the believer's ongoing status in Christ as much as their initial inclusion in Christ.

✦ God calls believers into the fellowship of Jesus Christ:

1Cor 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 

The expression "the fellowship of his Son" would appear to involve fellowship with Jesus Christ (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NIV, NLT), as well as with other Christians.

Jesus Christ identifies himself with God's people

See also:

- *"In" Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .*, p. 783
- *. . . This identification also has other implications – present and future*, p. 784
- *Note: What one does for another Christian, one does for Jesus Christ*, p. 1339

Jesus' statements below identifying himself with God's people arguably reflect their union with him.

Matt 18:5 Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ... 

With his use of the phrase "one such child", Jesus is often understood to be referring primarily to his followers, who should humble themselves like little children (cf. vv. 3-4).

Matt 25:35-40 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,^e you did it to me.' 

^e Or *brothers and sisters*

The King in this parable represents Jesus Christ himself. Commentators generally interpret "these my brothers" to be referring to Christians. It has also been interpreted to refer to the poor in general and even to the Jews.

Acts 22:4-8 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ⁵as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. ⁶"As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. ⁷And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' ⁸And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' 



Persecution of Jesus Christ's followers amounts to persecution of him.

Matt 10:40 *Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.* 

Here and in the following two verses listed (John 13:20; Luke 10:16) Jesus primarily has in view believers spreading his message, meaning that people's response to them and their message about him is effectively the people's response to him. As such in these verses Jesus is perhaps not as explicitly identifying himself with God's people in a general sense.

John 13:20 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.* 

Luke 10:16 *"The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."* 

God's people live with Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- *a) God Is Always with His People*, p. 802

2Cor 13:4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you *we will live with him by the power of God.* 

Rom 6:8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that *we will also live with him.* 

Note that here "live with him" is probably referring to the new spiritual life that Christians share in Christ now.

1Thes 5:10 ... who died for us so that *whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.* 

John 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him.*" 

. . . and Jesus Christ is in his people

See also:

- [John 14:23](#) 
- *God and Jesus Christ in fact live in their people . . .*, p. 807

John 6:56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and *I in him.* 

The "eating" of Jesus' "flesh" and "drinking" of his "blood" is metaphorical language alluding to dependence on Jesus' death. Jesus appears to teach that the result of such dependence is a reciprocal indwelling of a believer with him. He is at least referring to a very close spiritual association.

John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and *I in you.* 

John 15:4 Abide in me, and *I in you.* As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 

John 17:23, 26 *I in them* and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.  ... ²⁶I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and *I in them.* 

2Cor 13:5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that *Jesus Christ is in you?*—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! 

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but *Christ who lives in me.* And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 

Jesus Christ lives in believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Col 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory. 

The phrase "Christ in you" denotes the personal experience of Jesus Christ dwelling within one, as indicated by the rendering "Christ lives in you" (CEV, NLT; cf. ZBC).

Col 3:11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,^f free; but *Christ is all, and in all.* 

^f Greek *bondservant*

With the final clause, Paul appears to have primarily in view Jesus Christ being in all believers (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT).

2Jn 1:9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. *Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.* 



This indicates that in a sense both God and Jesus Christ are in believers (cf. 1Jn 5:20). This is understood to be a reality through the Holy Spirit's presence in believers.

Rom 8:9-10 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, *if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* ¹⁰*But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* 

As per the above comments on Galatians 2:20a and 2 John 1:9, this and Ephesians 3:16-17a below link the Holy Spirit living in a person with Jesus Christ living in them.

Eph 3:16-17 ... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through *his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ... 

✦ **Paul gave up all else to “gain Christ and be found in him”:**

Phil 3:7-9 *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him,* not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 

Particularly with the subsequent reference to being found in Christ (v. 9a), the term “gain Christ” (v. 8b) may well be speaking of Christ indwelling believers in a spiritual sense, as per the theme of this subsection. Note that Paul's use of “gain” here may well allude to his earlier use of “gain” in v. 7, to contrast his “gain” of Christ with what he no longer considered as gain.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Significance of Being 'in' Jesus Christ

Generally speaking at least, the spiritual standing and blessings that Christians have are based on them being “in” Jesus Christ, by which they are associated and even identified with him. As referred to earlier, this means that they are granted by God the standing and blessings that Jesus Christ has attained on behalf of those so associated with him.

Note that not all of the verses in the following subsections specifically refer to being in Jesus Christ, but they do at least speak of associated concepts.

Subsections

- “In” Jesus Christ God's people are saved
- “In” Jesus Christ they have righteousness and are redeemed
- “In” Jesus Christ God's people are sanctified
- “In” Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .
- . . . This identification also has other implications – present and future
- “In” Jesus Christ God's people are given God's grace
- “In” Jesus Christ God's people have peace and other spiritual “fruits”
- “In” Jesus Christ God's people have eternal life
- “In” Jesus Christ they will have glory and other blessings in the afterlife
- Further blessings of being “in” Jesus Christ

“In” Jesus Christ God's people are saved

See also:

- “In” Jesus Christ God's people have eternal life, p. 786

2Tim 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that *they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.* 

This may be meaning that salvation comes to those who are “in” or “belong to” (CEV) Jesus Christ – hence its inclusion here. However it could simply be referring to salvation coming through Jesus Christ (cf. GNT).

Eph 2:4-5 But⁸ God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, *made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—* 



§ Or *And*

This indicates that we “have been saved” (v. 5b) through God having “made us alive together with Christ” (v. 5a) – i.e. God has made us alive in our relationship with Christ, or “in” Christ.

Gal 3:16, 29 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.  ... ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. 

The reference to being Christ's (v. 29) can be linked with being “in” Christ. Due to this association with Christ, believers are Abraham's “offspring” and so are heirs “according to” and/or of the “promise” (v. 29) – or “promises” (v. 16) – made to Abraham and his offspring. The promise or promises referred to are not specified, but most likely matters associated with salvation are in view – quite possibly justification by faith (cf. vv. 6-9, v. 24), or the promise of receiving the Spirit by faith (cf. v. 14). Even various or all of the promises made to Abraham (v. 16, cf. v. 21) may be in view.

Eph 3:6 This mystery is^h that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and *partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus* through the gospel. 

^h The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

Similar to Galatians 3:16, 29 above, what the “promise” refers to is not specified but most likely relates to an aspect of salvation in the saving work of the Messiah. As such this also points to the fact that in Jesus Christ believers are saved.

‡ In Jesus Christ, those who were far off have been “brought near”:

Eph 2:12-13 ...remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 

In v. 13 “brought near” may be talking of being brought near to God (cf. v. 12) – as a number of other translations stipulate or imply – alluding to reconciliation with God. Alternatively it may be referring to being brought near to Israel and “the covenants of the promise” (v. 13). Both possibilities are associated with salvation, which is obtained in Jesus Christ as v. 13 implies.

“In” Jesus Christ they have righteousness and are redeemed

1Cor 1:30 And because of himⁱ you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ... 

ⁱ Greek *And from him*

This suggests that by being in Jesus Christ believers are afforded “righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, *the Spirit is life because of righteousness*. 

This associates union with Jesus Christ with righteousness – as well as having the Holy Spirit and spiritual life.

2Cor 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 

Phil 3:8-9 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 

Paul is saying that righteousness comes through faith, but in conjunction with this he links righteousness with being in Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ... 

Col 1:13-14 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 

“In” Jesus Christ God's people are sanctified

See also:

- [1Cor 1:30](#) ↑
- [Rom 6:2b-11](#) ↓; [Col 2:11-14](#) ↓; [Rom 8:1-2](#) ↓

As reflected in the above cross references, note that aspects of the following subsection also pertain to this one.



1Cor 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to *those sanctified in Christ Jesus*, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ...

Eph 1:4a ... even as *he chose us in him* before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy and blameless before him*.

This suggests that it is through being in Christ that God's people are holy and blameless.

1Jn 3:6 *No one who abides in him keeps on sinning*; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

One who lives in Christ does not keep on or persistently go on sinning. As one's relationship with Christ deepens, the hold of sin on them diminishes. This speaks of sanctification in the ongoing sense.

Eph 5:8 ... for *at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord*. Walk as children of light ...

Christians no longer live in the "darkness" of sin but now, in the Lord, they are "light". As such this points to their sanctification.

‡ "In" Jesus Christ God's people become a new creation:

2Cor 5:17 Therefore, *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*.^j The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

^j Or *creature*

"In" Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .

See also:

- *Jesus Christ identifies himself with God's people*, p. 779
- *In union with Jesus Christ, their sinful selves have "died" and they are now spiritually alive*, p. 855
- *Baptism into Jesus Christ signifies being united with him – with the corresponding implications*, p. 1439

Rom 6:2b-11 *How can we who died to sin still live in it?* ³*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* ⁵*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him*

in a resurrection like his. ⁶*We know that our old self^k was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* ⁷*For one who has died has been set free^l from sin.* ⁸*Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.* ⁹*We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.* ¹⁰*For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.* ¹¹*So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

^k Greek *man*

^l Greek *has been justified*

Being "baptized into Christ" (v. 3) signifies the union of the believer with Christ. In v. 5, the phrases "a death like his" and "a resurrection like his" appear to refer to "the likeness of His death" and "the likeness of His resurrection" (NASB), which perhaps more closely associate the believer's death to sin and spiritual resurrection with those of Christ, as per the context. Verse 10a appears to be indicating that because Christ died, sin now "has no power over him" (GNT; cf. v. 10b) – meaning that those who are "in Christ" have also died to sin (v. 11), sin thus losing its stranglehold on them. One implication of this is that Christ has defeated the power of sin (cf. NCV, NLT).

Col 2:11-14 *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,* ¹²*having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* ¹³*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,* ¹⁴*by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

Verses 11-12 speak of one's sinful nature being cut off through one being buried and raised with Christ. Following on from this, Paul speaks of believers being given life with Christ (v. 13). In v. 14, "the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands" appears to portray a record of our sins with the corresponding "legal demands" of the law which we have broken. Paul may be implying that Christ cancelled not only our sins but also the "legal demands" of the law, releasing us from the law. The passage suggests that this cancellation is due to believers' association with Christ.

Rom 7:4-6 Likewise, my brothers, *you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.* ⁵*For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at*



work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.^m 

^m Greek of the letter

Verse 4a is saying that as “part of the body of Christ” (CEV, GNT), in a spiritual sense believers died with Christ (cf. NLT) and so are dead to the law “which held us captive” (v. 6a) – released from it to “serve in the new way of the Spirit” (v. 6b). Note that the believer’s union with Christ appears to continue to be in view in v. 4b, and thus Paul probably alludes to their spiritual identification with Christ in him being raised from the dead, whereby being spiritually alive they can “bear fruit for God” (cf. v. 6b).

Gal 2:19-20 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 

In saying that “through the law” he died to the law (v. 19), Paul may be meaning that in accordance with the law and the penalty of death that it demands for sin, he has died – in being crucified with Christ (v. 20) – and by dying he has been released from the realm of the law. Alternatively Paul may have in view the law’s role in leading one to Christ, in whom one has died to the law.

Rom 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.ⁿ ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^o free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 

ⁿ Some manuscripts add *who walk not according to the flesh (but according to the Spirit)*

^o Some manuscripts *me*

For an explanation of the phrase “the law of sin and death”, see the comment on **Rom 8:2-3** – under *We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit*, p. 1073.

Gal 2:4 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— 

Freedom from the OT law is in view here.

... This identification also has other implications – present and future

This subsection speaks of further implications of Christians – through their position “in” Jesus Christ – being identified with Christ in his death, resurrection and life. These implications relate to both present and future aspects of their lives – including their own resurrection.

2Cor 4:10-11 ... always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

¹¹For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 

Paul alludes to the sufferings he undergoes for Jesus’ sake (v. 11a), by which he identifies with and shares in – metaphorically speaking – the death of Jesus (v. 10a). In both verses Paul says he does this so that the power of Jesus Christ’s resurrection life may be revealed in his fragile, mortal body. The believer’s union with Christ is clearly in view.

2Cor 13:4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. 

The phrase “crucified in weakness” is probably a reference to Jesus’ death, with “weakness” alluding to either his humanity or his submissiveness and meekness. In Christ, Paul similarly was “weak”. This is a reference to Paul’s apparent non-assertiveness on his previous visit to Corinth and quite possibly to emulating the submissiveness and meekness of Christ (cf. 10:1). Additionally, in view of the earlier clause “he was crucified in weakness”, “we also are weak in him” may allude to the believer’s identification with Jesus Christ in his death. Despite such weakness, Paul asserts that by God’s power he lived with Christ. This implies that he shared in the power of God that Christ lives by – with God’s power working through him in his service of others.

Col 2:20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— 

The term “the elemental spirits of the world” quite possibly has in view “the evil powers of this world” (NLT; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV). Alternatively, “elementary principles” (NASB; cf. AMP, NIV) born of the thinking of this world may be in view. With either possibility, in the context Paul is clearly using the expression to refer to the influence – demonic and/or worldly – apparent in people’s adherence to the false teaching of asceticism, which involved strict, rigorous rules (cf. v. 21). In Christ believers have died to both evil powers and worldly wisdom – and thus should not needlessly submit to any such rules propagated by them.

Eph 2:4-7 But^p God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 

^p Or *And*



In v. 6, what is true of Jesus Christ in the present is applied to believers in a secondary, spiritual sense. Being "in" Christ – in addition to participating now with him in his risen life (v. 5) – believers are in a spiritual sense positioned with him in heaven (cf. Col 3:1-4 ↓). The consummation of this with its wonderful blessings will take place in the afterlife (v. 7).

Col 3:1-4 If then *you have been raised with Christ*, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your^a life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ☞

^a Some manuscripts *our*

The phrase "hidden with Christ in God" (v. 3) suggests that through the believer's spiritual union with Christ they are "in God" in a spiritual sense, by virtue of Christ's relationship with the Father. Similar to Ephesians 2:6-7 above, the believer's "position" in heaven "with Christ" may well be in view throughout this passage, particularly with its consummation being spoken of in v. 4.

1Cor 15:22-23 For as in Adam all die, so also *in Christ shall all be made alive*. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ☞

Verse 2 parallels all people's identification and union with Adam, in which they die, with believers' identification and union with Jesus Christ, in which they will be made alive – as he has been (v. 23).

2Cor 4:14 ... knowing that *he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus* and bring us with you into his presence. ☞

The believer's union with Christ is apparent here. As God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, he will raise those who are "with Jesus".

2Tim 2:11 The saying is trustworthy, for: *If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ...* ☞

Commentators differ on whether "we will also live with him" refers to the Christian's spiritual life in him now or to living with Christ in heaven. Arguably the context suggests that the latter is in view (cf. vv. 10, 12).

"In" Jesus Christ God's people are given God's grace

1Cor 1:4-5 I give thanks to my God always for you because of *the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus*, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ☞

Eph 1:6 ... to the praise of *his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved*. ☞

The phrase "in the Beloved" may well be referring to believers being "in Jesus Christ" – hence the verse's inclusion here. But it could alternatively be speaking of what God has done in the work of Jesus Christ. (The same could be said of "in Christ Jesus" in the following verses.)

Eph 2:7 ... so that in the coming ages he might show *the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*. ☞

2Tim 1:9 ... who saved us and called us to^r a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and *grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began*,^s ... ☞

^r Or *with*

^s Greek *before times eternal*

2Tim 2:1 You then, my child, be strengthened by *the grace that is in Christ Jesus*, ... ☞

Arguably this most likely refers to grace from God (cf. NLT), although Jesus Christ himself may be in view as the source of the grace (cf. CEV). Probably the believer's union with Christ is again being spoken of (cf. GNT).

† Paul received grace through Jesus Christ:

Rom 1:4b-5 *Jesus Christ our Lord*, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ... ☞

"In" Jesus Christ God's people have peace and other spiritual "fruits"

John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that *in me you may have peace*. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. ☞

Phil 4:7 And *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*. ☞

1Pet 5:14b *Peace to all of you who are in Christ*. ☞

1Tim 1:14 ... and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with *the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*. ☞

This appears to be speaking of the faith and love "that are [to be realized] in Christ Jesus" (AMP), "in union with Christ Jesus" (GNT). However it has also been interpreted as referring to this faith and love as coming from or being of



Jesus Christ (cf. NIRV, NLT). A similar comment could be made regarding faith and love in 2 Timothy 1:13 below.

2Tim 1:13 Follow the pattern of the sound^t words that you have heard from me, in *the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*. 

^t Or *healthy*

✦ **Christians are filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ:**

Phil 1:10-11 ... so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹*filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God*. 

Note that this is speaking of “the fruit of righteousness” coming through Christ (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NKJV, NLT) as opposed to speaking of righteousness coming through him.

“In” Jesus Christ God’s people have eternal life

See also:

▪ **Col 3:3-4** 

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but *the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*. 

1Thes 4:16-17 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And *the dead in Christ will rise first*. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and *so we will always be with the Lord*. 

While v. 17 does not specifically speak of the believers who have not died as being “in” Christ, it does associate them with “the dead in Christ” (v. 16b) and so arguably does imply this. As such these verses reflect that all those who are in Christ will always live with him, and thus have eternal life.

1Cor 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also *in Christ shall all be made alive*. 

2Tim 2:11 The saying is trustworthy, for: *If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ...* 

1Jn 5:11-12 And this is the testimony, that *God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*. ¹²*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life*. 

Verse 11 may be speaking of eternal life having its source in Jesus Christ (cf. GNT), rather than being realized through one

being “in” him. However v. 12 certainly has the believer’s union with Christ in view.

2Tim 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to *the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, ...* 

This may be referring to the promise of life – inclusive of eternal life – that one has “in union with Christ Jesus” (GNT). Alternatively, “in Christ” may more generally have a meaning akin to “because of Christ”.

✦ **With Christ in believers, the Spirit brings life:**

Rom 8:10 But *if Christ is in you*, although the body is dead because of sin, *the Spirit is life because of righteousness*. 

Believers have now spiritual life – equated with eternal life – through their relationship to Christ and the associated presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 9). Such life is theirs in Christ on the basis of the righteousness that they have been granted.

“In” Jesus Christ they will have glory and other blessings in the afterlife

Col 3:3-4 For you have died, and *your life is hidden with Christ in God*. ⁴*When Christ who is your^a life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory*. 

^a Some manuscripts *our*

Col 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. 

Because of their union with Jesus Christ, believers have the hope of glory.

1Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, *the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you*. 

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ...* 

The phrase “in the heavenly places” may well be indicating that the blessings spoken of are ones that we will experience in the afterlife, although they have already been designated to us. However, possibly the phrase may be emphasizing the heavenly and eternal dimension of spiritual blessings that we have now.



Eph 1:11 *In him we have obtained an inheritance*, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ...

Eph 2:6-7 ... and *raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

As referred to earlier, that which God has granted us in Jesus Christ will come to fulfillment in the coming ages, perpetually displaying the incomparable riches of God's grace to us in Christ.

Phil 3:14 I press on toward the goal for *the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "*Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.*" "*Blessed indeed,*" says the Spirit, "*that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!*"

Those who die in the Lord will be blessed in the afterlife with the rewards for their deeds (cf. CEV). Note that this is speaking of those who die in the great tribulation, but its teaching is applicable to all Christians.

✦ **Those who continue in Jesus Christ will be confident and unashamed on his return:**

1Jn 2:28 And now, little children, *abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.*

Further blessings of being "in" Jesus Christ

John 15:5-7 *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

Rom 8:10 But *if Christ is in you*, although the body is dead because of sin, *the Spirit is life* because of righteousness.

Paul may well have in view that through our union with Christ we have God's gift of the Holy Spirit – as spoken of below in Ephesians 1:13 and possibly also Philippians 2:1.

1Cor 1:4-5 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵*that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—*

Gal 3:25-26 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶*for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*

Eph 1:13 *In him you also*, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, *were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ...*

In Christ God's people have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Eph 3:11-12 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in *Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence* through our faith in him.

This speaks of "access" into God's presence.

Phil 2:1-2 So if there is any *encouragement in Christ*, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²*complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*

Note that here Paul may imply that together with other believers in Christ there is not only encouragement, but also the subsequent things he lists – i.e. "comfort from love, ... participation in the Spirit, ... affection and sympathy".

Col 2:9-10 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰*and you have been filled in him*, who is the head of all rule and authority.

In Jesus Christ dwells "God's whole nature" (NlrV®). Through their union with him believers share in this fullness; in a spiritual sense they are "complete" (NKJV, NLT).

1Jn 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and *we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ*. He is the true God and eternal life.

This indicates that God's people are in God through being in Jesus Christ.

2Cor 2:14 But thanks be to *God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.*

Paul alludes to the practice of victorious Roman generals leading their soldiers and captives in a triumphant procession, where the air was filled with sweet aroma, in describing God triumphantly spreading the gospel through



him in Christ. Although in being part of this we ourselves may not always feel triumphant, it is certainly a privilege, accompanied by many other blessings.

John 13:8 Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." 

This reflects that because of the believer's identification with Christ, they will have a "share with" him – which quite possibly refers to or is inclusive of having a part with him in such things as his glory and kingdom.

✦ Being "in" Christ also entails hardship:

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and partner *in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus*, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 

This shows that along with incomparable blessings such as the kingdom, being in Christ also entails hardship.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God's People Are One Body 'in' Jesus Christ

See also:

- a) *The Church as One Body*, p. 1296

Subsections

- All believers – including Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free – are one body "in" Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . The church is in fact the body of Christ
- God's people are many different parts making up one body "in" Jesus Christ
- The church body is built by and "in" Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . and Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church
- Jesus Christ is the head of the church body
- Jesus Christ is portrayed as the husband of the church
- God fosters unity and peace in the church body
- The church's unity is linked with it having one God, one Lord and one Spirit



All believers – including Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free – are one body "in" Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- *Jesus Christ has made Jews and Gentiles one*, p. 623

1Cor 12:13 For *in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^v or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.* 

^v Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

The "one body" is the body of believers. Believers are one body in which they share in the "one Spirit". The following references indicate that it is in Jesus Christ that all these groups are made one body (cf. v. 12).

Gal 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^w nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* 

^w Greek *bondservant*

Oneness in Jesus Christ takes primacy over all distinctions. In him "there is no difference" (GNT, NCV) between contrasting groups such as Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free people, and males and females. For no group is spiritually superior to another, and all are equal before God (cf. Eph 6:8-9). Note that the use of "Greek" as opposed to "Jew", appears to denote all Gentiles.

Eph 2:11-20 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,^x but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ... 

^x Or *sojourners*

Note that the references to "peace" and "hostility" (vv. 14-17) are probably referring to that between Gentiles and Jews, rather than between them and God – although some commentators would debate this in respect to v. 17 at least.

Eph 3:6 This mystery is^y that *the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* 

^y The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

Note that commentators differ somewhat on what "the promise" refers to, but it seems clear that it is a promise relating to the saving work of the Messiah.

Col 3:11 *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,^z free; but Christ is all, and in all.* 

^z Greek *bondservant*

"Christ is all, and in all" points to Christ as being that which unifies his people, making them one body. For Jesus Christ is "all that matters, and he lives in all of us" (CEV, NLT). Note that in addition to "Greek", Gentiles are also referred to here by the terms "uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian" – with the latter two speaking of uncivilized Gentiles in particular, in contrast to "Greek".

... The church is in fact the body of Christ

See also:

- *Participating in the Lord's Supper also symbolizes participating in the blood and body of Jesus Christ*, p. 1444

The term "the body of Christ" figuratively depicts the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with his people. As such it points to the oneness Christ's people have together in their relationship with him. Note that references to the church in this and the following subsections, are generally applicable both to the worldwide church as a whole and to each individual church.

1Cor 12:27 *Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.* 

Eph 5:23, 30-32 For the husband is the head of the wife even as *Christ is the head of the church, his body*, and is himself its Savior.  ... ³⁰*because we are members of his body.* ³¹*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* ³²*This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* 

The profound mystery (v. 32) is the union of Christ with the church, which is what the quotation in v. 31 is used to

illustrate, drawing a marked parallel of this union with that of husband and wife becoming one body.

Eph 1:22-23 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to *the church*, ²³*which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.* 

The phrase "the fullness of him" (v. 23) has a few possible meanings. It may mean that: the church is filled by Christ's presence and/or by the blessings he gives it; the fullness of Christ is manifested in the church; or the church is the complement of Christ, in a sense the completion of what he represents.

Col 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of *his body, that is, the church*, ... 

1Cor 6:15 Do you not know that *your bodies are members of Christ?* Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 

Our bodies are parts of "the body of Christ" (GNT, CEV).

✦ Believers are added to Jesus Christ:

Acts 5:14 And more than ever *believers were added to the Lord*, multitudes of both men and women, ... 

This reflects and possibly even has in view the fact that believers form the body of Christ.

God's people are many different parts making up one body "in" Jesus Christ

See also:

- **1Cor 12:27** 
- *The many church members form one body – the body of Christ – with no overriding distinctions*, p. 1296
- *God's people are given different spiritual gifts*, p. 1431

Rom 12:4-5 For *as in one body we have many members*,^a *and the members do not all have the same function*,⁵ *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* 

^a Greek *parts*; also verse 5

With the phrase "individually members one of another" (cf. **Eph 4:25** ) Paul may have in view the fact that believers are "mutually dependent on one another" (AMP; cf. NLT).

1Cor 12:12-14, 18-20 For *just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.* ¹³*For in one Spirit we were all*



baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^b or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ☞ ... ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts,^c yet one body. ☞

^b Or servants; Greek bondservants

^c Or members; also verse 22

Throughout this passage Paul draws parallels between the human body with its many parts and the body of Christ which likewise has many different parts.

1Cor 10:16-17 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? *The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ☞

When believers participate in the Lord's Supper, sharing the one loaf of bread signifies that each of them is a part of the one body.

Eph 4:4, 25 *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call* ☞ ... ²⁵Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for *we are members one of another.* ☞

The church body is built by and “in” Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- *The church body grows – spiritually and numerically,* p. 1299

Matt 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and *on this rock*^d I will build my church, and the gates of hell^e shall not prevail against it. ☞

^d The Greek words for *Peter* and *rock* sound similar

^e Greek *the gates of Hades*

Note that “Peter” – the new name given here by Jesus to Simon – sounds like “rock” (cf. text note). This points to Peter's leadership role in Jesus Christ's building of his church. The “gates of hell” may be speaking of “all the powers of hell” (NLT; cf. AMP) that are opposed to Jesus Christ and his church – or, more specifically, death (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Heb 3:3 For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as *the builder of a house* has more honor than the house itself. ☞

This implies that Jesus Christ is the builder of God's house, which probably refers to the household of God's people

although some think it could denote all creation. In contrast Moses was just a part of the house, a servant in it (cf. v. 5).

Eph 2:21-22 ... *in whom* [Christ] *the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* ²²*In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^f the Spirit.* ☞

^f Or in

Note that v. 22 may be speaking of church members “being built together” “by the Holy Spirit”. But “by the Holy Spirit” may instead be speaking of how God dwells in the church (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Eph 4:7, 11-16 But *grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.* ☞ ... ¹¹*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^g and teachers,^h ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,ⁱ to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, *we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.* ☞*

^g Or pastors

^h Or the shepherd-teachers

ⁱ Greek to a full-grown man

The grace given (v. 7) refers to the gifts (v. 11) that Christ has given his people, to build up his body (v. 12). In v. 13, “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” refers to becoming more like Christ. In v. 15, “grow up ... into him” could have a similar meaning, but more likely means to grow into a deeper union with Christ.

Eph 5:25-30 Husbands, love your wives, as *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*^j ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but *nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body.* ☞

^j Or holy and blameless



A primary aspect of Jesus Christ's work in building up the church was/is making it holy (vv. 25-27). The phrase "washing of water" (v. 26) is understood by some to be a reference to baptism, but more often it is seen simply as a description of Christ's cleansing of the church – which is vital to its growth – through its exposure to God's word (v. 26).

Col 2:19 ... and not holding fast to *the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.* 

Note that this speaks of God producing the growth of the church, with Jesus Christ being the basis or source of its growth.

John 17:22-23 *The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.* 

Jesus enables believers to be one just as he and God are one. Regarding the use of "glory", there are various interpretations of what it is referring to here. These include: Christ's glorious reconciliatory work, given to believers to continue doing; Christ's manifestation in believers; and the eternal glory that will be consummated in heaven.

2Cor 3:3 And you show that *you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*^k 

^k Greek *fleshly hearts*

The "letter from Christ" is the Corinthian Church. The terminology points to them being one entity, formed by Christ – in Paul's ministry and through the Holy Spirit.

Zec 6:11-13 Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹²And say to him, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "*Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.* ¹³*It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*" 

This crowning of the high priest is understood to be symbolic, portraying the messianic King-Priest who would build the temple of God. This "temple" is quite possibly a reference to the church – making the verse pertinent to this subsection – although some consider a millennial temple to be in view.

... and Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church

Acts 4:11 *This Jesus^l is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.*^m 

^l Greek *This one*

^m Greek *the head of the corner*

Although rejected by the Jewish religious leaders (cf. **1Pet 2:4** ↓), Jesus Christ became the cornerstone of God's church – the most important and honored stone in the structure. The metaphor alludes to such roles as: being the key element in the building's foundation (cf. **1Cor 3:9-11** ↓), holding the building together; and setting the direction for the building's design and growth.

Eph 2:19-21 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,ⁿ but you are fellow citizens with the saints and *members of the household of God,* ²⁰*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,* ²¹*in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* 

ⁿ Or *sojourners*

1Pet 2:4-8 *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,* ⁵*you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* ⁶For it stands in Scripture: "*Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.*" ⁷So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,*"^o ⁸and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 

^o Greek *the head of the corner*

With Christ as the living cornerstone (vv. 4, 6, 7), believers "like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house" (v. 5). Note that regarding the term "the honor", most other modern translations interpret the Greek to refer to the stone being "precious" or of great value to believers (v. 7a) – as he is to God (v. 4b) – because he is the "precious" cornerstone" (v. 6) of the "spiritual house" (v. 5), the one in whom they can trust (v. 6).

1Cor 3:9-11 For we are God's fellow workers. *You are God's field, God's building.* ¹⁰According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹*For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* 



Akin to being its cornerstone, Jesus Christ is the foundation of God's building, the church.

✦ Christ is like a vine with believers as the branches:

John 15:5 *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* 

This reflects the fact that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church, portraying him as being that on which the church is based and revolves around.

Jesus Christ is the head of the church body

See also:

- *Jesus Christ is the church's Lord and ruler*, p. 774
- *... and Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church*, p. 791

As the head of his body, the church, Christ is its ruler and leader – and the key factor in its life and growth.

Col 1:18 *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.* 

Eph 4:15-16 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way *into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.* 

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as *Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* 

Col 2:19 ... and not holding fast to *the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.* 

The "Head" of the body clearly refers to Jesus Christ.

✦ Jesus Christ is the head of every man in the church:

1Cor 11:3 But I want you to understand that *the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife^p is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.* 

^p Greek *gunē*. This term may refer to a *woman* or a *wife*, depending on the context

This points to Jesus Christ's headship over all individuals in his body.

Jesus Christ is portrayed as the husband of the church

See also:

- **1Cor 11:3** 

Jesus Christ's portrayal as the husband of the church points to both his headship of it and his oneness with it (cf. Gen 2:24 et al.).

2Cor 11:2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since *I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.* 

Paul is speaking to the Corinthian church.

Eph 5:23-32 For *the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.^a ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.^b ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* 

^a Or *holy and blameless*

Here Paul draws a number of parallels between a husband's relationship to his wife and Jesus Christ's relationship with the church, portraying Jesus Christ as an ideal husband with the church as his wife. In v. 27, the reference to the "splendor" of the church alludes to a bride in her splendor. As noted earlier, in v. 32 Paul indicates that in v. 31 he has Christ's union with the church primarily in view.

Rev 19:7-9 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for *the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹And the angel said^r to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."* 

^r Greek *he said*

The "Lamb" is Jesus Christ, and the "bride" likely represents God's people – "the saints" (v. 8). These verses look forward



to the consummation of Jesus Christ's relationship or union with his people, associated with the consummation of their salvation at the end of the age.

Matt 9:15 *And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

Jesus is here referring to himself as a bridegroom. (His disciples are the guests and the "days" when he would be taken from them refers to his death.) Arguably this alludes to his people as a whole as his bride (cf. [John 3:29](#) ↓).

John 3:29 *The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.*

Here John the Baptist parallels the roles of Jesus and himself with the roles of a bridegroom and a friend. In speaking of a bridegroom and a bride, John possibly is alluding to Jesus' relationship with his people.

✦ **The new Jerusalem as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband:**

Rev 21:2, 9-10 *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* ... ⁹Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ...

Partially in view of the new Jerusalem being the future dwelling place of God's people, some commentators view this depiction of it as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband to be a portrayal of God's people as Christ's bride (vv. 2, 9; cf. 22:17).

God fosters unity and peace in the church body

See also:

- [Eph 4:3-4](#) ↓; [John 17:11, 20-23](#) ↓
- *All believers – including Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free – are one body "in" Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 788
- *The church body is built by and "in" Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 790

God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit take a critical role in establishing and maintaining unity and peace in the church body, which is made up of many different parts. In reading the following passages, bear in mind that amongst the

references below to unity in the church are references to a unity of form and function as well as to a unity of spirit.

2Chr 30:12 *The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD.*

God's work here in giving unity of mind to the people of Israel is illustrative of his work in the church.

Rom 15:5-6 *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1Cor 12:7, 12-13 *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* ... ¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^s or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

^s Or servants; Greek bondservants

Verse 7 speaks of spiritual gifts being given by the Holy Spirit (cf. [vv. 4-6, 11](#) ↓) for the good of the church as a whole. These gifts from the Spirit and the Spirit's role in believers becoming part of the church body (v. 13), illustrate the Holy Spirit's part in fostering a unity amongst the many members in form and function. For as such the church is able to exist as a unit or single body (v. 12).

1Cor 12:24b-25 *But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.*

Eph 2:21-22 *... in whom [Christ] the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^t the Spirit.*

^t Or in

Note that v. 22 could be speaking of church members "being built together" "by the Holy Spirit". But "by the Holy Spirit" may instead be speaking of how God dwells in the church (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Eph 4:11-13 *And he [Jesus Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^u and teachers,^v ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^w to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ...*

^u Or pastors



^v Or *the shepherd-teachers*

^w Greek to a *full-grown man*

Phil 2:1-2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

That which we have from or with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (v. 1) should spur church members on to unity (v. 2).

2Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers,^x rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another,^y agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

^x Or *brothers and sisters*

^y Or *listen to my appeal*

The phrase “the God of love and peace” may well be alluding to God as the one who gives love and peace (cf. AMP, CEV, Nlrv), suggesting that the aforementioned unity and peace comes from him.

2Thes 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

This is probably speaking primarily of Jesus Christ giving peace or harmony amongst the believers as a church.

Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

The reference here is to relationships with other believers, in which they should seek after Christ’s “peace” in working out differences.

✦ **The kingdom of God is characterized by righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit:**

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This is from a passage dealing with matters of church harmony. The implication is that in and through the Holy Spirit, the church should be characterized by peace (along with righteousness and joy).

The church’s unity is linked with it having one God, one Lord and one Spirit

See also:

▪ [1Cor 12:12-13](#)

1Cor 12:4-6, 11 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;

⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ... ¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Verses 4-6 speak of the different spiritual gifts given to church members and their different applications all having a unity in their source, function and purpose – in accordance with the same Spirit, Lord and God being behind them. Verse 1 further underlines that there is one Spirit involved (cf. [v. 13](#)) in these gifts.

Eph 2:18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

The unity of Gentile and Jewish believers in Christ (cf. vv. 14-17) is alluded to here with Paul saying that it is by “one Spirit” that they both can have access to God.

Eph 4:3-6 ... eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The reference to “one Spirit... one Lord... one God and Father of all” (vv. 4-6) – along with other singular elements of the faith – reinforces the call (v. 3) and need for unity. The coupling of the term “one Spirit” with “one body” (v. 4) may well be intended to underline the Holy Spirit’s role in facilitating the spiritual life and unity of the body – as per the theme of the previous subsection – reinforcing the earlier reference to “the unity of the Spirit” (v. 3). In v. 6, if the use of “all” refers to all of God’s people (cf. CEV, NLT) as opposed to all things (cf. NCV), then the verse points to the unity of believers in having one God who encompasses all of them.

1Cor 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ...

All believers everywhere together call on the one Lord – the Lord of all of them. This points to the unity of all believers worldwide.

Mal 2:10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

For God’s people to be unfaithful to one another is incongruous with the fact that they all have the one Father.



Matt 23:8-10 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.^z ⁹And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. 

^z Or brothers and sisters

The emphasis here is on equality and humility more so than unity, but the concepts are not unrelated and each is right and proper in view of the fact the church has only one "teacher" and "instructor" (Jesus Christ) and one spiritual "Father".

✚ God's people should be one just as the Father and Jesus Christ are one:

John 17:11, 20-23 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, *that they may be one, even as we are one.*  ... ²⁰"I do not ask for these only, but also for *those who will believe in me through their word,* ²¹*that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us,* so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, *that they may be one even as we are one,* ²³*I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one,* so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 

The clause "that they also may be in us" (v. 21b) is most likely speaking of believers being one in the Father and Jesus Christ (cf. AMP, NCV). Regarding "glory" (v. 22), see the comment on [John 17:22-23](#) – under *The church body is built by and "in" Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 790.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Epilogue: God's People Relate to God through Jesus Christ

See also:

- [God works in and through his people, through Jesus Christ](#), p. 535
- [b\) Jesus Christ as High Priest](#), p. 671

Verses which speak of God's people relating to God (e.g. praying to him) "through" Jesus Christ appear to have in view one or more of the following three concepts: Jesus Christ's death opening the way into God's presence; Jesus Christ's priesthood; and God's people being "in" Jesus Christ. Bear in mind that these three concepts or interpretations are not mutually exclusive and all three are aspects of Jesus Christ's mediatory role in a believer's relationship with God. The following three paragraphs discuss these three concepts further.

By his death, Jesus Christ's consummate sacrifice removed sin forever as a barrier between God and his people – opening the way into God's presence for God's people. Thus it can be said that God's people approach God "through Jesus Christ" by what he has accomplished in his death.

In his ongoing high priestly role Jesus Christ mediates between God and God's people, representing the people before God. It would appear that this includes him doing so in conjunction with individual believer's approaches to God. As such, just as under the old covenant people approached God by having a priest go before God on their behalf, now believers approach God "through Jesus Christ" in his role as high priest.

Additionally, it can be said that one relates to God "through Jesus Christ" by being "in" Christ (as per the theme of the preceding sections). Believers have the right to approach God because of their relationship with Jesus Christ, being "in" him (cf. Eph 3:12). For it is because of this union with Jesus Christ that what they say is sanctioned to be spoken before God. (See also the introductory comment below on [God's people ask the Father for things in Jesus Christ's "name"](#), p. 798.)

Subsections

- [Jesus Christ's death and priesthood have opened the way into God's presence for God's people](#)
- [God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit](#)
- [God's people give thanks and praise to God through Jesus Christ](#)



- God's people ask the Father for things in Jesus Christ's "name"
- Further references to God's people relating to him through Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ's death and priesthood have opened the way into God's presence for God's people

Matt 27:50-51 *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.* ☞

To enter the Most Holy Place of God's presence in the temple, the high priest – the only one permitted to do so – went through the curtain that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. The tearing of the curtain of the temple in two from top to bottom (v. 51) is understood to symbolically proclaim that there was no longer any barrier to people themselves directly entering into God's presence; no longer was this privilege confined to just the high priest.

Heb 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers,^a since *we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* ☞

^a Or *brothers and sisters*

The reference to Jesus Christ's body as "the curtain" (v. 20), is drawing a parallel between his death which opened a way for believers to confidently enter into God's presence, and the curtain which the high priest went through to enter the Most Holy Place of God's presence on the Day of Atonement. The expression "our bodies washed with pure water" (v. 22) is understood by some to be a reference to baptism, but more often it is seen as a reference to being made clean by Jesus Christ's sacrifice. Similar to "hearts sprinkled clean" (v. 22), the expression is used to draw a parallel with the priests washing with water to signify them being cleansed whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting or approached the altar to present an offering to God (cf. Ex 30:20-21).

Heb 4:14-16 *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,*

that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. ☞

Because of Jesus Christ and his position as high priest (vv. 14-15), we may approach "the throne of our gracious God" (NLT; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Heb 7:17-22 *For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." ¹⁸For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. ²⁰And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'" ²²This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.* ☞

God made Jesus Christ high priest forever, on oath (vv. 20-21). In doing so God has effectively introduced a better hope for us (v. 19; cf. Heb 6:19-20 ↓), with Jesus Christ's role as high priest guaranteeing a better covenant (cf. v. 22) or relationship between God and his people. In this relationship we can now draw near to God (v. 19b), through Jesus Christ (v. 25 ↓).

Heb 9:6-14 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸*By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing* ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age).^b According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. ¹¹*But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^c then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify^d for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^e conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* ☞

^b Or *which is symbolic for the age then present*

^c Some manuscripts *good things to come*



^d Or *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies*

^e Some manuscripts *your*

Previously the high priest alone entered the earthly Most Holy Place, with the blood of sacrifices made for sin (v. 7). This indicated that the sacrifices ultimately were not able to clear the people's consciences, for them themselves to be able to enter God's presence (vv. 8-9). But by his own blood Jesus Christ entered God's very presence in heaven to obtain eternal redemption (v. 12) and realize true cleansing for God's people (vv. 13-14). As such they may serve God (v. 14b), having been made holy – with the implication that Jesus Christ's high priestly work, notably his sacrifice, has opened the way into God's presence (v. 8) for all God's people.

✦ **Because of Jesus, our hope extends into God's presence, "behind the curtain":**

Heb 6:19-20 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, *a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain*,²⁰ *where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf*, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. 📖

Verses 19b-20 may mean that our hope extends into God's very presence, where Jesus has entered as a "forerunner" on our behalf – giving us an assured hope that we will be able to follow. (As such our future, ultimate entry into God's presence would appear to be in view.) Alternatively, or along with the above, the verses may mean that our hope is based on Jesus' ministry for us in God's presence, in his role as high priest.

God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *Pray in the Holy Spirit*, p. 1219
- *Worship God in spirit and by the Holy Spirit*, p. 1346

Eph 2:18 *For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.* 📖

Here "through him" may be speaking of how people are to approach God. Alternatively it could be referring to being able to approach God because of what Jesus Christ has done (cf. NLT) – i.e. his reconciliation of people to God by his death (cf. v. 16).

Eph 3:11-12 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²*in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.*

📖

In v. 12, "in whom" may well have the believer's union with Christ in view (cf. GNT). In him and through our faith in him we can confidently access God.

Heb 7:25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who *draw near to God through him*, since he always lives to make intercession for them. 📖

^f That is, completely; or *at all times*

The expression "draw near to God through him" may be referring to believers turning to God at conversion. However, in the Greek the verb translated as "draw near" is in the present tense, which suggests that this phrase is referring to continuing to come to God through Jesus Christ, relating to God through him (cf. NEL, NBC).

✦ **Jesus' declaration of heaven opening up:**

John 1:51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you,^g *you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*" 📖

^g The Greek for *you* is plural; twice in this verse

A number of commentators understand this to be speaking of communication between God and humankind being opened or freed up through Jesus Christ. In this, Jesus ("the Son of Man") is the representative of humankind or God's people and the means by which this more accessible communication is possible. Another interpretation of this verse is that Jesus is implying that the disciples would see heaven, or God, testifying to who he is.

God's people give thanks and praise to God through Jesus Christ

See also:

- **Eph 5:20** ↴

Rom 1:8 First, *I thank my God through Jesus Christ* for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. 📖

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of *the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* 📖

Heb 13:15 *Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God*, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. 📖



As quite possibly is the case in other verses in this subsection, Jesus Christ's role as high priest is in view here, with him being the one through whom we offer such sacrifices.

1Pet 4:10-11 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order *that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ*. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 

This could well be speaking of people glorifying or praising (cf. GNT, NIV) God through Jesus Christ for God's grace in one's ministry. However, some commentators understand the reference to Jesus Christ to be primarily related to his role in one's ministry, through which glory comes to God.

Jude 1:25 ... *to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.* 

This may be speaking of ascribing to God through Jesus Christ "glory, majesty, dominion, and authority" (cf. NIRV) – hence its inclusion here. Alternatively it may be saying that these things are or will be God's through Jesus Christ.

Rom 7:24-25a Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* 

Note that the appropriateness of this verse to this subsection is debatable, as v. 24 and the general context suggests that rather than giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ, Paul may instead be speaking of God saving him through Jesus Christ (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIRV, NLT).

✦ **They offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ:**

1Pet 2:4-5 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to *offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* 

The phrase "through Jesus Christ" may be referring to how the spiritual sacrifices are offered (cf. CEV), or the reason why they are acceptable, i.e. Jesus Christ's work in securing salvation (cf. NLT).

God's people ask the Father for things in Jesus Christ's "name"

See also:

- *Ask for things in Jesus Christ's "name"*, p. 1225

In Jewish thought, a person's name represented or embodied their whole person – including their nature, authority and goals. Believers make requests of God "in Jesus Christ's name" – in accordance with all that his name signifies. Such prayer is compatible with Jesus' person and purpose and offered on his authority. (cf. NSB, ZBC) (See also the introductory comment on *Ask for things in Jesus Christ's "name"*, p. 1225.)

Being "in" Jesus Christ and relating to God "through" Christ are connected to this concept of relating to God "in the name of" Jesus Christ. For it is only because of a believer's relationship with Jesus Christ – in which believers may relate to God "through" Jesus Christ – that a believer can make requests of God in Jesus Christ's "name", on his authority.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that *whatever you ask the Father in my name*, he may give it to you. 

John 16:23-24, 26 In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, *whatever you ask of the Father in my name*, he will give it to you. ²⁴*Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask*, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.  ... ²⁶*In that day you will ask in my name*, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ... 

"I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf" (v. 26b), probably refers to the fact that God's people are able to ask God directly, in Jesus Christ's name; Jesus does not have to ask for them.

Matt 18:19-20 Again I say to you, *if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.* ²⁰*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.* 

Coming together in Jesus Christ's name (v. 20) to pray to God (v. 19), is comparable to praying in his name.

✦ **They give thanks to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ:**

Eph 5:20 ... *giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...* 

Along with the verses in the previous subsection and in accordance with the teaching in this subsection, this verse



suggests that giving thanks to God in the name of Jesus Christ is closely associated with giving thanks to God through him.

Further references to God's people relating to him through Jesus Christ

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" 

A common interpretation of the first statement is that Jesus means he is the way to the Father for he is the truth and the life. The second statement appears to relate back to the first assertion – "I am the way". The verse is speaking of, primarily at least, coming into a relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ, and is usually understood to be meaning that what Jesus has done is the reason for why we can begin this relationship. Arguably it is also applicable to one's ongoing relationship with the Father, with Jesus being the means or way through which we can come to the Father.

Rom 5:11 More than that, we also *rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* 

The phrase "through our Lord Jesus Christ" may be referring to Jesus Christ as the means by which we rejoice in God. However, the phrase may instead mean that Christ is the reason why we can, which is spoken of in the subsequent clause.

2Cor 1:20 For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. *That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.* 

"Amen" is a reference to the "Yes" in the first sentence (as emphasized by the NCV which uses "yes" in both instances; cf. CEV text note). In response to God's promises to us finding their fulfillment (i.e. being "Yes") in Jesus Christ, we say "Yes" or "Amen" in worship to God "through Christ" – quite possibly meaning "in His Person and by His agency" (AMP). Presumably Paul means we do this in acknowledgment of the promises and of their fulfillment in Christ, including in his death and resurrection.

✦ Paul's confidence "through Christ toward God":

2Cor 3:3-4 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.^h *Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God.* 

^h Greek *fleshly hearts*

Paul was confident through Christ toward or before God that the product of his work amongst the Corinthians (v. 3) validated his ministry (cf. vv. 1-2).

Pray for persecuted Christians



Keys to God's Interaction

I. Basics

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II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

- a) God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People..... 831
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I. Basics

This section looks at some basic factors underlying God's interaction with his people. They show that God's relationship with his people is not an aloof, impersonal one – far from it. God is always with his people and they can actually know him. Complementary to this is God's great love and steadfast faithfulness towards his people – two characteristics which are often coupled together in the Bible. Undergirding all God's interaction with his people is his truly amazing grace.

a) God Is Always with His People

See also:

- *God's people live with Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 780
- *. . . and Jesus Christ is in his people*, p. 780

"The best of all is: God is with us." – John Wesley

Subsections

- God and Jesus Christ are with their people
- God and Jesus Christ are always with their people . . .
- . . . God's people are always with God – living in his presence
- God is with his people wherever they go . . .
- . . . God also goes before his people
- God is with his people in trouble
- Being with his people in trouble, God sees them through it
- God and Jesus Christ in fact live in their people . . .
- . . . and God's people live in him and Jesus Christ
- God's people are with Jesus Christ even in death
- Note: Examples of people being successful because God was with them

God and Jesus Christ are with their people

Num 23:21 He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob, nor has he seen trouble in Israel. *The LORD their God is with them*, and the shout of a king is among them. 

Note that the final clause appears to either: further be speaking of God's presence amongst his people; or meaning that God is proclaimed as King by them (cf. GNT, NLT).

Num 35:34 You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for *I the LORD dwell in the midst of the people of Israel*. 

2Chr 15:2, 9 ... and he [Azariah] went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: *The LORD is with you while you are with him*. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.  ...⁹And he [Asa] gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when *they saw that the LORD his God was with him*. 

Isa 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "*I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit*, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite. 

Note that to have a "contrite" spirit is to be deeply remorseful and repentant of sin. One who has a "lowly spirit" is humble – here quite possibly a reference to being so in response to one's own sin.

Hag 1:13 Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "*I am with you, declares the LORD*." 

1Cor 14:24-25 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that *God is really among you*. 

2Cor 6:16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? *For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people*. 

God's people being his "temple" is indicative of God's presence amongst them.

2Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers,^a rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another,^b agree with one another, live in peace; and *the God of love and peace will be with you*. 

^a Or *brothers and sisters*

^b Or *listen to my appeal*



Phil 4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and *the God of peace will be with you.* 

John 14:18 *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*



Quite possibly this refers to the giving of the Holy Spirit (cf. vv. 16-17) at Pentecost and Jesus' presence through the Spirit's indwelling. Alternatively Jesus' appearance to the disciples after his resurrection or even his second coming may be in view.

2Thes 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. *The Lord be with you all.* 

This is a blessing or prayer, speaking of Jesus Christ's presence with his people (cf. **2Tim 4:22** ↓).

2Tim 4:22 *The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*^c



^c The Greek for *you* is plural

✦ **Prayer that Christ's grace, God's love and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit will be with believers:**

2Cor 13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* 

These things can be considered aspects or results of the presence of Jesus Christ, God and the Holy Spirit with their people.

God and Jesus Christ are always with their people . . .

Deut 31:8 It is the LORD who goes before you. *He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you.* Do not fear or be dismayed. 

Josh 1:5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. *Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.* 

Ps 89:21 ... so that *my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.* 

Here God says of David that his "hand" – indicative of his power in particular – "shall always remain with him" (NRSV; cf. GNT). This indicates that God would always be with him – "I will always be there" (CEV).

Ps 90:1 *Lord, you have been our dwelling place*^d *in all generations.* 

^d Some Hebrew manuscripts (compare Septuagint) *our refuge*

God has always been his people's home and refuge, indicative of him always being with them.

Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, *the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day,* ... 

The reference to God as his "shepherd" points to God's presence with Joseph, caring for him and guiding him – all his life.

Gen 21:22 At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, "*God is with you in all that you do.*" 

Deut 4:7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? 

Ps 16:8 *I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.* 

David is saying that he continually kept himself aware of God's presence (cf. GNT), indicative of the fact that God was always at his side.

Matt 28:20b [Jesus:] And behold, *I am with you always, to the end of the age.* 

. . . God's people are always with God – living in his presence

See also:

- *Continue to live before God, in his presence . . .*, p. 1207

Ps 73:23 Nevertheless, *I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.* 

Here and in 139:18b immediately below, the psalmists speaks of always being with God.

Ps 139:18b I awake, and *I am still with you.* 

Luke 15:31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.' 

A parallel can be made with the son being spoken of as always being with his father and God's people always being with their heavenly Father.

Deut 33:27a *The eternal God is your dwelling place,*^e and underneath are the everlasting arms.^f 



^e Or a dwelling place

^f Revocalization of verse 27 yields *He subdues the ancient gods, and shatters the forces of old*

Note that this and most of the following verses do not refer to God's people as "always" dwelling or being with God (as per the above subheading). However they do show that God's people dwell with him and even suggest that this is always the case.

Psa 91:1 *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.* 

The latter part of the verse speaks of resting securely under God's protection (cf. v. 2).

Psa 41:12 But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and *set me in your presence forever.* 

This and the following verses refer to God's people living in his presence.

Psa 140:13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name; *the upright shall dwell in your presence.* 

Psa 102:28 The children of your servants shall dwell secure; *their offspring shall be established before you.* 

This speaks of God's people being firmly set in his "presence" (CEV, NLT, NRSV).

✦ **Blessed are those who God brings near to live in his presence:**

Psa 65:4 *Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!* 

Note Psalm 148:14 also speaks of God's people being near him – "He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the LORD!"

God is with his people wherever they go . . .

Gen 28:15 Behold, *I am with you and will keep you wherever you go*, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. 

The fulfillment of this promise made to Jacob, is testified to by him in the following reference – Genesis 35:3.

Gen 35:3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and *has been with me wherever I have gone.* 

Josh 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for *the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.* 

2Sam 7:9 And *I have been with you wherever you went* and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 

Ex 33:14 And he said, "*My presence will go with you*, and I will give you rest." 

Ex 40:38 For *the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.* 

The "cloud of the LORD" signified the LORD's presence (cf. vv. 34-35), with the people in all their travels, guiding them along the way (cf. vv. 36-37; [Ex 13:21-22](#) ↓).

. . . God also goes before his people

Deut 31:3, 8 *The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you*, so that you shall dispossess them, and Joshua will go over at your head, as the LORD has spoken.  ... ⁸*It is the LORD who goes before you.* He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. 

Isa 52:12 For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for *the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.* 

Not only did God promise to go before them, but also to protect them from behind – to be their "rear guard".

Mic 2:13 *He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king passes on before them, the LORD at their head.* 

"He who opens the breach" refers to the LORD – who will be "at their head". The verse speaks of God regathering his people from exile.

Judg 4:14-15a And Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. *Does not the LORD go out before you?"* So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him. ¹⁵*And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword.* 

Verse 15a demonstrates that the LORD had indeed gone ahead of Barak to deliver the enemy into his hands, as Deborah had declared (v. 14).



1Chr 14:15 And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then go out to battle, for *God has gone out before you* to strike down the army of the Philistines.

Ex 13:21-22 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²²*The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.*

Isa 45:2 *I will go before you and level the exalted places,^g I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ...*

^g Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint *level the mountains*

The reference is to God going before the Persian king Cyrus, breaking down any obstacles, as he used Cyrus to do his work. This can be applied to God going before his people.

✦ **The Israelites knew God was among them and would drive out nations before them when the ark went into the Jordan before them and cut off its water:**

Josh 3:10-11, 13, 15-16 And Joshua said, “*Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites.* ¹¹*Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth^h is passing over before you into the Jordan.* ... ¹³*And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.* ... ¹⁵*and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), ¹⁶the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho.*

^h Hebrew *the ark of the covenant, the Lord of all the earth*

God is with his people in trouble

See also:

▪ *a) God Is Always with His People* [reasons to not be afraid], p. 802

Ps 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, *a very presentⁱ help in trouble.*

ⁱ Or *well proved*

Gen 39:20-22 And Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined, and *he was there in prison.* ²¹*But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.* ²²*And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it.*

2Chr 20:17 You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. *Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.*

Ezra 9:9 For *we are slaves. Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery*, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection^j in Judea and Jerusalem.

^j Hebrew *a wall*

Even though they were slaves, Ezra could say: “God has not left us.” (NCV™)

Ps 14:4-5 Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the LORD? ⁵*There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous.*

Amidst attacks by evildoers (v. 4; cf. **2Chr 20:17** ↑), God is present with his people (v. 5) – protecting them and bringing terror to their enemies.

Ezek 11:16 Therefore say, “Thus says the Lord GOD: *Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while^k in the countries where they have gone.*’

^k Or *in small measure*

Although the people had been sent far away from the sanctuary in Jerusalem which signified God’s presence with



his people, he himself was a sanctuary for them in their exile, which indicates that he was "present with them" (GNT, cf. CEV).

✦ **In persecution, God's people are not forsaken by him:**

2Cor 4:9 ... persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ...

Most likely this is referring to not being abandoned by God (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT), in persecution.

Being with his people in trouble, God sees them through it

Ps 46:4-7 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. ⁵God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. ⁶The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. ⁷The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

Ps 91:15 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.

Ps 109:31 For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.

Isa 8:9-10 Be broken,^l you peoples, and be shattered;^m give ear, all you far countries; strap on your armor and be shattered; strap on your armor and be shattered. ¹⁰Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.ⁿ

^l Or *Be evil*

^mOr *dismayed*

ⁿ The Hebrew for *God is with us* is *Immanuel*

Despite the hostility of enemy nations, Israel would not succumb for God was with them.

Isa 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

Jer 1:19 They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you.

Jer 20:10-11 For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! "Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" say all my close friends, watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him."

¹¹But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.

Jer 30:11a For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end.

Ezek 34:29-30 And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. ³⁰And they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord GOD.

Zec 10:5 They shall be like mighty men in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets; they shall fight because the LORD is with them, and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.

The GNT and NLT use "even" in relation to the horsemen – i.e. "even the enemy horsemen" (GNT) – implying that horsemen were generally a superior force. Because the LORD would be with his people, they would overcome stronger enemies.

Acts 7:9-10 And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.

Acts 18:9-10 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."

2Tim 4:16-17 At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

Ps 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

"I will not be shaken" points to God's protection.



God and Jesus Christ in fact live in their people . . .

See also:

- 1Jn 3:24a ↴; 1Jn 4:13, 15-16 ↴
- . . . *Having the Holy Spirit indicates that God lives in a person*, p. 834
- . . . *God and Jesus Christ are with those who obey – they in God and he in them*, p. 1065

Verses that speak of God and/or Jesus Christ living in their people (or vice versa) largely have in view the spiritual union of God and Jesus Christ with their people. This union is in part at least based on God's people having his Holy Spirit (cf. 1Jn 3:24 ↴; 1Jn 4:13 ↴).

John 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him*. ☞

1Jn 3:24 *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^o and God^p in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* ☞

- ^o Greek *him*
- ^p Greek *he*

1Jn 4:12 No one has ever seen God; *if we love one another, God abides in us* and his love is perfected in us. ☞

1Jn 2:23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. *Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.* ☞

Whoever acknowledges and accepts (cf. CEV, GNT) Jesus Christ "has" God also. This appears to refer to God's and Jesus Christ's presence in their people (cf. ZBC).

2Jn 1:9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. *Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.* ☞

Eph 4:6 ... one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and *in all*. ☞

Here "all" may mean all things, rather than being limited to all Christians, although the latter would still likely be primarily in view.

. . . and God's people live in him and Jesus Christ

See also:

- a) *God's People Are 'in' Jesus Christ*, p. 778
- d) *Epilogue: Living 'in' Jesus Christ*, p. 1078

See also the introductory comments on the above cross references.

John 17:21 ... that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, *that they also may be in us*, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ☞

Col 3:3 For you have died, and *your life is hidden with Christ in God*. ☞

Through the believer's spiritual union with Christ, they are "in God" (cf. 1Jn 5:20 ↴) in a spiritual sense by virtue of Christ's relationship with the Father.

1Thes 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, *To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.* ☞

1Jn 2:5-6 ... but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. *By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.* ☞

Note that it is debatable as to whether John is speaking here of knowing and abiding in God (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) or Jesus Christ.

1Jn 3:24a *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^a and God^r in him.* ☞

- ^a Greek *him*
- ^r Greek *he*

1Jn 4:13, 15-16 *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* ☞ ... ¹⁵*Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.* ¹⁶*So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* ☞

Each of these three verses gives a different reason as to how we can know that we live in God and he in us.

1Jn 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and *we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ*. He is the true God and eternal life. ☞



God's people are with Jesus Christ even in death

See also:

- *God's people will be with Jesus Christ*, p. 745

Luke 23:42-43 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, *today you will be with me in Paradise.*"

Jesus is speaking here to one of the other criminals being crucified next to him.

Acts 7:59-60 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

2Cor 5:8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Phil 1:23-24 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

1Thes 5:9-10 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

With the reference to being "asleep", this may in part be speaking of believers who die being with Jesus Christ following their death. However some translations specifically refer to Jesus Christ's return (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), i.e. their focus is on whether we are alive or dead when he returns.

Rev 14:3-4 ... and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. *It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.* These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, ...

The 144,000 probably symbolize the faithful believers who had come out of "the great tribulation" (7:14) and at this point are most likely in heaven after dying, though not all commentators would agree. Note that the expression "not defiled themselves with women" (v. 4) most likely refers to either abstaining from sexual immorality or from defiling relationships with the world.

✦ Jesus Christ is the Lord of believers even after they die:

Rom 14:6-9 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷For none of us lives to himself, and *none of us dies to himself.* ⁸For if we live, we live to the Lord, and *if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.* ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Paul's assertion that believers do not die to themselves alone (v. 7b) but rather to the Lord (v. 8a), appears to mean that even on the other side of death, they belong to Christ (v. 8b) who remains their Lord (v. 9). As such the passage also points to them being with him in death.

Note: Examples of people being successful because God was with them

Gen 39:2-4, 23 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. ⁴So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ... ²³The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

1Sam 18:14-15 And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him. ¹⁵And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him.

1Chr 11:9 And David became greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts was with him.

2Chr 1:1 Solomon the son of David established himself in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

2Ki 18:7 And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.

1Sam 10:6-7 Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. ⁷Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you.



This implies that because God was with Saul, he would be successful in whatever he did. It also may be implying that as God was with him, God would lead him in his course of action – “do whatever God leads you to do” (GNT).

✦ God’s promise to Isaac that he would be with him and bless him:

Gen 26:2-3 And the LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³Sojourn in this land, and *I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Knows His People and They Know Him

See also:

- *d) Know God*, p. 1209

Subsections

- God and Jesus Christ know their people
- God knows all his people’s needs and troubles
- God and Jesus Christ enable their people to know them
- So God’s people know him . . .
- . . . and God’s people know Jesus Christ
- God’s people are friends of him and Jesus Christ
- God’s people have fellowship with him and Jesus Christ

God and Jesus Christ know their people

God and Jesus Christ of course know everybody, which is what may be primarily in view in some of the verses below even though they do all refer to God or Jesus Christ knowing their followers (either individual ones or all of them). However, at least a number of the following verses suggest that their “knowing” believers has an additional intimacy or a more personal facet. (See the comments below on Exodus 33:17 and 1 Corinthians 8:3.)

Ex 33:17 And the LORD said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and *I know you by name.*” 

The expression “I know you by name” (cf. [John 10:3 ↓](#)) indicates: an intimate knowledge – “I know you very well” (GNT, NCV); and a personal relationship – “I know you personally” (AMP); “you are my friend” (NLT, cf. CEV).

2Sam 7:20 And *what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord GOD!* 

David acknowledged that there was nothing he could tell God about himself and his situation that God did not already know.

Ps 139:1 *O LORD, you have searched me and known me!* 

Jer 1:5 “*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.*” 

Jer 12:3a *But you, O LORD, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you.* 

Nah 1:7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; *he knows those who take refuge in him.* 

1Cor 8:3 *But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.*^s 

^s Greek *him*

Here and in Galatians 4:9a below, the phrase “known by God” may be speaking of God knowing his own people in a unique way, in his personal, intimate relationship with them. However it could instead be referring simply to them being recognized by God as one of his own (cf. [2Tim 2:19 ↓](#)).

1Cor 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as *I have been fully known.* 

Gal 4:9 *But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?* 

2Tim 2:19 But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “*The Lord knows those who are his,*” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” 

“The Lord knows those who are his” could be referring to God knowing his people in an intimate, relational sense. However it may instead mean: “The Lord knows who his people are.” (CEV) The latter probably better fits the OT verse that it is quoting, Numbers 16:5. If this latter meaning is the case, then the verse is not so applicable to this subsection. Note that



"God's firm foundation" is usually interpreted to be referring to either his truth as a whole or to the church.

John 10:3, 14, 27 To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and *he calls his own sheep by name* and leads them out. ... ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. *I know my own* and my own know me, ... ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and *I know them*, and they follow me.

God knows all his people's needs and troubles

See also:

- *God hears the cries of the godly and rescues them . . .*, p. 1977

Matt 6:8, 31-32 Do not be like them, for *your Father knows what you need before you ask him*. ... ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and *your heavenly Father knows that you need them all*.

Ex 2:23-25 During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. *Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God*. ²⁴*And God heard their groaning*, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵*God saw the people of Israel—and God knew*.

Ex 3:7 Then *the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ..."*

Ps 31:7 I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because *you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, ...*

Ps 38:9 *O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you*.

Ps 69:19 *You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you*.

Isa 40:27-28 *Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God?"* ²⁸*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable*.

The idea that our "way" and "right" (v. 27) – including our needs and troubles – are hidden from God is absurd in the light of who God is (v. 28).

Jer 15:15a *O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors*.

God knew the persecution that Jeremiah suffered.

Jer 18:23 *Yet you, O LORD, know all their plotting to kill me. Forgive not their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from your sight. Let them be overthrown before you; deal with them in the time of your anger*.

Lam 3:59-61 *You have seen the wrong done to me, O LORD; judge my cause*. ⁶⁰*You have seen all their vengeance, all their plots against me*. ⁶¹*"You have heard their taunts, O LORD, all their plots against me*.

Rev 2:9, 13 *'I know your tribulation and your poverty* (but you are rich) and the slander^t of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ... ¹³*"I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith^u even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells*.

^t Greek *blasphemy*

^u Or *your faith in me*

In v. 13a, "where Satan's throne is" refers to Pergamum as a center of pagan worship, and is indicative of a place hostile to Christians. Jesus Christ knew these very difficult circumstances in which these Christians lived.

Rev 3:8 I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. *I know that you have but little power*, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

Jesus Christ knew that the church in Philadelphia had "little strength" (NCV™, NIV®) amidst trying circumstances.

Deut 2:7 For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. *He knows your going through this great wilderness*. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing."

The implication in this and the following verses is that God not only knows about his people's circumstances, he also cares about them and acts accordingly.

Ps 1:6 ... for *the LORD knows the way of the righteous*, but the way of the wicked will perish.



Ps 37:18 *The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; ...* 

Hos 13:5 *It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; ...* 

God “knew (recognized, understood, and had regard for)” (AMP) Israel during her desert ordeal.

Zec 9:8 Then I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that none shall march to and fro; *no oppressor shall again march over them, for now I see with my own eyes.* 

A number of commentators understand this to be primarily referring to the renewed Israel of the end times. The last clause suggests that not only did God see the affliction of his people, he would now acknowledge it and act accordingly.

God and Jesus Christ enable their people to know them

See also:

- [Heb 8:10-12](#) ↓
- [Jesus came to enable us to know God](#), p. 511

Matt 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and *no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* 

John 17:1-3, 6, 26 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all flesh, *to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.* ³*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*  ... ⁶*“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.*  ... ²⁶*I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”* 

Eternal life involves knowing God and Jesus Christ (v. 3) in an ongoing, progressive, intimate relationship. As the one who gives eternal life (v. 2), it is Jesus Christ who enables us to have this personal knowledge of God. The references to manifesting and making known God’s “name” (vv. 6, 26), speak of manifesting and making known God – “I have revealed Your very Self, Your real Self” (AMP).

Gal 1:15-16 But when he who had set me apart before I was born,^v and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶*was pleased to reveal his Son to^w me*, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;^x ... 

^v Greek *set me apart from my mother’s womb*

^w Greek *in*

^x Greek *with flesh and blood*

Eph 1:16-17 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ...* 

Isa 43:10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” 

The clause “that you may know and believe me” may be speaking of knowing God and believing him (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV, NLT) – hence the verse’s inclusion here. However, in speaking of Israel being his “witnesses” that he is God, it may instead be speaking of knowing (and believing) that he is God. Alternatively, both concepts could be involved, which may well be the case in Jeremiah 24:7 immediately below.

Jer 24:7 *I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.* 

‡ **Jesus’ promise to his disciples that he would come and manifest himself to them:**

John 14:18-23 “I will not leave you as orphans; *I will come to you.* ¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but *you will see me.* Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰*In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.* ²¹Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and *I will love him and manifest myself to him.*” ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” ²³Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him.*” 

This could be referring to either: the giving of the Holy Spirit (cf. vv. 16-17) at Pentecost, with believers’ experience of Jesus’ presence through the Spirit’s indwelling; Jesus’ appearance to the disciples after his resurrection; or Jesus’ second coming.



So God's people know him . . .

See also:

- [John 17:3](#) ↴

Heb 8:10-12 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹¹And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹²For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.

Note that v. 12 points out that knowing God under the new covenant is due in no small part to his forgiveness.

Hos 2:19-20 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. ²⁰I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

Gal 4:8-9 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. ⁹But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

Col 1:10 ... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

The final clause may well be speaking of coming to "know God better and better" (NLT, cf. GNT) – rather than just growing in knowledge about God.

1Jn 2:13b I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

1Jn 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

"Abba" is an intimate term, and so highlights the intimacy of believers with God, indicative of them knowing him.

Job 42:5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; ...

Here Job attests to his personal encounter with God. Any such encounter leads to greater personal knowledge of God.

. . . and God's people know Jesus Christ

John 10:4, 14 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ... ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ...

Jesus illustrates the intimate knowledge that he and his people have of each other by drawing a parallel with the close relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. The clause "they know his voice" (v. 4) can be applied to his people knowing Jesus Christ's leading (through the Holy Spirit) and perhaps also his teachings – including his claims that enable his people to recognize who he is.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Phil 3:8-10 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ...

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.^y

^y Or *what I have entrusted to him*; Greek *my deposit*

Here Paul appears to be saying that he knows the one in whom he has believed (cf. CEV, NRSV), rather than simply that he knows who it is that he has believed. It is not clear whether Paul is referring here to Jesus Christ or God; what he says is applicable to both.

1Jn 2:13a I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

The expression "him who is from the beginning" refers to Jesus Christ.

Eph 4:11-13 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^z and teachers,^a ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the



knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^b to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ...

^z Or *pastors*

^a Or *the shepherd-teachers*

^b Greek *to a full-grown man*

The phrase “the knowledge of the Son of God” appears to speak of – or at least be applicable to – both knowing Christ personally and knowing what the Bible teaches about him (cf. ESB).

✦ God’s people know the Holy Spirit:

John 14:17 ... even *the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. *You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

God’s people are friends of him and Jesus Christ

Job 29:4 ... as I was in my prime,^c *when the friendship of God was upon my tent*, ...

^c Hebrew *my autumn days*

Here Job refers to experiencing “God’s intimate friendship” (NIV®) and its blessings.

Ps 25:14 *The friendship^d of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.*

^d Or *The secret counsel*

Prov 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but *there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

The “friend who sticks closer than a brother” is probably not intended as a reference to God, but it has often been applied to him, and appropriately so.

Isa 41:8 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of *Abraham, my friend*; ...

Jer 3:4 Have you not just now called to me, ‘*My father, you are the friend of my youth*—

Despite this being applicable to God’s people generally, note that the context shows that regrettably this had been a very shallow declaration by the people.

James 2:23 ... and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and *he was called a friend of God.*

The reference is probably primarily to 2 Chronicles 20:7 – “Abraham your friend” – but also note Isaiah 41:8 above.

Luke 12:4 I tell you, *my friends*, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

John 15:12-15 This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone *lay down his life for his friends*. ¹⁴*You are my friends if you do what I command you.* ¹⁵*No longer do I call you servants,*^e for the servant^f does not know what his master is doing; *but I have called you friends*, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

^e Greek *bondservants*

^f Greek *bondservant*; also verse 20

The “command” (v. 14) primarily in view is to love each other as Jesus had loved them (v. 12). The thought behind Jesus’ statement in v. 14 may then be that Jesus’ friends are those who are like-minded and act as he does. Such friends share common goals, and as such Jesus takes them into his confidence, sharing with them all he has learned from God (v. 15).

Judg 5:31 “So may all your enemies perish, O LORD! But *your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might.*” And the land had rest for forty years.

Note that Deborah may in essence be asking God to give those who are his friends a life of much blessing (cf. BKC), or perhaps more simply that they would be strong (cf. NCV).

God’s people have fellowship with him and Jesus Christ

See also:

▪ ... *Believers have fellowship collectively with God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1306

1Jn 1:3 ... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and *indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

1Cor 1:9 God is faithful, by whom *you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The expression “the fellowship of his Son” would appear to involve fellowship with Jesus Christ (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NIV, NLT), as well as with other Christians.

Phil 3:10 ... *that I may know him* and the power of his resurrection, *and may share his sufferings*, becoming like him in his death, ...

We experience a deep fellowship and bonding with others when we endure difficult times together with them. In the same way we experience such fellowship with Christ when we share in his sufferings – “the fellowship of sharing in his



sufferings" (NIV®; cf. KNKJ) – suffering for his cause as he did.

Lev 26:12 And *I will walk among you* and will be your God, and you shall be my people. 📖

"I will walk among you" points to the close relationship and fellowship that God would have with his people as he lived among them (cf. v. 11) – "I will walk in *and* with *and* among you" (AMP).

Ps 15:1-2 *O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? ²He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; ...* 📖

The phrases "sojourn in your tent" and "dwell on your holy hill" are suggestive of fellowship or communion with God (cf. ZBC).

John 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come to him and make our home with him.*" 📖

The last clause quite possibly alludes to fellowship with God and Jesus Christ, as part of their abiding presence – as does the latter part of Revelation 3:20 below.

Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, *I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God Loves His People

See also:

- *a) Love* [God's], p. 74

God loves the whole world but his love for his people has an additional intimacy or a more personal facet (as was noted in the previous section regarding his knowing them). There is also far more latitude for God to express his love in his dealings with those who are in a right or true relationship with him.

Subsections

- God loves his people
- God loves his people greatly
- God's love is with his people forever
- God shows his love for his people in delivering them . . .
- . . . and God shows his love for his people in protecting them
- God shows his love in his kindness and blessings to his people
- Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them
- Note: God delights and rejoices in his people

God loves his people

Ex 20:5-6 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but *showing steadfast love to thousands* of those who love me and keep my commandments.* 📖

* Or to the thousandth generation

Deut 33:3 Yes, he loved his people,^h all his holy ones were in hisⁱ hand; so they followed^j in your steps, receiving direction from you, ... 📖

^h Septuagint; Hebrew *peoples*

ⁱ Hebrew *your*

^j The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Job 10:12 *You have granted me life and steadfast love,* and your care has preserved my spirit. 📖

Ps 18:50 Great salvation he brings to his king, and *shows steadfast love to his anointed,* to David and his offspring forever. 📖

What is said here of David (cf. *Isa 55:3* ↓) is applicable to all God's people.

Ps 25:10 *All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.* 📖

Ps 42:8 *By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,* and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. 📖

As implied by the second clause, in the first clause the psalmist speaks of God directing his love towards him (cf. NIRV, NLT).



Ps 103:4 ... who redeems your life from the pit, *who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy*, ...

The second part of the verse suggests that God surrounds his people with his love and mercy (cf. NLT), even blessing them with manifestations of his love and mercy (cf. GNT).

Ps 146:8 ... the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; *the LORD loves the righteous*.

Prov 15:9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but *he loves him who pursues righteousness*.

Isa 55:3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, *my steadfast, sure love for David*.

God's love for all his people is "steadfast" and "sure".

John 14:21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And *he who loves me will be loved by my Father*, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

John 16:27 ... for *the Father himself loves you*, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.^k

^k Some manuscripts *from the Father*

1Thes 1:4 For we know, *brothers^l loved by God*, that he has chosen you, ...

^l Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

1Jn 4:16 So *we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us*. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

✦ God treasures his people:

Ex 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, *you shall be my treasured possession* among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ...

God loves his people greatly

See also:

- *God's love is great*, p. 74

Gen 32:10a *I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant* ...

1Ki 3:6 And Solomon said, "*You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David* my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And *you have kept for him this great and steadfast love* and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day.

Ps 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but *steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD*.

Ps 86:5 For you, *O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you*.

Ps 103:11-12 For *as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him*; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Ps 117:2 For *great is his steadfast love toward us*, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

Dan 10:19 And he said, "*O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage*." And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

Here an angel is addressing Daniel.

John 17:23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and *loved them even as you loved me*.

This shows the incomprehensible depth of God's love for his people, by comparing it with his love for Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:5 ... and hope does not put us to shame, because *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*.

This is generally understood to be referring to God filling his people with his love for them – as opposed to giving them his love so as to enable them to love. The term "poured" depicts the abundance of God's love for his people.



Eph 2:4-5 But^m God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

^m Or And

Eph 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

The term “beloved” (cf. [Col 3:12 ↓](#)) means “dearly loved” (NIV®).

Col 3:12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ...

Jude 1:2 May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

Jude in effect prays that his readers would experience a multiple measure of God's love.

Hos 14:4 I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

✦ God's people are “the apple of his eye”:

Zec 2:8 For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent meⁿ to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye: ...

ⁿ Or he sent me after glory

God's love is with his people forever

See also:

- [Ps 32:10 ↑](#)
- [God's love is steadfast](#), p. 75
- [God's love lasts forever](#), p. 76

Deut 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ...

The covenant God made with Israel was a covenant based on love – and he would keep it for “a thousand generations”, suggesting forever (cf. NIV).

Ps 23:6 Surely^o goodness and mercy^p shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell^q in the house of the LORD forever.^r

^o Or Only

^p Or steadfast love

^q Or shall return to dwell

^r Hebrew for length of days

The alternative rendering in the second text note offers “steadfast love” instead of “mercy”.

Ps 89:28, 30-33 My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm^s for him. ...³⁰If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules,^t ³¹if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, ³²then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ³³but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.

^s Or will remain faithful

^t Or my just decrees

Ps 103:17-18 But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children,¹⁸to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

Ps 136:1-2, 26 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. ²Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever. ...²⁶Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.

The refrain “his love endures forever” is repeated in each of this psalm's 26 verses (cf. [vv. 3, 10-16, 23-24 ↓](#)). It is likewise used as a refrain in 118:1-4.

Isa 54:8, 10 In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the LORD, your Redeemer. ...¹⁰For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

Jer 31:3b I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Lam 3:22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;^u his mercies never come to an end; ...

^u Syriac, Targum; Hebrew Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off

✦ Nothing can separate God's people from his and Jesus Christ's love:

Rom 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?³⁶As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”³⁷No, in all these things we are more



than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 📖

God shows his love for his people in delivering them . . .

See also:

- Rom 8:37 ↑
- Ps 144:2 ↓
- *God is love – as epitomized in him giving his only Son, to save us*, p. 74

Deut 7:8 ... but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 📖

Ps 17:7 Wondrously show^v your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. 📖

^v Or *Distinguish me by*

Ps 31:7-8 I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, ⁸and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place. 📖

Ps 57:3 He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness! 📖

Ps 86:13 For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol. 📖

Ps 98:3 He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. 📖

Here “salvation” is primarily that which God provided for “the house of Israel” – showing his love and faithfulness to his people.

Ps 136:3, 10-16, 23-24 Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever; 📖 ... ¹⁰to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, for his steadfast love endures forever; ¹¹and brought Israel out from among them, for his

steadfast love endures forever; ¹²with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his steadfast love endures forever; ¹³to him who divided the Red Sea in two, for his steadfast love endures forever; ¹⁴and made Israel pass through the midst of it, for his steadfast love endures forever; ¹⁵but overthrew^w Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for his steadfast love endures forever; ¹⁶to him who led his people through the wilderness, for his steadfast love endures forever; 📖 ... ²³It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever; ²⁴and rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever; ... 📖

^w Hebrew *shook off*

Regarding v. 10, the striking down of “the firstborn of Egypt” (v. 10a) was a critical act in God’s redemption of his people from Egypt, and so reflected his love for them (v. 10b).

Isa 43:3-4 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. ⁴Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. 📖

The second half of v. 4 is referring to what was said in v. 3. It is implying that in exchange for allowing his people (the Jewish exiles) to return home, God would allow the Persians to usurp the countries mentioned in v. 3b.

Isa 63:9 In all their affliction he was afflicted,^x and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. 📖

^x Or *he did not afflict*

Lam 3:22, 32 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;^y his mercies never come to an end; 📖 ... ³²but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; ... 📖

^y Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off*

Particularly if the rendering in the text note is to be preferred, these verses illustrate that God shows his love for his people in delivering them.

Zeph 3:17 The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. 📖

The clause “quiet you by his love” appears to speak of the calm (cf. NLT) and rest (cf. NCV) produced by God’s love and salvation (the latter being referred to earlier in the verse).



However there is some doubt about the Hebrew text (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB).

... and God shows his love for his people in protecting them

Deut 23:5 But the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you.

Deut 33:3, 12 Yes, he loved his people,^z all his holy ones were in his^a hand; so they followed^b in your steps, receiving direction from you, ... ¹²Of Benjamin he said, “The beloved of the LORD dwells in safety. The High God^c surrounds him all day long, and dwells between his shoulders.”

^z Septuagint; Hebrew *peoples*

^a Hebrew *your*

^b The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

^c Septuagint; Hebrew *dwells in safety by him. He*

The clause “all his holy ones were in his hand” (v. 3) speaks of God’s protection and care of his people (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV). The expression “dwells between his shoulders” (v. 12) refers to God’s people resting amidst God’s strength.

Ezra 9:9 For we are slaves. Yet our God has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection^d in Judea and Jerusalem.

^d Hebrew *a wall*

Ps 21:7 For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.

Because of God’s steadfast love for them, his people (like the king here) “will not be overwhelmed” (NCV™).

Ps 40:11 As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!

Ps 94:18 When I thought, “My foot slips,” your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.

Ps 144:2 ... he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples^e under me.

^e Many Hebrew manuscripts, Dead Sea Scroll, Jerome, Syriac, Aquila; most Hebrew manuscripts *subdues my people*

God’s steadfast love appears to be in view in the subsequent protective images applied to him.

Isa 38:17 Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.

✦ In his steadfast love, God leads his people:

Ex 15:13 You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

Note that Hosea 11:4 in the following subsection also speaks of God’s love in leading his people.

God shows his love in his kindness and blessings to his people

See also:

▪ *God shows his faithfulness in helping and blessing his people*, p. 822

Gen 39:20-21 And Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. ²¹But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

Num 14:19 Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.

2Chr 9:8 Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God! Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness.

Ps 103:11-12 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Ps 106:44-46 Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry. ⁴⁵For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love. ⁴⁶He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive.



Out of his great love God diminished the punishment that his people had deserved.

Ps 136:17, 21-22 ... to him who struck down great kings, for his steadfast love endures forever; ... ²¹and gave their land as a heritage, for his steadfast love endures forever; ^{22a} heritage to Israel his servant, for his steadfast love endures forever.

God brought down great kings (v. 17) and gave their land – the promised land of Canaan – as an inheritance to his people Israel (vv. 21-22), illustrating his enduring love for them.

Hos 11:4 I led them with cords of kindness,^f with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

^f Or *humaneness*; Hebrew *man*

Mic 7:18 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

Eph 1:4b-5 In love ⁵he predestined us^g for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ...

^g Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

1Jn 3:1a See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

2Thes 2:16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ...

✦ **God's love and great blessings for Israel under the first covenant:**

Deut 7:12-14 And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. ¹³He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you. ¹⁴You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock.

Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them

See also:

▪ *Jesus was loving – shown ultimately in him giving up his life*, p. 524

John 14:21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

John 15:9-10 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

In v. 9 Jesus remarkably likens his love for his people with God's ultimate love for him.

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers *beloved by the Lord*, because God chose you as the firstfruits^h to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

^h Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I have loved you.

John 15:12-13 This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

In v. 13 Jesus alludes to himself laying down his life for his followers, demonstrating a love of which there is none greater amongst people.

2Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ...

The love that Christ expressed in dying for all, compelled Paul to live for him.

Gal 2:20b And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Eph 5:2, 25 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ... ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ...



1Jn 3:16 *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.* 📖

Jesus Christ encapsulated or epitomized love in laying down his life for us.

Rev 1:5b *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ...* 📖

Note: God delights and rejoices in his people

Deut 30:9-10 The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For *the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers,*¹⁰ when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 📖

2Sam 22:20 He brought me out into a broad place; *he rescued me, because he delighted in me.* 📖

Ps 35:27 Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, *"Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant!"* 📖

In conjunction with his delighting in his people, God also delights in their well-being.

Ps 147:10-11 *His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,*¹¹ *but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.* 📖

Ps 149:4 For *the LORD takes pleasure in his people;* he adorns the humble with salvation. 📖

Prov 11:20 Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the LORD, but *those of blameless ways are his delight.* 📖

Isa 62:4-5 You shall no more be termed Forsaken,ⁱ and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,^j but *you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,^k and your land Married;¹ for the LORD delights in you,* and your land shall be married. ⁵For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, *and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.* 📖

ⁱ Hebrew *Azubah*

^j Hebrew *Shemamah*

^k Hebrew *Hephzibah*

¹ Hebrew *Beulah*

A renewed Israel of the future is most likely in view here – and below in 65:19 and Zephaniah 3:17.

Isa 65:19 *I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people;* no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. 📖

Jer 32:41 *I will rejoice in doing them good,* and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul. 📖

Zeph 3:17 The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; *he will rejoice over you with gladness;* he will quiet you by his love; *he will exult over you with loud singing.* 📖

‡ God delights in his people's obedience:

1Sam 15:22 And Samuel said, *"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God Is Faithful to His People

See also:

- *c) Faithfulness* [God's], p. 64

Subsections

- God is completely faithful to his people
- God is faithful even if his people are unfaithful and do wrong
- God shows his faithfulness in helping and blessing his people
- God faithfully keeps his promises to his people
- God faithfully maintains his covenants with his people forever
- Note: God remembers his people



God is completely faithful to his people

Ps 25:10 *All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.* 

Gen 32:10a *I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant ...* 

Deut 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, *the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ...* 

Lam 3:22-23 *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;^m his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* 

^mSyriac, Targum; Hebrew *Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off*

1Thes 5:23-24 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴*He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.* 

1Pet 4:19 Therefore *let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* 

† Promise of faithfulness and steadfast love:

Ps 89:24 *My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted.* 

This promise of faithfulness and steadfast love – which are often paired together in the OT – is made to the Davidic Messiah, but is applicable to all of God's people.

God is faithful even if his people are unfaithful and do wrong

Rom 3:3-4 *What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."* 

Neh 9:17-19, 33 *They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious*

and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and *did not forsake them.* ¹⁸*Even when they had made for themselves a goldenⁿ calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, ¹⁹you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go.*  ... ³³*Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.* 

ⁿ Hebrew *metal*

In vv. 17, 19 God's faithfulness to his unfaithful people (v. 33) is highlighted by the fact that he "did not forsake them" (vv. 17, 19).

Lev 26:43-44 But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because *they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes.* ⁴⁴*Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God.* 

2Ki 13:22-23 Now Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. ²³*But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now.* 

Despite the sin and unfaithfulness of the people (cf. v. 11) – which lead to their oppression by the Syrians (v. 22) – God faithfully persisted in keeping his covenant (cf. *God faithfully maintains his covenants with his people forever . . .*, below) and so did not destroy them.

Jer 31:37 Thus says the LORD: *"If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD."* 

Jer 51:5 *For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the LORD of hosts, but the land of the Chaldeans^o is full of guilt against the Holy One of Israel.* 

^o Hebrew *their land*

Most other modern translations follow the interpretation reflected in the alternative rendering in the ESV text note (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV). As such this verse attests to God's faithfulness to Israel in spite of their guilt and unfaithfulness.



2Tim 2:13 ... if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself. 📖

The reference is to Jesus Christ. Like his Father, Jesus is faithful even when his people are faithless.

✦ **Despite what David's descendants might do, God would maintain his faithfulness to David:**

Ps 89:30-33 *If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules,^p ³¹if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, ³²then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ³³but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.* 📖

^p Or my just decrees

God shows his faithfulness in helping and blessing his people

See also:

- *God's discipline is characterized by faithfulness and justice,* p. 876

Gen 24:27 ... and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen." 📖

Abraham's servant is speaking of God leading him to find a wife for Abraham's son Isaac, thus showing his faithfulness to Abraham.

Gen 32:10 *I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.* 📖

The term "two camps" refers to Jacob's large household (including servants) and numerous flocks, herds and camels – all of which Jacob had just (v. 7) divided into two groups.

Ps 31:5 Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God. 📖

Ps 40:11 As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me! 📖

Ps 57:3 *He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!* 📖

Ps 85:10-12 *Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other. ¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky. ¹²Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.* 📖

This attests to God's faithfulness – along with his love and righteousness – in his care of his people.

Ps 91:4 *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.* 📖

In his faithfulness God will protect his people.

Ps 98:3 He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. 📖

Here "salvation" is primarily that which God provided for "the house of Israel" – showing his faithfulness to his people.

Lam 3:22-23 *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;^a his mercies never come to an end; ²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* 📖

^a Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off*

Zec 8:7-8 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, ⁸and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.* 📖

This may be speaking of God being faithful (and righteous) to his people following on their return to the land, rather than in his earlier actions (vv. 7-8a). But even if this is the case, this is well complimented by God's saving them and returning them home (vv. 7-8a), exemplifying his faithfulness.

1Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. *God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* 📖

1Thes 5:23-24 *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.* 📖

1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 📖



Isa 49:7 Thus says the LORD, *the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."* 

This speaks of God's faithfulness to his Messiah, in exalting him.

‡ **God promises to be faithful to his people:**

Hos 2:20 *I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.* 

God faithfully keeps his promises to his people

See also:

- *God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises*, p. 65
- *So, God was faithful to his covenants and promises with Abraham and Israel*, p. 351

Note that most of the promises referred to in the following verses are ones associated with covenants that God had made with his people.

Josh 21:45 *Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.* 

Josh 23:14-15 And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things^r that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed. ¹⁵But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the LORD your God has given you, ... 

^r Or words; also twice in verse 15

In v. 15 Joshua refers to God's promised judgment for the people if they broke his covenant with them. Just as he keeps his promises of blessings to his people, God also keeps his promises of judgment.

Deut 7:8 ... but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 

1Ki 5:12a And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him. 

1Ki 17:16 *The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.* 

Ps 105:42-45 For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. ⁴³So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. ⁴⁴And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, ⁴⁵that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD! 

The "holy promise" (v. 42) was that of the land of Canaan (cf. vv. 8-11), referred to here as "the lands of the nations" (v. 44).

Ps 119:65, 140 *You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word.*  ... ¹⁴⁰Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it. 

This reflects that God's promises have been "thoroughly tested" (NIV®) and proven true.

Ps 132:11 *The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body^s I will set on your throne.* 

^s Hebrew *of your fruit of the womb*

Ps 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. [*The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.*]^t 

^t These two lines are supplied by one Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint, Syriac (compare Dead Sea Scroll)

Jer 33:14 *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.* 

Mic 7:20 *You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.* 

Note that here faithfulness is part of what God swore or promised, a promise which Micah asserts God will fulfill.

Acts 13:23 Of this man's offspring *God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.* 

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for *he who promised is faithful.* 



‡ God is able to keep his promises:

Rom 4:20-21 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 📖

God faithfully maintains his covenants with his people forever

God's faithful keeping of his covenants with his people is one of the most prominent OT attestations to God's faithfulness.

Gen 9:11-16 I establish my covenant with you [Noah and his sons], that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹²And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." 📖

God has faithfully kept this covenant – made with those who were his people, but for all humankind and all creatures – to this day.

Deut 4:31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God. *He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.* 📖

Deut 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, *the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ...* 📖

Judg 2:1 Now the angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, ...' 📖

Here the angel of the LORD speaks on behalf of God.

2Sam 23:5 For does not my house stand so with God? For *he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure.* For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? 📖

Ps 89:28, 34-37 My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and *my covenant will stand firm^u for him.* 📖 ... ³⁴I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. ³⁵Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. ³⁷Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies." Selah 📖

^u Or will remain faithful

Verse 37 speaks of the moon faithfully remaining in the sky as being reflective of God faithfully keeping his covenant with David forever.

Ps 105:8-11 *He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, ⁹the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, ¹⁰which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, ¹¹saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance."* 📖

Ps 111:9 He sent redemption to his people; *he has commanded his covenant forever.* Holy and awesome is his name! 📖

Jer 32:40 *I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them.* And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. 📖

Jer 33:20-21 *Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, ²¹then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers.* 📖

Just as God will keep the cycle of day and night continuing till the end of days, so will he faithfully keep his covenants with David (cf. **Ps 89:28, 34-37** ↑) and with the Levitical priests.

Hos 2:19 *And I will betroth you to me forever.* I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. 📖

Betrothal was a binding contract – a covenant – entered into prior to marriage. In saying that he will betroth Israel to himself forever, God speaks of faithfully maintaining this covenant with her forever.



Note: God remembers his people

Ps 136:23 *It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever; ...* 

Ps 115:12 *The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; ...* 

Isa 44:21 Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; *O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.* 

Isa 49:14-16 But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.” ¹⁵*“Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.* 

With the last clause (vv. 16b) God is in effect saying to Jerusalem and its people: “You are always in my thoughts!” (CEV)

Zeph 2:7 The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah, on which they shall graze, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For *the LORD their God will be mindful of them* and restore their fortunes. 

Gen 8:1 But *God remembered Noah* and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. *And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.* 

Gen 19:29 So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, *God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.* 

Gen 30:22 Then *God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.* 

1Sam 1:19-20 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and *the LORD remembered her.* ²⁰*And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the LORD.”*^v 

^v *Samuel* sounds like the Hebrew for *heard of God*

Ps 40:17 As for me, I am poor and needy, but *the Lord takes thought for me.* You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God! 

† **God remembers his covenants:**

Ex 2:24 And God heard their groaning, and *God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) God Shows Grace to His People

See also:

- *Along with being merciful, God is gracious*, p. 77
- *b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ*, p. 646
- *“In” Jesus Christ God’s people are given God’s grace*, p. 785

What God does for his people is based on his “grace” – his free and undeserved favour. God’s wonderful grace in the believer’s salvation is discussed largely in *b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ*, p. 646. The first subsection here also includes references to it, but this section as a whole primarily deals with the ongoing role of God’s grace in his people’s lives.

Subsections

- *God and Jesus Christ show abundant grace toward their people*
- *By grace God’s people are given spiritual blessings and gifts*
- *By grace God’s people are entrusted with his work . . .*
- *. . . By grace God’s people are enabled to do his work*
- *By grace God’s people are strengthened*
- *By grace God’s people avoid sin*
- *Further notes on grace in the lives of God’s people*



God and Jesus Christ show abundant grace toward their people

See also:

- [John 1:14, 16](#) ↓

Rom 5:15-17, 20-21 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, *much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.* ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but *the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.* ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, *much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.* ... ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but *where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,* ²¹*so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Verse 15 contrasts the sin of Adam, which led to many dying, with the grace of Jesus Christ, which led to many receiving God's grace and the accompanying gift of righteousness. In saying that "much more" the latter "abounded" to many, Paul appears to be pointing to it being more emphatic and overwhelming. This greater forcefulness is illustrated in the following verse (v. 16), which describes how the judgment followed only one sin whereas the gift that came by grace surmounted many sins. The result of the latter is also more triumphant – it being the irrevocable justification which offsets the judgment. Verses 17, 20-21 further show how "much more" (v. 17) effusive is the effect of God's grace than that of sin.

2Cor 9:8, 14 And *God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^w in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.* ... ¹⁴*while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.*

^w Or *all contentment*

Eph 2:6-7 ... and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷*so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

1Tim 1:14 ... and *the grace of our Lord overflowed for me* with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

1Pet 1:2b *May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and *great grace was upon them all.*

Acts 6:8 And *Stephen, full of grace* and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.

† **God is "the God of all grace":**

1Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, *the God of all grace*, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

The ascription of God has "the God of all grace" speaks of God as the one who "imparts all blessing and favor" (AMP), the ultimate source of all spiritual blessings. It also points to his grace as being incalculable and limitless.

By grace God's people are given spiritual blessings and gifts

John 1:14, 16 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ... ¹⁶*And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*

The term "fullness" (v. 16) refers to Christ being "full of grace and truth" (v. 14; cf. NCV), and thus refers to "the fullness of his grace" (GNT, NIV). The phrase "grace upon grace" speaks of "one gracious blessing after another" (NLT).

Rom 12:3 For *by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you* not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

The phrase "the grace given me" appears to refer to the wisdom and authority given to Paul by God's grace (cf. v. 6 ↓).

Rom 12:6 *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us*, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ...

The spiritual gifts given to believers are manifestations of God's grace (cf. v. 3 ↑; 1Cor 1:4-5 ↓; Eph 4:7-8, 11 ↓; 1Pet 4:10 ↓).

1Cor 1:4-5 I give thanks to my God always for you because of *the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,* ⁵*that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—*



In v. 5b Paul quite possibly has spiritual gifts in view, particularly as he deals with them in detail later in the letter.

Eph 4:7-8, 11 But *grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.* ⁸Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and *he gave gifts to men.*" ... ¹¹*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^x and teachers,^y ...*

^x Or *pastors*

^y Or *the shepherd-teachers*

1Pet 4:10 *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ...*

"God's varied grace" here points to the different spiritual gifts one receives from God, manifestations of his grace.

† God graciously blesses his people:

Gen 33:11 [Jacob, to Esau:] *Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.* Thus he urged him, and he took it.

The use of "gracious" (or "graciously") in the OT does not have precisely the same sense as "grace" in the NT. Nevertheless this verse reflects the fact that God in his grace blesses us, to the extent that we can in turn bless others.

By grace God's people are entrusted with his work . . .

Although the following passages all involve Paul speaking largely of his own circumstances, the principle of God's people being entrusted with his work by his grace is applicable to all believers.

Rom 1:4b-5 ... Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received *grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith* for the sake of his name among all the nations, ...

The mention of Paul receiving "grace" is most likely referring to God's grace shown to him in choosing him for his task (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). But it could also refer to or include the grace which God bestowed on Paul in equipping him for the task.

Rom 15:15-16 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, *because of the grace given me by God* ¹⁶*to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

1Cor 15:9-10a For *I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* ¹⁰*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.*

By grace Paul was made an apostle, with the accompanying critical ministry of extending God's kingdom. Note that the first part of v. 10a gives a sobering principle that can be applied generally to all aspects of our lives – i.e. we are what we are only by the grace of God.

Gal 1:15-16 But when *he who had set me apart before I was born,^z and who called me by his grace,* ¹⁶*was pleased to reveal his Son to^a me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;^b ...*

^z Greek *set me apart from my mother's womb*

^a Greek *in*

^b Greek *with flesh and blood*

The fact that Paul was set apart by God before he was born illustrates God's grace, along with him being called by grace (v. 15). Note that Paul is likely talking – primarily at least – of being set apart for and called to his apostolic work (cf. GNT, NCV), but instead his conversion could be in view. Possibly Paul is not intending to distinguish between the two.

Gal 2:7, 9 On the contrary, when *they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised,* just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised ... ⁹*and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*

The grace given to Paul (v. 9a) refers to him being entrusted with preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (v. 7; cf. v. 9b).

Eph 3:2-3, 7-9 ... assuming that you have heard of *the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,* ³*how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.* ... ⁷*Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.* ⁸*To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,* ⁹*and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^c God who created all things, ...*

^c Or *by*

There is some doubt as to how "grace" is used in v. 2. Amongst the possibilities are that it refers to God's grace: in commissioning Paul for this work; in making known the mystery of Christ to Paul (cf. v. 3); in the message itself; and in imparting the message to the Ephesians or the Gentiles in general. The first two options – which are closely related –



are reflected in the use of "grace" in vv. 7-9. Both options pertain to this subsection. The fourth option pertains to the following subsection. Note that the latter part of v. 7 may be speaking of the expression of God's grace in Paul becoming a servant of the gospel being effected by God's power, in changing Paul and/or equipping him for the work. However God's power in Paul's ongoing ministry may primarily be in view (cf. BKC).

... By grace God's people are enabled to do his work

See also:

- Eph 3:2-3 ↑

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 📖

This may well be implying that the apostles were able to give such powerful testimony because of God's grace.

Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 📖

Acts 14:26 ... and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. 📖

In committing Paul and Barnabas to God's grace (cf. Acts 15:40 ↓), the believers acknowledged that it would only be by God's grace that they would be able to complete the work – which they now had done.

Acts 15:40 ... but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 📖

1Cor 3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 📖

1Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 📖

2Cor 8:1-2, 6-7 We want you to know, brothers,^d about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 📖 ...⁶Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷But as you excel in everything—in faith, in

speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you^e—see that you excel in *this act of grace* also. 📖

^d Or *brothers and sisters*

^e Some manuscripts *in your love for us*

Particularly in light of vv. 1-2, in vv. 6-7 "grace" probably is primarily likewise referring to the grace of God manifested in generous giving towards supplying the needs of God's people (cf. 2Cor 9:8, 12-14 ↓). Note that such acts are a service (cf. 2Cor 9:13 ↓) to others, an aspect of God's work for believers to do.

2Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^f in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 📖

^f Or *all contentment*

2Cor 9:13-14 By their approval of this service, they^g will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 📖

^g Or *you*

The "surpassing grace of God upon you" (v. 14) is that manifested in their "service" (v. 13) of giving.

Phil 1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace,^h both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 📖

^h Or *you all have fellowship with me in grace*

Particularly in light of Paul's reference earlier in v. 5 to their partnership with him in spreading the gospel, it appears that here "grace" refers to that which God gave Paul and the Philippians in regard to defending and confirming the gospel – either in being commissioned to do so (as per the theme of the previous subsection) or in being enabled to do so.

2Thes 1:11-12 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power,¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. 📖

1Pet 4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ... 📖

As noted earlier, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are a manifestation of God's grace, equipping believers for God's work, such as serving others.



By grace God's people are strengthened

Heb 13:9 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for *it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace*, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. 

2Tim 2:1 You then, my child, *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*, ... 

1Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, *the God of all grace*, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, *will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you*. 

The title "the God of all grace" suggests that it is by God's grace that he restores his people and confirms, strengthens, and establishes them in the faith.

2Cor 12:9-10 But he said to me, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*" *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. *For when I am weak, then I am strong.* 

Christ's grace was sufficient for Paul in his weakness for the more he was aware of his weaknesses, the more he was open to depending on Christ's power – in which by Christ's grace he was truly made strong.

✦ The word of God's grace builds them up:

Acts 20:32 And now I commend you to God and to *the word of his grace, which is able to build you up* and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 

The use of the expression "the word of his grace" speaks of "the commands and counsels and promises of His unmerited favor" (AMP).

By grace God's people avoid sin

Rom 6:14 For *sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace*. 

We are not under the law but "under grace" – the new regime where, in addition to being gained by God's grace, our righteousness is maintained by God's grace.

Titus 2:11-12 For *the grace of God* has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²*training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age*, ... 

Heb 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but *one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin*. ¹⁶*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* 

For comment, see [Heb 4:15-16](#) – under [Approach God with confidence](#), p. 1217.

James 4:4-6 You adulterous people!ⁱ Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? ⁶*But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* 

ⁱ Greek *You adulteresses!*

God's people are to shun friendship with the world (vv. 4-5), which is contrary to God (v. 4) and so an aspect of sin. This is not easily done, but God gives his humble people grace that is greater than such a difficulty (v. 6a; cf. AMP, GNT, NLT).

Further notes on grace in the lives of God's people

See also:

- [Due to his mercy, graciousness and compassion: God is long-suffering; . . .](#), p. 78
- [. . . and God is forgiving](#), p. 79
- [. . . and live in God's grace](#), p. 1074

2Thes 2:16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and *gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace*, ... 

By his grace, in conjunction with the salvation in which it was manifested, God has given us "eternal comfort and good hope".

Gal 6:18 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.* 

This benediction or blessing of the presence of Jesus Christ's grace suggests that Christ continues to minister to believers through his grace. (A similar comment can be made regarding the following two references.)

2Jn 1:3 *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us*, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, *in truth and love*. 



John assures his readers that God and Jesus Christ's grace – along with their mercy and peace – will “be with us who live in truth and love” (NLT).

Rev 22:21 *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all!*¹ Amen. 

¹ Some manuscripts *all the saints*

✦ **The hope of the grace to come:**

1Pet 1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action,^k and being sober-minded, *set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* 

^k Greek *girding up the loins of your mind*

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

God's incomparable gift of his Holy Spirit is critical to God's relationship with each of his people – including God's work in and through them. In part at least, this is due to the Holy Spirit being the prime means by which God renews and helps believers.

a) God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People

See also:

- *God gave the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ*, p. 535
- *Baptism signifies or is linked with receiving the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 1441
- *. . . Receiving the Holy Spirit is sometimes spoken of as being "baptized" with the Holy Spirit*, p. 1441

Subsections

- Prelude: Prophecies of God giving his Spirit to his people
- God gives his people his Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe and obey him
- The Holy Spirit lives in God's people
- Having the Holy Spirit verifies that a person is one of God's people . . .
- . . . Having the Holy Spirit indicates that God lives in a person
- The Holy Spirit is God's seal, guaranteeing what is to come
- Examples of people receiving the Holy Spirit
- Examples of people being filled with the Holy Spirit
- Note: The concept of asking for the Holy Spirit

Prelude: Prophecies of God giving his Spirit to his people

Apart perhaps from Zechariah 12:10, the following verses are referring to – or are at least applicable to – the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on God's people under the new covenant, first occurring at Pentecost (cf. [Acts 2:1-4 ↓](#)). But note that some commentators see them referring to a dispensation of the Spirit in the end times, during a millennial kingdom.

Possibly some of the verses have both in view. See also comments below on [Joel 2:28-29](#) and [Ezekiel 36:26-27](#).

Isa 32:14-15 For the palace is forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks; ¹⁵*until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high*, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. 

Isa 44:3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; *I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.* 

Ezek 36:26-27 *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*^a 

^a Or *my just decrees*

The contexts for this and the following two verses from Ezekiel speak of a national restoration of Israel, apparently in the end times (cf. [Zec 12:10 ↓](#)). Note that v. 26 repeats 11:19 almost verbatim. The context of the earlier occurrence (11:19) makes it easier to associate it with the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Ezek 37:14 *And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.* 

Ezek 39:29 *And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God.* 

Joel 2:28-29 ^b *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. ²⁹Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.* 

^b Ch 3:1 in Hebrew

This refers at least primarily to the present era, following Jesus Christ's inaugurating of God's kingdom. In Peter's use of this passage in Acts 2, "all flesh" is applied to all of God's people, from among the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Zec 12:10 *And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only*



child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. 

It is possible that “spirit” refers to the Holy “Spirit” (NASB, NKJV), hence this verse’s inclusion here. Note that the verse quite likely refers to Israel in the end times.

Acts 1:4-5 And while staying^c with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to *wait for the promise of the Father*, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but *you will be baptized with^d the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*” 

^c Or *eating*

^d Or *in*

✦ **The fulfillment at Pentecost of God’s promises of the Holy Spirit:**

Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ²And *suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested^e on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* 

^e Or *And tongues as of fire appeared to them, distributed among them, and rested*

The “tongues as of fire” (v. 3) were a visual symbol of the presence of God’s Spirit, “tongues” quite possibly signifying the “other tongues” (v. 4) or languages that the Holy Spirit enabled the believers to speak.

God gives his people his Holy Spirit . . .

Rom 5:5 ... and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through *the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.* 

Gal 4:6 And *because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”* 

1Cor 2:12 Now *we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God*, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. 

1Cor 6:19a Or do you not know that your body is a temple of *the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?* 

1Cor 12:13 For *in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^f or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.* 

^f Or *servants; Greek bondservants*

The expression “in one Spirit we were all baptized” speaks of Christians sharing in the Holy Spirit, being cleansed by the Spirit at conversion. This is closely associated here with – even identified with – receiving the Holy Spirit (“all were made to drink of one Spirit”).

1Thes 4:8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but *God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.* 

Titus 3:5-6 ... he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of *the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly* through Jesus Christ our Savior, ... 

1Jn 2:20, 27b But *you have been anointed by the Holy One*, and you all have knowledge.[‡]  ... ²⁷ ... But as *his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.* 

[‡] Some manuscripts *you know everything*

This “anointing” that believers receive is taken by most commentators to refer to the Holy Spirit. Being anointed with the Holy Spirit designates and sets apart a believer for a life devoted to God. The phrases “and is true, and is no lie” (v. 27b) is either affirming that the anointing is “real, not counterfeit” (NIV®), or speaking of the Spirit’s teaching being true (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Phil 2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any *participation in the Spirit*, any affection and sympathy, ... 

In being given the Holy Spirit, God’s people participate in the Holy Spirit.

. . . God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe and obey him

See also:

- ***We are given God’s Holy Spirit*** [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1053

This subsection reiterates the teaching of the previous two subsections – i.e. that God gives the Holy Spirit to his people – but it does so by teaching that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe and obey.

John 7:38-39 *Whoever believes in me*, as^h the Scripture has said, *‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’*³⁹ *Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive*, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. 



^h Or *let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As*

Acts 11:17 If then *God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?*

The "gift" is the Holy Spirit (cf. vv. 15-16), given to people when they believe in Christ.

Eph 1:13 In him *you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ...*

Gal 3:2, 14 Let me ask you only this: *Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?* ...¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that *we might receive the promised Spiritⁱ through faith.*

ⁱ Greek *receive the promise of the Spirit*

The latter part of v. 14 may seem like it is talking about having faith in receiving the Spirit. But as reflected by v. 2, its context shows that it is almost definitely meaning that if we have faith in Christ, we will receive the Spirit that God has promised (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

1Cor 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and *no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.*

"Jesus is Lord" was the earliest Christian confession, expressing one's belief. This cannot be done "except in the Holy Spirit" – which illustrates the connection between having the Holy Spirit and belief.

John 14:15-17a "If you love me, you will *keep my commandments.* ¹⁶*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper;^j to be with you forever,* ¹⁷*even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.*

^j Or *Advocate, or Counselor*; also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7

This and the following verses show that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey him.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

This refers to repentance, which involves obedience. Thus this verse also indicates that those who obey receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is *the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.*

1Jn 3:24 *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^k and God^l in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.*

^k Greek *him*

^l Greek *he*

† **David's repentant plea for God to not take the Holy Spirit from him:**

Ps 51:11 Cast me not away from your presence, and *take not your Holy Spirit from me.*

Note that David had received a distinctive anointing with the Holy Spirit. For when Samuel anointed him to be king, "the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward." (1Sa 16:13)

The Holy Spirit lives in God's people

John 14:17 ... even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for *he dwells with you and will be in you.*

Note that this verse shows that in contrast to God's people, the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit – nor discern him.

Rom 8:9a, 11 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact *the Spirit of God dwells in you.* ... ¹¹*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

2Tim 1:14 *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

James 4:5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over *the spirit that he has made to dwell in us*"?

The Holy Spirit may be the "spirit" being spoken of here (cf. CEV, NASB, NCV, NKJV, NLT), who dwells within believers.

1Jn 2:27a *But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you.*

1Cor 6:19 Or do you not know that *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ...*

The reference to each believer's body as "a temple of the Holy Spirit" is indicative of the fact that the Holy Spirit lives



in believers – as reflected by the subsequent phrase (“within you”).

Eph 3:16 ... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through *his Spirit in your inner being*, ...

✦ The mystery of the Holy Spirit in a believer:

John 3:8 *The wind^m blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*

^mThe same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*

This most likely is implying one or more of the following: the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the lives of God's people, doing whatever he pleases; one cannot comprehend the work of the Spirit in God's people; and/or one “can't explain how people are born of the Spirit” (NLT).

Having the Holy Spirit verifies that a person is one of God's people . . .

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence*, p. 143
- *Having the Holy Spirit* [reasons for assurance], p. 1057

Acts 15:8 And God, who knows the heart, *bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit* just as he did to us, ...

The phrase “bore witness to them” refers to God indicating that he had accepted people from among the Gentiles as his people – by giving them the Holy Spirit.

Rom 8:15-16 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but *you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”* ¹⁶*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* ...

The Holy Spirit testifies to and assures believers that they are God's children (v. 16). Accordingly, by the Holy Spirit believers can acknowledge or address God as Father (v. 15). Note that “Abba” is Aramaic for “Father”.

Rom 8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. *Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

Acts 11:17 If then *God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ*, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

God gives people the Holy Spirit “when” (cf. **Eph 1:13** ↓) they believe. This implies that all people who believe have the

Holy Spirit. As such, having the Holy Spirit verifies that a person is a believer, one of God's people.

Eph 1:13 In him *you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,* ...

Gal 3:2-3 Let me ask you only this: *Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?* ³Are you so foolish? *Having begun by the Spirit*, are you now being perfected by^a the flesh?

^a Or *now ending with*

Like Acts 11:17 above, this implies that we receive the Holy Spirit when we believe (v. 2), at the beginning (v. 3) of our lives as one of God's people.

. . . Having the Holy Spirit indicates that God lives in a person

1Jn 3:24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^o and God^p in him. *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.*

^o Greek *him*

^p Greek *he*

Having the Spirit of God verifies that God himself lives in us.

1Jn 4:13 *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*

The Greek translated here as “given us of his Spirit” indicates that we are given a share in God's Spirit (cf. BKC) – a “participation in the Spirit” (Phil 2:1; cf. Rom 8:9) – which is probably a more precise description of what is meant when one speaks of God giving his Holy Spirit to his people. Also note that sharing with God of his Spirit is a key aspect to the mutual indwelling of God and believers.

John 14:16-21 And I will ask the Father, and *he will give you another Helper,^a to be with you forever,* ¹⁷*even the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for *he dwells with you and will be in you.* ¹⁸“I will not leave you as orphans; *I will come to you.* ¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but *you will see me.* Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰In that day *you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.* ²¹Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and *I will love him and manifest myself to him.*

^a Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7



This could be referring to believers experiencing Jesus Christ's presence (vv. 18-21) – with him living in them (v. 20) – through having the Holy Spirit (cf. vv. 16-17). For further comment, including alternative interpretations, see *God and Jesus Christ enable their people to know them*, p. 811.

‡ **One must be born of the Holy Spirit to enter God's kingdom:**

John 3:5-7 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.^r ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You^s must be born again.' 

^r The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*

^s The Greek for *you* is plural here

One needs to be born of the Spirit – given spiritual life by the Spirit (v. 6b) – through the Spirit's presence, in order to enter God's kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is God's seal, guaranteeing what is to come

Eph 1:13-14 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, *were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,* ¹⁴*who is the guarantee^t of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,*^u to the praise of his glory. 

^t Or *down payment*

^u Or *until God redeems his possession*

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve *the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* 

2Cor 1:21-22 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²²*and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*^v 

^v Or *down payment*

In saying that God "put his seal on us" (v. 22) Paul appears to be referring to God giving the Holy Spirit to believers, as in the subsequent phrase. Note that "anointed us" (v. 21b) may have in view God bestowing on believers gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. AMP), in commissioning them for his service (cf. NLT).

2Cor 5:5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is *God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.* 

Rom 8:11 *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* 

Although the physical bodies of believers will die due to sin (cf. v. 10), because God's Spirit lives in them believers can be assured that God will raise them from the dead through his Spirit.

Rom 8:23 And not only the creation, but *we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* 

The term "firstfruits" alludes to the firstfruits of the harvest which were offered to God. As well as preceding the rest of the harvest, it was seen as a confirmation that the rest would take place. Here the term is applied to either the spiritual fruits produced in believers by the indwelling Holy Spirit and/or the Holy Spirit himself (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT) in believers. For like the firstfruits of the harvest, the Spirit's presence and his fruit both precede and are an assurance of the future blessings promised to believers.

Gal 5:5 *For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.* 

Having the Holy Spirit enables believers to await the righteousness to come – presumably one aspect of the Spirit's role as God's seal. This "hope of righteousness" is either referring to being pronounced right with God on Judgment Day (cf. v. 4), or being made righteous in ourselves (i.e. the consummation of our sanctification) following Christ's return.

‡ **God's promise that his Spirit (and words) will not leave his people:**

Isa 59:21 "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore." 

A millennial age is understood by many to be primarily in view, but even so (as often is the case) the truth set forth is very much applicable to believers now.

Examples of people receiving the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:14-17 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵*who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit,* ¹⁶*for he had not yet fallen*



on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. 

This occurrence of the Gentiles not receiving the Holy Spirit until some time after their apparent conversion is unusual (although possibly it also occurs in Acts 19:1-6 below). As seen in the previous subsections, Scripture as a whole teaches that believers receive the Holy Spirit at the time of their conversion. A common explanation for this occurrence is that it was because these particular believers were Samaritans and being in the very early days of the church, even prior to the lesson learnt through Cornelius (cf. Acts 1-12), it was very beneficial that leaders from the church in Jerusalem be present to see these Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit. This showed the Jewish section of the church that their conversion was genuine and that God had accepted them (cf. Acts 10:44-46a ). Additionally, particularly as they received the Holy Spirit when Peter and John laid hands on them, it promoted unity and acceptance of each other.

Acts 9:17-18 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so *that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*" ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ... 

Although it is not explicitly stated, presumably Paul received the Holy Spirit at this time, particularly as it is mentioned along with receiving back his sight in v. 17, which did occur here (v. 18).

Acts 10:44-46a While Peter was still saying these things, *the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.* ⁴⁵And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because *the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.* ⁴⁶For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. 

Acts 19:1-6 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland^w country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ²And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in^x the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands on them,

the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. 

^w Greek *upper* (that is, highland)

^x Or *into*

A number of commentators think that these disciples (v. 1) were disciples of John and had only a limited understanding of the gospel. Verses 4b-5 may well mean that it was only at this point that Jesus became the focus of their faith – which would explain why they received the Holy Spirit at this time rather than when they earlier "believed" (v. 2).

Examples of people being filled with the Holy Spirit

See also:

▪ **Acts 9:17** 

Being "filled with the Holy Spirit" involves one being thoroughly immersed in the Spirit and under his control, with one's own spirit being in step with, even at one with, the Holy Spirit. At times it appears to be spoken of as occurring for a relatively short period of time, such as in empowering a person to speak or preach God's word on a particular occasion (cf. Luke 1:41-42, 67 ; Acts 4:8 ; Acts 4:31 ; Acts 13:8-11 ). (Although this does not necessarily mean that afterwards such people were no longer filled with the Spirit.) In contrast, some people are described generally as being full of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 1:15 ; Acts 6:3-5 ; Acts 11:24 ). Like these people, all believers are called to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18 .

Luke 1:15 ... for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and *he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.* ... 

This is a prophecy regarding John the Baptist, whose parents were Elizabeth (cf. v. 41 ) and Zechariah (cf. v. 67 .

Luke 1:41-42, 67 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And *Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,* ⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!  ... ⁶⁷And his father *Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit* and prophesied, saying, ... 

Luke 4:1 And *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,* returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness ... 

Acts 2:4 And *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit* and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. 



Acts 4:8 Then *Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit*, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ... 

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit* and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. 

Acts 6:3-5 Therefore, brothers,^y pick out from among you *seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit* and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose *Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit*, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 

^y Or *brothers and sisters*

Acts 11:24 ... for [Barnabas] *he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit* and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. 

Acts 13:8-11 But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹But Saul, who was also called *Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit*, looked intently at him ¹⁰and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. 

Note the power (v. 11) that accompanied Paul's words that he spoke when "filled with the Holy Spirit" (v. 9).

Acts 13:52 And *the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit*. 

Ex 31:3 ... and *I have filled him with the Spirit of God*, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, ... 

✦ **Believers are to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit:**

Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but *be filled with the Spirit*, ... 

Here Paul implies that believers are to continue on being filled with the Holy Spirit. It also suggests that they are passively involved – they are to "let" (CEV, NLT) the Holy Spirit fill them (cf. ZBC).

Note: The concept of asking for the Holy Spirit

Luke 11:13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!* 

This reference to asking for the Holy Spirit appears to contradict the teaching that all believers have the Holy Spirit, given to them when they first believe. In explaining this, some commentators point out that Jesus said this before the Holy Spirit was given to believers at Pentecost (although note Acts 8:14-15 below which occurred afterwards). Possibly this reference here can be applied to asking God to continue filling one with his Holy Spirit (cf. [Eph 5:18](#) ).

Acts 8:14-15 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵who came down and *prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit*, ... 

For comment, see the comment on [Acts 8:14-17](#) – under [Examples of people receiving the Holy Spirit](#), p. 835.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit

Subsections

- God saves his people through the Holy Spirit
- God instructs and teaches his people through the Holy Spirit
- God works through his people by the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . God speaks through his people by the Holy Spirit
- Jesus Christ works amongst God's people through the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit continues Jesus Christ's work in and through his people

God saves his people through the Holy Spirit

See also:

- [Isa 63:14](#) 
- [God saves people through Jesus Christ](#) + ref., p. 533



- *God works in and through his people, through Jesus Christ*, p. 535
- *The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life*, p. 843
- *... They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God's word*, p. 857

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because *God chose you as the firstfruits^z to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.* 📖

^z Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

Titus 3:5 ... *he saved us*, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit*, ... 📖

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve *the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* 📖

Being sealed by God with the Holy Spirit for “the day of redemption” indicates that the Spirit has a key role in securing a Christian’s salvation – supporting the assertion that God saves his people through the Holy Spirit.

Rom 8:11 *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* 📖

This refers in part at least to the culmination of the salvation of God’s people (cf. **Eph 4:30** ↑) – i.e. their resurrection from the dead.

✦ **God fills his people with his love for them through the Holy Spirit:**

Rom 5:5 ... and hope does not put us to shame, because *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit* who has been given to us. 📖

God fills his people with his love for them “by means of” (GNT) the Holy Spirit.

God instructs and teaches his people through the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *God has given his word by the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 301
- *... Further mention of Scripture coming by the Holy Spirit*, p. 302
- *The Holy Spirit teaches God's people . . .*, p. 845

- *... The Holy Spirit teaches God's people about all things*, p. 846
- *The Holy Spirit leads God's people*, p. 848
- *The Holy Spirit directs God's people in doing God's work*, p. 848

God instructs his people through the Holy Spirit, both in teaching them and directing them.

Neh 9:20 *You gave your good Spirit to instruct them* and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. 📖

Isa 63:11-14 Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people.^a Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is *he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit*, ¹²who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, ¹³who led them through the depths? *Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble.* ¹⁴*Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.* 📖

^a Or *Then his people remembered the days of old, of Moses*

This implies that the Holy Spirit played a key role in God’s directing of his people during the Exodus and the subsequent journey.

John 16:13 *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.* 📖

God teaches his people through the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit speaks to them of “what he hears”. (Note that this could be referring to “what he hears” from Jesus Christ rather than from God.) See also *The Holy Spirit teaches God's people . . .*, p. 845; *... The Holy Spirit teaches God's people about all things*, p. 846.

1Cor 2:9-10 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— ¹⁰*these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.* For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 📖

Eph 3:14-19 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family^b in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory *he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being*, ¹⁷so that *Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*



¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 

^b Or *fatherhood*; the Greek word *patria* is closely related to the word for *Father* in verse 14

God granting that we “be strengthened with power through his Spirit” in our inner beings (v. 16) is key to us having “strength to comprehend” (v. 18a) the things subsequently mentioned (vv. 18b-19a). It also reflects that God strengthens us spiritually through his Spirit – with power. Note that in v. 18, “the breadth and length and height and depth” has been interpreted to be speaking of the immensity of either Christ’s love (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV) or God’s love (cf. NLT). It could more generally be referring to the vastness of riches that believers have in their relationship with Christ.

Heb 10:15-16 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” ... 

This speaks of an example of God instructing people through the Holy Spirit by inspiring Scripture through the Spirit. Further examples of this can be found in some of the above cross references.

† **God causes his people to obey him through the Holy Spirit:**

Ezek 36:27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.^c 

^c Or *my just decrees*

This appears to be saying that God would move his people to follow his laws through his Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

God works through his people by the Holy Spirit . . .

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit empowers God's people to do God's work*, p. 849
- *God gives each of his people a spiritual gift, through the Holy Spirit*, p. 1430

Ex 31:1-5 The LORD said to Moses, ²“See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, ⁴to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, ⁵in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. 

This was for the construction of the tabernacle, which God would accomplish through craftsmen like Bezalel. The verse suggests that Bezalel’s “ability and intelligence ... knowledge and ... craftsmanship” (v. 3) were a result of God filling him with the Holy Spirit – to do God’s work.

Judg 3:10 The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. 

This verse implies that the LORD empowered Othniel with the Holy Spirit, and then through Othniel defeated the king of Mesopotamia, to whom his people had been subject (cf. v. 4).

1Sam 10:6-7 Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. ⁷Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. 

This suggests that the LORD empowered Saul with the Spirit (v. 6) to accomplish whatever the LORD led him to do (v. 7).

Ezek 3:11, 14-15 And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,’ whether they hear or refuse to hear.”  ... ¹⁴The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. ¹⁵And I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling.^d And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days. 

^d Or *Chebar, and to where they dwelt*

The Spirit’s transportation of Ezekiel may have been part of his vision, although some commentators suggest that it may have involved a physical movement of Ezekiel. Whatever it actually involved, these verses are an example of God working through his people by the Holy Spirit – particularly if one associates the Holy Spirit’s work with “the hand of the LORD being strong” (v. 14b) upon Ezekiel. Note that commentators are divided over whether Ezekiel’s bitterness and anger of spirit (v. 14) was a response to being given such an arduous task, or in accordance with God’s wrath towards the sin and hard-hearted attitude of his people.

Zec 4:6-7 Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. ⁷Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” 

God would accomplish the work he was doing through Zerubbabel by his Spirit. Mountainous problems would be overcome and Zerubbabel would “bring forward the top



stone" (v. 7b) signifying the completion of the work, the rebuilding of the temple.

Gal 3:5 Does *he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you* do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—

Paul may at least partially be referring to God working miracles amongst believers by the Holy Spirit, including through individual believers.

Heb 2:4 ... while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by *gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will*.

One aspect of God's work through his people by the Holy Spirit is that he gives his people gifts of the indwelling Holy Spirit for them to use in doing his work. This is discussed at length in *e) Spiritual Gifts*, p. 1430.

... God speaks through his people by the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *God has given his word by the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 301
- *... Further mention of Scripture coming by the Holy Spirit*, p. 302
- *The Holy Spirit has a significant role in what God's people speak*, p. 851

One way in which God works through his people by the Holy Spirit (as per the previous subsection) is speaking through them by the Holy Spirit.

2Sam 23:2-3 *The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue. ³The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ...*

2Chr 24:20 Then *the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.'"*

Neh 9:30a Many years you bore with them and *warned them by your Spirit through your prophets*.

God spoke through his prophets by the Holy Spirit, often to admonish the Israelites.

Acts 4:29, 31 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and *grant to your servants^e to continue to speak your word with all boldness*, ... ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in

which they were gathered together was shaken, and *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness*.

^e Greek *bondservants*

1Cor 2:4-5 ... and *my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, ⁵that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but *in the power of God*.

With the phrases "of the Spirit and of power" (v. 4b) and "in the power of God" (v. 5b), this suggests that God used the Spirit to powerfully and effectively impart his message through Paul's preaching.

John 15:26-27 But *when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷And you also will bear witness*, because you have been with me from the beginning.

The Holy Spirit is said here to come "from the Father" to believers (v. 26a); it is also said that both the Holy Spirit and believers "will bear witness" (vv. 26b, 27a). As such, this passage points to God – and Jesus himself who would send the Spirit – speaking through believers by the Holy Spirit, in witnessing about Jesus.

1Pet 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in *the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven*, things into which angels long to look.

The Holy Spirit was sent by God – "sent from heaven" – to empower believers in preaching the good news from God. So in the believers preaching "by the Holy Spirit", God spoke through them by the Holy Spirit.

Num 24:2-4 And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And *the Spirit of God came upon him*, ³and he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, *the oracle of the man whose eye is opened*,^f ⁴*the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: ...*

^f Or *closed*, or *perfect*; also verse 15

This is actually an example of God communicating his word by the Holy Spirit through someone who was not one of his people. Balaam was actually a pagan diviner.



‡ **A further example of God working through the Holy Spirit:**

Isa 34:15-16 There the owl nests and lays and hatches and gathers her young in her shadow; indeed, there the hawks are gathered, each one with her mate. ¹⁶Seek and read from the book of the LORD: Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. *For the mouth of the LORD has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them.* 

The reference is to judgment on Edom, here possibly representative of Israel's enemies generally. Such will be its desolation that the land will only be inhabited by animals that God will gather there through his Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ works amongst God's people through the Holy Spirit . . .

In conjunction with God and his will, Jesus Christ works amongst God's people through the Holy Spirit – working through believers to advance God's kingdom (cf. **Rom 15:18-19** ↓) as well as working in their own spiritual development (cf. **2Cor 3:3** ↓; **Rev 3:1, 6** ↓). A number of verses in the following subsection also point to Jesus Christ working amongst God's people through the Holy Spirit, with the theme of the following subsection supplementing the theme of this subsection.

Rom 15:18-19 For I will not venture to speak of anything except *what Christ has accomplished through me* to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, *by the power of the Spirit of God*—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ... 

The clause “by the power of the Spirit of God” (v. 19b) – along with the two preceding clauses – is likely speaking of how Christ accomplished what he did through Paul (cf. CEV, GNT, NIV).

2Cor 3:3 And you show that *you are a letter from Christ* delivered by us, *written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God*, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.[‡] 

‡ Greek *fleshly hearts*

The Corinthians' new spiritual lives were composed by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, in Paul's ministry.

Rev 3:1, 6 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: *‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.* “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.  ... ⁶He who has an ear, *let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* 

In v. 1, “the seven spirits of God” – who Christ is said to have (cf. **Rev 5:6** ↓) – is understood to portray the Holy Spirit, “the sevenfold Spirit” (NIV® text note). The term depicts his completeness or perfection. Verse 6 is a refrain occurring seven times in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation (cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:13, 22). Each time the refrain and the context show Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit being involved together in conveying messages to churches. If the refrain is implying that Jesus Christ conveys these words through the Holy Spirit, than these occurrences are evidence that Jesus Christ works through the Holy Spirit amongst God's people. Alternatively they could be interpreted as showing the Holy Spirit or God working/speaking through Jesus Christ.

Rev 5:6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders *I saw a Lamb standing*, as though it had been slain, *with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.* 

This verse could well imply that Jesus Christ – the “Lamb” – works in the world (including amongst God's people) through the Holy Spirit – “the seven spirits of God”. For the Spirit is spoken of as the “seven eyes” that Christ has (cf. **Rev 3:1** ↑), presumably for him to use, in “all the earth”. Additionally, he may well be the one who sent out “the seven spirits of God ... into all the earth”.

. . . The Holy Spirit continues Jesus Christ's work in and through his people

John 14:16-18 And I will ask the Father, and *he will give you another Helper*,^h *to be with you forever*, ¹⁷*even the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for *he dwells with you and will be in you*. ¹⁸*“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.* 

^h Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7

The reference to “another Helper” (v. 16) alludes to the Holy Spirit being another helper like Jesus – with the apparent implication that he would take Jesus' place, continuing on his work with believers. Furthermore, in light of vv. 16-17, quite possibly v. 18 refers to the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Jesus' presence with believers through the Spirit's indwelling. As such it would also reflect the fact that the Holy Spirit continues Jesus Christ's work in believers. (Alternatively, as noted earlier in this chapter, Jesus' appearance to the disciples after his resurrection or even his second coming may be in view in v. 18.)



John 14:26 But the Helper, *the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name*, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 

Jesus said God would send the Holy Spirit in his name – “in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf” (AMP; cf. CEV, NLT; [John 16:7 ↓](#)). As such the Holy Spirit represents Jesus Christ's interests and continues his work, doing such things as bringing to their minds things Jesus Christ said.

John 15:26-27 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. 

Similar to what was commented earlier, in Jesus saying that the Holy Spirit “will bear witness” and that believers “also will bear witness”, the implication is that one of the major roles of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is to work with them or through them to witness to others about Christ. The context also supports this assertion.

John 16:7, 12-15 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for *if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*  ... ¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 

The Holy Spirit continues Jesus Christ's work in believers, effectively taking Jesus Christ's place (v. 7; cf. comments on: [John 14:26 ↑](#); [John 7:39 ↓](#)) and continuing on to completion the teaching that Jesus began (vv. 12-15; cf. [John 14:26 ↑](#)). In doing the latter, the Holy Spirit takes what Jesus Christ (and/or God) has to say or teach (vv. 13-14; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV), particularly that regarding Christ's person and work, and makes it known to Christ's followers (vv. 14-15). Verse 14 indicates that the Holy Spirit brings glory to Jesus Christ by revealing what Jesus Christ has to say – and presumably by the manifestation of it in the lives of believers.

John 20:21-22 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 

Jesus Christ sends his people anointed and empowered with the Holy Spirit to continue his work, the work God sent him

to do (v. 21b). Note that v. 22 is often understood as anticipating the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. 

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to witness for Jesus Christ, throughout the world.

† Those who believe in Jesus Christ receive the Holy Spirit:

John 7:37-39 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, asⁱ the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. 

ⁱ Or let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As

Note that the final statement alludes to the Holy Spirit taking Jesus Christ's place (cf. [John 16:7 ↑](#)). Particularly in light of this, the fact that those who believe in Jesus Christ receive the Holy Spirit arguably reflects the reality that the Holy Spirit continues the work begun by Jesus Christ in and through believers.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Holy Spirit Renews God's People

Subsections

- The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life
- The Holy Spirit sanctifies God's people
- The Holy Spirit gives God's people love and faith
- The Holy Spirit gives God's people joy and peace
- The Holy Spirit teaches God's people . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit teaches God's people about all things
- Having the Holy Spirit is linked with having wisdom and knowledge



The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life

See also:

- ... *They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God's word*, p. 857
- *Living by the Spirit brings life – in contrast to living by the sinful nature and to the law*, p. 1075

The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life in the present, leading to everlasting life in the next age.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*^l 

^l The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*

The final clause appears to indicate that Christians are born of the Spirit into "spiritual life" (NCV^m; cf. NLT).

John 6:63 *It is the Spirit who gives life*; the flesh is no help at all. *The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.* 

Particularly in light of the verse's first clause, the second statement may indicate that the words Jesus spoke were from (cf. NIV, CEV) or spoken through the Holy Spirit. As such they are words that the Holy Spirit uses to produce life – when people believe them and live according to them.

John 7:38-39 *Whoever believes in me, as^k the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*³⁹ *Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive*, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. 

^k Or *let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As*

In referring to the Holy Spirit as "living water", Jesus associates the Holy Spirit with spiritual life.

Rom 8:2, 6, 10-13 *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^l free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*  ... ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but *to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*  ... ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, *the Spirit is life* because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, *he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* ¹²So then, brothers,^m we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but *if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* 

^l Some manuscripts *me*

^mOr *brothers and sisters*; also verse 29

The Holy Spirit brings life in contrast to sin, which brings death. Regarding the meaning of "the law" (v. 2), see the comment on **Rom 8:2-3** – under *We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit*, p. 1073. As indicated earlier, vv. 10-11 appear to teach that although the physical bodies of believers will die due to sin (v. 10), because God's Spirit lives in them God will raise them from the dead through his Spirit. However, another interpretation holds that Paul may also have in view that the Spirit brings spiritual life now to each believer. Similarly it can be argued that the references to "life" in vv. 2, 6 are inclusive of spiritual life both now and in the afterlife.

2Cor 3:6b For the letter kills, but *the Spirit gives life.* 

Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but *the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.* 

Isa 32:14-15 For the palace is forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks; ¹⁵*until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.* 

This and 44:3-4 below likely portray the spiritual life and vitality that the Holy Spirit brings to God's people. Although the latter parts of v. 15 appear to firstly refer to the Holy Spirit effecting physical blessings, they are often understood to have a spiritual application – particularly with the aforementioned reference to the Holy Spirit as being "poured upon us" (v. 15a). As often the case in the books of the OT prophets (cf. **Isa 44:3-4** ↓; **Ezek 37:13-14** ↓), this prophecy can be understood to have a number of fulfillments or applications. These include: the renewal of Israel after the Babylonian exile; the pouring out of the Holy Spirit following Christ's ascension; and a renewal of Israel in the last days. Arguably it can also be applied to the Spirit's renewing of God's people, both corporately and individually, in any era.

Isa 44:3-4 For *I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.* ⁴*They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams.* 

This is prophesying of – or at least has a fulfillment in – the Holy Spirit giving spiritual life and renewal to God's people, the spiritual descendants of Israel. Similar to 32:15 above, v. 4 portrays the spiritual life and vitality of those on whom God would pour out his Spirit and consequent blessings (v. 3b). The terms used in this portrayal correspond to the language



of v. 3a, implying that v. 3a has a similar spiritual meaning or application.

Ezek 37:13-14 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD. 

As with the above prophecies from Isaiah, this speaks of the Spirit bringing life. Primarily at least, it is speaking of the Israelite nation as a whole, but it is also applicable to believers. Note that at the time of the prophecy, Israel was in exile and practically dead as a nation. Thus the Jews' return from the Babylonian exile was a fulfillment of this.

‡ **Specific reference to God's people being renewed by the Holy Spirit:**

Titus 3:5 ... he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and *renewal of the Holy Spirit*, ... 

This talks of the overall theme of this section – i.e. that the Holy Spirit renews God's people. As such it is reflected in this and the following subsections.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies God's people

See also:

- *God saves his people through the Holy Spirit*, p. 837

"Sanctification" and like terms can refer to: Christians being made holy in a judicial sense through Christ's sacrifice on coming to faith; and/or to the ongoing process of Christians being made increasingly more holy. The Holy Spirit plays a key role in both.

Rom 15:16 ... to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, *sanctified by the Holy Spirit*. 

1Cor 6:11 And such were some of you. But *you were washed, you were sanctified*, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ *and by the Spirit of our God*. 

Along with being justified, this appears to be attributing being washed and sanctified – here aspects of being justified – to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. CEV).

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruitsⁿ to be saved, *through sanctification by the Spirit* and belief in the truth. 

ⁿ Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

1Pet 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *in the sanctification of the Spirit*, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 

2Cor 3:18 And *we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^o are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit*. 

^o Or *reflecting the glory of the Lord*

One aspect of the believer's sanctification is that their characters are being transformed into Christ's likeness, increasingly reflecting (cf. text note) even manifesting his glory. The last statement associates the Holy Spirit with this process.

‡ **Jesus would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and fire":**

Matt 3:11 I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*. 

Some see "fire" as referring to the purification associated with having the Holy Spirit – reflecting the theme of this subsection. However it may instead refer to Christ's judgment on the wicked (cf. v. 12) or even to the "tongues as of fire" that came with the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:3-4).

The Holy Spirit gives God's people love and faith

See also:

- Gal 5:22 ↓

Rom 15:30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and *by the love of the Spirit*, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ... 

The "love of the Spirit" is probably referring to love which is given by the Holy Spirit (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT; Col 1:8 ↓).

Col 1:8 ... and has made known to us *your love in the Spirit*. 



This refers to the love that believers have through partaking of the Holy Spirit – “love that God’s Spirit has given you” (CEV, cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

2Tim 1:7 ... for God gave us *a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control*. 

Here the term “spirit” may well refer to or allude to the Holy Spirit (cf. CEV, GNT).

Rom 5:5 ... and hope does not put us to shame, because *God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*. 

This may be referring to God giving us his love to enable us to love, through the Holy Spirit – hence the verse’s inclusion here. However, it is more often taken to be speaking of God filling us with his love for us.

Acts 11:24 ... for he was a good man, *full of the Holy Spirit and of faith*. And a great many people were added to the Lord. 

The description of Barnabas as being full of both the Holy Spirit and faith arguably suggests that faith comes with the Holy Spirit. It at least associates faith with having the Holy Spirit. Note that Acts 6:5 similarly refers to Stephen as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit”.

1Cor 12:8-9 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹*to another faith by the same Spirit*, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ... 

This “faith” refers to the spiritual gift of exceptional faith or trust in God. The Holy Spirit gives to some believers such exceptional faith – for the edification of the whole church.

The Holy Spirit gives God’s people joy and peace

See also:

- *God fosters unity and peace in the church body*, p. 793

1Thes 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received *the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit*, ... 

Acts 13:52 And *the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit*. 

This may be implying – and certainly is reflective of the fact – that joy comes with or through the Holy Spirit.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and *peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*. 

This speaks of the Holy Spirit facilitating peace and joy amongst God’s people.

Gal 5:22-23 But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control*; against such things there is no law. 

Note the other “fruits” of the Spirit listed here.

Rom 8:6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but *to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace*. 

For those whose minds are controlled by the Spirit, there will be life and peace.

Isa 63:14 Like livestock that go down into the valley, *the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest*. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name. 

The rest given by the Holy Spirit to the Israelites is reflective of the spiritual rest and peace that believers have through the Holy Spirit.

† Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit:

Luke 10:21 In that same hour *he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit* and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”^p 

^p Or *for so it pleased you well*

The Holy Spirit teaches God’s people . . .

Neh 9:20 You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. 

1Cor 2:13 And *we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths* to those who are spiritual.^q 

^q Or *interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual*

The Holy Spirit enables God’s people to know spiritual truths – and to express them to others.

Eph 3:4-5 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into *the mystery of Christ*,⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as *it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*. 



1Tim 4:1 Now *the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ...* 

This is an example of the Holy Spirit's teaching of or for God's people.

Heb 9:6-8 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. ⁸*By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing ...* 

The greatly restricted access into the Most Holy Place – the second section (v. 7) – was used by the Holy Spirit to show or teach the people that they did not have access into God's presence while the first covenant – here signified by “the first section” (v. 6; cf. AMP, NCV, NLT) – was still in force.

Heb 10:12-17 But when Christ^r had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. ¹⁵*And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,* ¹⁶*“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”* ¹⁷*then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”* 

^r Greek *this one*

The Holy Spirit testifies or teaches, through Scripture, that through Jesus Christ's sole sacrifice (vv. 12-14) a new covenant has been instituted (v. 16) in which the sins of God's people are forgiven and remembered no more (v. 17).

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, *let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.* 

As noted earlier, the first statement is a refrain used a further half dozen times in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. It is indicative of the Holy Spirit (in conjunction with Jesus Christ) being instrumental in the teaching and exhortations contained therein.

... The Holy Spirit teaches God's people about all things

See also:

▪ [1Cor 2:15](#) 

John 14:26 But *the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.* 

John 16:13-15 When the Spirit of truth comes, *he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.* ¹⁴*He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.* ¹⁵*All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.* 

As referred to earlier, the segment “he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (v. 14, repeated almost verbatim in v. 15) appears to mean that the Holy Spirit would make known to the disciples Jesus' teaching (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV; [John 14:26](#) ) and quite possibly also other matters pertaining to his person and work. In conjunction with this segment, v. 15a may allude to the fact that the Holy Spirit would guide them into “all truth”.

1Jn 2:20, 27 But *you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.*^s  ... ²⁷*But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.* 

^s Some manuscripts *you know everything*

The “anointing” from God is more than likely the Holy Spirit (cf. GNT, NLT, NCV text note). Regarding v. 20, both the alternative rendering in the text note (cf. NKJV) and v. 27 imply that along with v. 27, v. 20 is speaking of the Holy Spirit teaching believers “all things”.

1Cor 2:9-10 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— ¹⁰*these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.* 

This suggests that the things God reveals to us by his Holy Spirit (v. 10a) are not confined to the previously unknown things referred to in v. 9, but to some degree at least encompass “everything, even the depths of God” (v. 10).



‡ The Holy Spirit enables one's conscience to be a trustworthy guide:

Rom 9:1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

Having the Holy Spirit is linked with having wisdom and knowledge

Acts 6:3, 9-10 Therefore, brothers,^t pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ...⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

^t Or brothers and sisters

1Cor 2:11-12, 14-16 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ... ¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶"For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Being the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit "comprehends the thoughts of God" (v. 11). Having received the Holy Spirit, believers gain insight into God's thinking and ways (v. 12) – whereas those without the Holy Spirit cannot understand such things (v. 14). Furthermore, having the Holy Spirit believers have the capacity – at least to some degree – to understand and make judgment about all things (v. 15; cf. v. 10), spiritual truths probably being primarily in view. One has such spiritual understanding because by having the Holy Spirit to some degree at least one has "the mind of Christ" (v. 16a) – which is comparable to having the mind of God (v. 16b).

Eph 1:17 ... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ...

Some translations use "Spirit" here instead of "spirit" (cf. CEV, GNT, NIV), which would make the verse relevant to this subsection.

Gen 41:37-39 This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. ³⁸And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?"^u ³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are."

^u Or of the gods

Pharaoh acknowledges that such great wisdom in a person must come from the Spirit of God – as does Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:8-9 immediately below (cf. text note).

Dan 4:8-9 At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods^v—and I told him the dream, saying, "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation."

^v Or Spirit of the holy God; also verses 9, 18

‡ The spiritual gifts of wisdom and knowledge given through the Holy Spirit:

1Cor 12:8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ...

In having the Holy Spirit, all believers have and grow in spiritual knowledge and wisdom. However, as spoken of earlier in this chapter, different spiritual gifts are given through the Holy Spirit to individual believers. The "utterance of wisdom" and the "utterance of knowledge" are such gifts, given only to certain believers. These gifts may broadly speaking be "the ability to give wise advice" (NLT) or insight and "the gift of special knowledge" (NLT) – with probably the application and conveying of spiritual truths being particularly in view.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) The Holy Spirit Helps God's People

Subsections

- The Holy Spirit helps each believer
- The Holy Spirit leads God's people
- The Holy Spirit directs God's people in doing God's work



- The Holy Spirit empowers God's people to do God's work
- The Holy Spirit has a significant role in what God's people speak
- God's people worship and pray by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit helps each believer

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and *he will give you another Helper,^w to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

^w Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7

The Greek translated as "Helper" – one "who will help you" (CEV) – was a term used for a legal "Advocate" (NRSV).

Rom 8:26 Likewise *the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

Phil 1:18b-19 Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that *through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...*

2Tim 1:14 *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

The Holy Spirit leads God's people

See also:

- *We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit*, p. 1073
- *Instead of living by the sinful nature, live by the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 1074

The Holy Spirit may lead a person by an inner conviction or sense of assurance, by circumstances, or even by a discernible revelation. (Giving such a revelation to a person with a prophetic spiritual gift is one way the Holy Spirit leads and directs Christian groups.)

Rom 8:14 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons^x of God.*

^x See discussion on "sons" in the Preface

Gal 5:18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

Ps 143:10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! *Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!*

1Ki 18:12 And as soon as I have gone from you, *the Spirit of the LORD will carry you I know not where*. And so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth.

The speaker, Obadiah, seems to be suggesting that the Holy Spirit could supernaturally transport Elijah (cf. [Acts 8:39](#) ↴). Irrespective of whether or not supernatural means are referred to, this attests to the Holy Spirit's leading or guidance.

Isa 63:11-14 Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people.^y Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is *he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit*, ¹²who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, ¹³*who led them through the depths?* Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. ¹⁴Like livestock that go down into the valley, *the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.*

^y Or *Then his people remembered the days of old, of Moses*

This appears to speak of the Holy Spirit's role in the leading of Israel by God, "who led them" (v. 13a).

Luke 2:25-28 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And *he came in the Spirit into the temple*, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ...

Verse 27 indicates that Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit to go into the temple (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV) to see God's Messiah. Note that v. 26 is an example of the Holy Spirit revealing God's will to his people.

The Holy Spirit directs God's people in doing God's work

Acts 8:29-31, 35, 39-40 *And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."* ³⁰So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹And he said, "How can I, unless



someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁹And when they came up out of the water, *the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away*, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But *Philip found himself at Azotus*, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Verse 39-40 suggest more than spiritual guidance or direction. Most likely the Spirit miraculously removed Philip and took him to Azotus (v. 40).

Acts 10:19-20 And while Peter was pondering the vision, *the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."*

Acts 13:2-4 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, *the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴So, being *sent out by the Holy Spirit*, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 15:28 For *it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:* ...

Acts 16:6-7 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, *having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.* ⁷And when they had come up to Mysia, *they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.*

For comment on these actions of the Holy Spirit, see the comment on **Acts 16:6-7** – under *Note: The plans of God's people are subject to his will*, p. 960.

Acts 20:22-23 And now, behold, *I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by^z the Spirit*, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

^z Or *bound in*

In v. 22 Paul is likely speaking of the Holy Spirit compelling him to go to Jerusalem (cf. AMP, NIV, NLT, NRSV). Note that supplementary to directing Paul in doing God's work (v. 22), the Holy Spirit also warned Paul that hardships awaited him in the work (v. 23).

1Cor 7:40 Yet *in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.*

In saying here that he thinks he too has God's Spirit, Paul is implying that he considers that the Holy Spirit guides or affirms his judgment.

Judg 6:34 But *the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon*, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him.

The term "clothed" implies that to some extent at least, the Holy Spirit "took control of" (CEV, GNT) Gideon, thus directing him. Note that the following subsection contains similar examples of the Holy Spirit clothing or coming upon people, empowering them to do God's work.

1Sam 11:6-7 And *the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled.* ⁷He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Saul mustered an army to defeat the Ammonites (cf. vv. 8-11).

‡ The beginning of the Holy Spirit working through Samson:

Judg 13:24-25 And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him. ²⁵And *the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

This suggests that the Holy Spirit was stirring or moving Samson towards doing God's work.

The Holy Spirit empowers God's people to do God's work

See also:

- [Luke 24:46-49](#) †
- *God gives each of his people a spiritual gift, through the Holy Spirit*, p. 1430

Acts 1:8 But *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

Through the Holy Spirit the disciples would receive "power (ability, efficiency, and might)" (AMP), enabling them to witness for Christ far and wide.

Rom 15:18-19 For I will not venture to speak of anything except *what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the*



Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ...

1Cor 2:4 ... and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ...

Here Paul may not so much be speaking of the Holy Spirit empowering him, but rather of the Holy Spirit's power (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) working through what he had said.

Mic 3:8 But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

Zec 4:6-7 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. ⁷Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"

God promised Zerubbabel that through the enablement of the Spirit (v. 6) he would be able to overcome any great obstacle – here metaphorically described as a mountain (v. 7) – to his work of rebuilding the temple.

Ex 31:2-5 See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, ⁴to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, ⁵in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.

As noted earlier, the verse suggests that it was through being filled with the Holy Spirit that Bezalel was empowered or equipped with the necessary ability, intelligence, knowledge and craftsmanship (v. 3) needed to do God's work.

Num 11:17 And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.

This and 27:16-19 below suggest that those spoken of would be empowered or equipped to do the work referred to through having the Holy Spirit.

Num 27:16-18 "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation ¹⁷who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd." ¹⁸So the LORD said to

Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.

The Spirit's empowerment to do the aforementioned work is likely in view.

Judg 3:10 The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

The Holy Spirit came upon Othniel, empowering him for his appointed task (cf. **Judg 15:14-15** ↓).

Judg 15:14-15 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. ¹⁵And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men.

1Sam 10:6-7, 10 Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. ⁷Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. ... ¹⁰When they came to Gibeah,^a behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them.

^a Gibeah means the hill

This implies that through the empowerment of the Spirit (vv. 6, 10) – and because correspondingly God was with him (v. 7) – Saul would be able to accomplish whatever God led him to do (v. 7).

1Sam 16:13a Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.

Ezek 2:2-3 And as he [God] spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. ³And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.

Verse 2 may well be indicative of the Spirit's empowerment, to do the work that God was sending Ezekiel to do (v. 3).

‡ God strengthens people with power through the Holy Spirit:

Eph 3:16 ... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ...



The Holy Spirit has a significant role in what God's people speak

See also:

- Acts 1:8 ↑; 1Sam 10:6, 10 ↑; Mic 3:8 ↑
- *God works through his people by the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 839
- *. . . God speaks through his people by the Holy Spirit*, p. 840
- *The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power*, p. 1770

Note that the teaching of this subsection is relevant to that of the two previous subsections. For the Holy Spirit's role in what God's people say in doing his work is an aspect of both: the Holy Spirit's direction in doing God's work; and the Holy Spirit's empowerment to do God's work.

2Sam 23:2 *The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.* 📖

Matt 10:18-20 ... and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for *what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.* ²⁰*For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.* 📖

Luke 12:12 ...for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. 📖

Luke 24:46-49 ... and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that *repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* ⁴⁸*You are witnesses of these things.* ⁴⁹*And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.*" 📖

This indicates that the disciples were to preach and witness (vv. 47-48; cf. CEV, NLT), for which they would be empowered with the promised Holy Spirit of God (v. 49). This is reflected in most of the following verses.

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ... 📖

Luke uses the phrase "filled with the Holy Spirit" eight times (Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 2:4; Acts 4:31 ↓; Acts 9:17; Acts 13:9 ↓). On most of these occasions the person so filled speaks words that are divinely inspired or empowered. This is indicative of the Spirit having a significant role in what they speak.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.* 📖

Acts 5:32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. 📖

This suggests that the Holy Spirit aids those he indwells in their witnessing.

Acts 6:9-10 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰*But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.* 📖

Acts 13:9-11 But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. 📖

1Cor 2:13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.^b 📖

^b Or interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual

1Pet 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through *those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit* sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. 📖

God's people worship and pray by the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *Pray in the Holy Spirit*, p. 1219
- *Worship God in spirit and by the Holy Spirit*, p. 1346

A further aspect of the Holy Spirit's help of God's people is that they are to worship and pray by or in the Holy Spirit. As such they worship and pray in reliance on the Holy Spirit – who dwells within them – under his power and guidance.



Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who *worship by the Spirit of God*^c and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— 📖

^c Some manuscripts *God in spirit*

Eph 5:18-20 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but *be filled with the Spirit*, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart*, ²⁰*giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ... 📖

The exhortation to “be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18) accompanied by the exhortations to sing “to the Lord with your heart” (v. 19b) and to give thanks to God (v. 20), point to the need for believers to worship by the Holy Spirit.

Eph 6:18 ... *praying at all times in the Spirit*, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ... 📖

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and *praying in the Holy Spirit*, ... 📖

Rom 8:26-27 Likewise *the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words*. ²⁷And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because^d *the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God*. 📖

^d Or *that*

This likely speaks of the Holy Spirit helping believers while they pray, overcoming their ignorance as to what to pray for by interceding on their behalf. As such one can infer from this that believers should pray by the Holy Spirit.

✦ **By the Holy Spirit believers call to God as their Father:**

Rom 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but *you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



God's Transformation of His People

I. General

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I. General

God transforms his people by giving them the invaluable gift of spiritual life, in which they are “reborn” in a spiritual sense. Additionally, God makes them holy and accordingly begins to transform them to be like Jesus Christ and himself. God does this through such things as teaching and disciplining them.

a) God Makes His People Spiritually Alive

See also:

- *b) Eternal Life*, p. 733

Subsections

- God's people have spiritual life
- They have passed from their former state of spiritual death to spiritual life
- In union with Jesus Christ, their sinful selves have “died” and they are now spiritually alive
- God's people are spiritually reborn of God . . .
- . . . They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God's word
- God's people are a new creation
- Note: God's promise of a new or renewed heart and spirit – so that his people will be committed to him

God's people have spiritual life

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life*, p. 843

Spiritual life involves being “alive to God” (Rom 6:11) and comes through having God's Holy Spirit. Each believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, renewing and nourishing them spiritually. Consequently believers have a spiritual consciousness that enables them to live in communion with and in dependence on God. As such they are “alive to God”.

One could make a parallel with a person's own spirit enabling them to have physical life (for without one's spirit indwelling one's physical body, the body is dead). Somewhat similarly, having the Holy Spirit enables a person to have spiritual life.

Note that the following verses do not use the term “spiritual life”, but this is generally understood to be in view (though note the comment on Psalms 36:9).

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*^a 

^a The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*

This implies that through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, one is born to spiritual life (cf. [John 6:63](#) ↓).

John 6:47 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever believes has eternal life.* 

Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ “has (now possesses) eternal life” (AMP; cf. NLT). As well as a future dimension, eternal life has a present dimension. As such eternal life can basically be correlated with spiritual life (cf. [v. 63](#) ↓; [John 5:24](#) ↓), life that comes through the Holy Spirit and God's word.

John 6:63 *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.* 

In the second statement Jesus appears to be saying that his words are spiritual, producing spiritual or eternal life. In the light of the first statement, Jesus may well be implying that it is by the Holy Spirit that his words produce this life.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that *they may have life and have it abundantly.* 

Life of such abundance is indicative of and can be correlated with spiritual life.

Acts 5:20 “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of *this Life.*” 

Here an angel of the Lord refers to the “new life” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV) that believers have, a life that is spiritual and far richer than any other experience of life.

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted *repentance that leads to life.*” 

Rom 8:6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but *to set the mind on the Spirit is life* and peace. 

Particularly as this is speaking of life that comes through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, “life” appears to refer to – or at least encompass – spiritual life.

Isa 55:3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that *your soul may live*; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. 



Ps 36:9 For *with you is the fountain of life*; in your light do we see light. 

The “life” spoken of here and in 133:3 below (cf. [Deut 30:19-20](#) ↓) has many parallels with the spiritual “life” that is prominent in the NT, and is arguably akin to it. Here “life” denotes a full and blessed life (cf. [John 10:10](#) ↑), stemming from a right relationship with God.

Ps 133:3 It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For *there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore*. 

They have passed from their former state of spiritual death to spiritual life

See also:

- [Col 2:13](#) ↓
- *... and spiritual death* [intrinsic ill-effects of sin], p. 373
- *Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life as opposed to death*, p. 614
- *God's people are given spiritual sight . . .*, p. 896
- *... They have spiritual light instead of spiritual darkness*, p. 897

1Jn 3:14 We know that *we have passed out of death into life*, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. 

John 5:24-25 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life*.²⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when *the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live*. 

In v. 25, “is now here” implies that what follows refers to or at least is applicable to spiritual life, that believers can begin participating in now – which is consistent with the teaching in v. 24.

Rom 6:13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who *have been brought from death to life*, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 

The suitability of the inclusion of this verse is somewhat debatable. The wording (supported by a number of other translations) does suggest that “death” is referring to one’s former state of spiritual death – in which case it would be suitable here. However, the wider context indicates that the believer’s subsequent death to sin may instead be in view (cf.

NCV). If this is the case, the verse would be better placed in the following subsection.

Eph 2:1, 4-5 And *you were dead in the trespasses and sin*  ...⁴But^b God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵*even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ*—by grace you have been saved— 

^b Or *And*

Luke 15:24 For *this my son was dead, and is alive again*; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate. 

This provides an illustration of a believer’s changed spiritual state, with the description of the prodigal son as being “dead” and now “alive”, “lost” and now “found”.

Eph 5:14 ... for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, *“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”* 

This speaks of a person waking from a state of spiritual death to the light – and by implication the life – which Christ provides.

† The Israelites’ choice of life or death:

Deut 30:19-20 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that *I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live*,²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for *he is your life* and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. 

Moses exhorted the people to choose “life” (v. 19b), aligned with obeying God who was the essence of their life (v. 20b). Such “life” involved blessings; a full and fruitful life.

In union with Jesus Christ, their sinful selves have “died” and they are now spiritually alive

See also:

- [Eph 5:14](#) ↑
- [1Pet 1:3](#) ↓
- *“In” Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .*, p. 783

Rom 6:2-8, 11, 23 By no means! How can *we who died to sin* still live in it? ³*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order*



that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self^c was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For one who has died has been set free^d from sin. ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ¶ ... ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¶ ... ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¶

^c Greek *man*

^d Greek *has been justified*

In our union with Jesus Christ we are identified with him in his death and resurrection. In a spiritual sense our old sinful selves have died with him in his death and we have been made alive spiritually with him in his post-resurrection life. Thus we have “died to sin” (v. 2; cf. v. 11a), are “no longer be enslaved to sin” (v. 6b) and so have been “set free from sin” (v. 7). In conjunction with the above, we “walk in newness of life” (v. 4a) in union with Jesus Christ (v. 5b), living with him (v. 8b). Furthermore, in Jesus Christ we are “alive to God” (v. 11b) and have eternal life (v. 23b). Regarding vv. 5, 8, note that some commentators point to the future tenses as meaning that these verses are referring to the believer’s resurrection and life with Christ at the end of the age. However others claim that the context indicates that the believer’s spiritual resurrection and life on coming to faith is in view, with a future tense only used to indicate certainty. In v. 23 “eternal life” may well be meant to be inclusive of the spiritual life which God’s people have in the present.

Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¶

There is doubt – as is reflected in other translations – as to whether the Greek translated here as “Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit who brings spiritual life or to the believer’s spirit. But both possibilities point to the spiritual life that believers have through their relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit’s presence (cf. v. 9) – which are theirs on the basis of the righteousness that they have been granted (v. 10b).

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ¶

In the first couple of sentences Paul refers to his former “self” that was self-centered and sinful. This sinful “self” has died and now his being is permeated by Christ’s life – from which it can be inferred that Paul has spiritual life.

Gal 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ¶

Col 2:11-13 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ... ¶

Note that “dead in your trespasses” (v. 13; cf. Eph 2:5a ↓) refers to the former dead spiritual state (spoken of in the preceding subsection) that is associated with the sinful nature. When one’s old sinful self dies through one’s union with Christ, one is made alive spiritually with him.

Col 3:3-4 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your^e life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ¶

^e Some manuscripts *our*

“For you have died” (v. 3) quite possibly has in view the believer’s death to sin as being in association with Christ’s death (cf. NLT) – particularly with the subsequent references to the believer’s life with Christ.

2Tim 2:11 The saying is trustworthy, for: *If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ...* ¶

Note that commentators differ on whether “we will also live with him” refers to the Christian’s spiritual life in him now or to living with Christ in heaven (cf. vv. 10, 12).

Eph 2:4-6 But^f God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, *made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—* ⁶*and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ...* ¶

^f Or *And*

In v. 6, what is true of Christ now, is applied to believers in a secondary, spiritual sense. Being “in him” they participate with him in his risen life and are in a spiritual sense positioned with him in heaven. The consummation of this will take place in the future (cf. v. 7). Note that “dead” (v. 5) refers to spiritual death as per the previous subsection, in which vv. 4-5 were included.



‡ Through Jesus Christ's death we have died to the things of this world:

Gal 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which[‡] the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* 

[‡] Or *through whom*

God's people are spiritually reborn of God . . .

See also:

- [John 3:3-8](#) ↓
- [God's people are his children](#), p. 770

The expressions "born of God" and "born again" (cf. the following subsection) refer to the spiritual rebirth people undergo when they come to faith, and by which they have spiritual life. It is accomplished by God through the work of the Holy Spirit within a person's heart or mind, along with exposure to God's word. This spiritual birth means that believers are in a real sense children of God (cf. comment on [1Jn 3:9](#) ↓). It also begins a process of growing more like God, as believers share in his Spirit which transforms them.

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, *he gave the right to become children of God,* ¹³*who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* 

1Jn 2:29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that *everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.* 

Note that "him" may be referring to Jesus Christ rather than God.

1Jn 3:9 No *one born of God* makes a practice of sinning, for *God's^h seed abides in him*, and he cannot keep on sinning because *he has been born of God.* 

^h Greek *his*

"God's seed" may well refer to God's nature, particularly his personal or moral nature, inherited to an extent by those who are born of him. It has also been interpreted to refer to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and God's word. (If the either of the latter two are in view, than this verse would also be pertinent to the following subsection.)

1Jn 4:4, 7 *Little children, you are from God* and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.  ... ⁷*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.* 

The phrase "from God" (v. 4; cf. v. 6) appears here to have the same sense as "born of God" (v. 7).

1Jn 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God*, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 

1Jn 5:18-19 We know that *everyone who has been born of God* does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. ¹⁹*We know that we are from God*, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 

"We know that we are from God" (v. 19a) has in view being "born of God" (v. 18a). Note that "he who was born of God" (v. 18b) is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

1Pet 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again* to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ... 

God has caused us to be born again, indicating that we have been reborn of him. Being born again, we now have a hope that is likewise living – real and ongoing. Note that "born again ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" may have in view believers being reborn into spiritual life through their union with Jesus Christ. If so, then this verse would also be pertinent to the previous subsection – as indeed it is to the following subsection.

. . . They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God's word

See also:

- [1Jn 3:9](#) ↑; [1Pet 1:3](#) ↑
- [Life . . .](#) [blessings of God's word], p. 315
- . . . [including spiritual and eternal life](#), p. 316
- [The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life](#), p. 843
- [Living by the Spirit brings life – in contrast to living by the sinful nature and to the law](#), p. 1075

John 3:3-8 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born againⁱ he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* ⁶*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*ⁱ ⁷*Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You^k must be born again.'* ⁸The wind^l blows



where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is *born of the Spirit*.”

- ⁱ Or *from above*; the Greek is purposely ambiguous and can mean both *again* and *from above*; also verse 7
- ^j The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*
- ^k The Greek for *you* is plural here
- ^l The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*

There are a number of interpretations as to what “water” (v. 5) refers. They include: cleansing, here associated with spiritual birth; water baptism, for repentance; the Holy Spirit (cf. John 7:37-39); God’s word (cf. Eph 5:26; 1Pet 1:23); and physical birth. With the last possibility, “born of water and the Spirit” would mean that one needs to be born not only physically but also spiritually. Note that v. 8 speaks of the mystery of the Holy Spirit’s work in a believer. It is most likely implying one or more of the following: the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the lives of God’s people, doing whatever he pleases; one cannot comprehend the work of the Spirit in God’s people; or one “can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit” (NLT).

Gal 4:29 But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was *born according to the Spirit*, so also it is now.

Titus 3:5 ... he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by *the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit*, ...

Possibly “regeneration” or “rebirth” (NIV®, NRSV; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT) is here being attributed to the Holy Spirit, along with “renewal”.

James 1:18 Of his own will *he brought us forth by the word of truth*, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

The expression “brought us forth” refers to giving us birth (cf. AMP, NIV, NRSV).

1Pet 1:22-23 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³since *you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God*; ...

A number of commentators assert that the “imperishable” seed (v. 23) refers to “the living and abiding word of God” (cf. CEV). Alternatively it may refer to the seed of God (cf. 1Jn 3:9 ↑), which/who “is immortal” (GNT).

✦ The Spirit gives life through Jesus’ words:

John 6:63 *It is the Spirit who gives life*; the flesh is no help at all. *The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life*.

This probably speaks of the Holy Spirit and God’s word (through Jesus Christ) together bringing eternal life – akin to spiritual rebirth. The second sentence implies that the description of Jesus’ words as “spirit” associates his words with the Holy Spirit. As such (as commented earlier) the first sentence would appear to be indicating that his words are used by the Holy Spirit to bring eternal life.

God’s people are a new creation

2Cor 5:17 Therefore, *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*.^m *The old has passed away; behold, the new has come*.

^mOr *creature*

Gal 6:15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but *a new creation*.

This implies that believers are – or at least should be – “a new creation”.

Eph 2:10 For *we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus* for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Eph 4:20-24 But that is not the way you learned Christ!—²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to *put off your old self*,ⁿ *which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires*, ²³and to *be renewed in the spirit of your minds*, ²⁴and to *put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*.

ⁿ Greek *man*; also verse 24

The term “the new self” (v. 24; cf. Col 3:9-10 ↓) reflects that Christians are a new creation. Note that Paul speaks here of the putting off of one’s old self or nature and the putting on of the new self as an ongoing process. In contrast in Colossians 3:9-10 below he speaks of this process as having been completed, although the phrase “is being renewed” (v. 10) does point to an ongoing aspect.

Col 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, *seeing that you have put off the old self^o with its practices* ¹⁰and *have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*.

^o Greek *man*; also as supplied in verse 10



Note: God's promise of a new or renewed heart and spirit – so that his people will be committed to him

Bear in mind that the verses below from Jeremiah and Ezekiel (which make up most of this subsection) have different stages of fulfillment, or at least an application in different stages of God's plan for his people throughout the ages. There was arguably a partial fulfillment of them in the people of Israel or Judah following the Babylonian exile. They also point to the second covenant, with the enriched spiritual state of those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Lastly, they may well have a consummate fulfillment in the renewal of Israel or God's people as a whole at the end of the age (cf. [Zec 12:10](#) ↓).

Jer 24:7 *I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.* 📖

Note that they being God's people and God being their God (cf. [Jer 31:33](#) ↓; [Ezek 1:19-20](#) ↓) is indicative of the people's commitment to him.

Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* 📖

The writing of God's law on their hearts points to a renewal of their hearts.

Jer 32:39 *I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.* 📖

This and Ezekiel 11:19 below may be figuratively speaking of God giving his people as a whole a new heart (cf. CEV). As such, the phrase "one heart and one way" points to a unity amongst the people, to follow God and fear him. Or the verses may be meaning that God would give each of his people "singleness of heart and action" (NIV®; cf. GNT) – i.e. an undivided heart totally committed to him.

Ezek 11:19-20 *And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.* 📖

The term "a heart of flesh" (cf. [Ezek 36:26](#) ↓) – in contrast to a "heart of stone" – speaks of a pliable heart, compliant to God's will and ways.

Ezek 36:26-27 *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*^p 📖

^p Or my just decrees

Zec 12:10 *And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.* 📖

This speaks of God's spiritual renewal of Israel in the end days.

Deut 30:6 *And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.* 📖

The promised to circumcise the people's hearts is akin to the promise of a new heart in the above verses.

✦ David's request for a pure heart and a steadfast spirit:

Ps 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right^a spirit within me.* 📖

^a Or steadfast

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Makes His People Holy

See also:

- [c\) God Teaches His People](#), p. 864
- [d\) God Disciplines His People \(I\): Reasons](#), p. 869
- [II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy](#), p. 1854

The concept of being made holy concerns God's people being set apart for God, as dedicated to him – for such purposes as doing his work and worshipping him. This involves them being made pure from sin.

Being made holy has a couple of phases or facets. Firstly, when a person comes to faith their sins are forgiven and as



such they are holy. Secondly, believers are made holy in that they are continually being transformed by God, becoming more like Jesus Christ and increasingly devoid of sin – a process often referred to as sanctification (though this term is sometimes also used of the first phase).

Note that in this second facet, believers are spoken of both as being passive and as being active in their sanctification. It is primarily a work of God through the Holy Spirit, but also something that believers are to strive towards (cf. *II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy*, p. 1854).

Subsections

- God makes his people holy . . .
- . . . God's people are a holy people
- God's people are primarily made holy through Jesus Christ's sacrifice
- God's people are being made like God . . .
- . . . God's people are being transformed to be like Jesus Christ
- Note: God's people are his workmanship

God makes his people holy . . .

See also:

- *God's word plays a role in sanctification*, p. 312
- *The Holy Spirit sanctifies God's people*, p. 844
- *God purifies his people, making them holy, to do his work . . .*, p. 963
- *It is our hearts that must be circumcised – as is ultimately accomplished by God*, p. 1448

Ex 31:13 You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. 

Ezek 37:28 Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore. 

Note that this is referring to a renewed Israel of the end times.

1Thes 5:23-24 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. 

Heb 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but *he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.* 

1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to *forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 

In making people holy God forgives their sins and cleanses them from "all unrighteousness", i.e. "everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action" (AMP).

Ps 4:3 But know that *the LORD has set apart the godly for himself*; the LORD hears when I call to him. 

As noted earlier, being set apart for God is one aspect of holiness.

Ps 18:32 ... *the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless.* 

Acts 15:9 ... and he made no distinction between us and them, *having cleansed their hearts by faith.* 

Note that this is referring to God's part in the initial cleansing of believers, on their coming to faith, whereas a number of other verses in this subsection largely have in view the ongoing process of sanctification.

Heb 11:40 ... *since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.* 

This is alluding to either God's people being made holy now – by what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ – or to the consummation of their holiness or perfection in the afterlife. Note that "they" refers to the OT saints mentioned in the preceding verses.

. . . God's people are a holy people

Jer 2:3 *Israel was holy to the LORD*, the firstfruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the LORD. 

1Cor 3:17b For *God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* 

God's temple – the church – is "holy (sacred to Him)" (AMP).

Eph 2:21 ... *in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* 

In Jesus Christ the whole church is joined together and grows (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) to become a holy "temple".

Eph 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify*



her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.^r ☞

^r Or *holy and blameless*

2Thes 1:10 ... when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. ☞

The term “saints” literally means “holy ones” – “holy people” (NCV™, NIV®, NLT).

1Pet 2:5 ... you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ☞

Isa 62:12 And they shall be called *The Holy People*, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken. ☞

This is speaking of the spiritually renewed Israel of the end times, but arguably is applicable to all God’s people of all eras.

‡ **God enables his people to serve him in holiness and righteousness:**

Luke 1:69, 74-75 ... and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ☞ ... ⁷⁴that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. ☞

By what he has done through Jesus Christ – as v. 69 alludes to – God enables us to serve him in holiness and righteousness throughout our lives.

God’s people are primarily made holy through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice

See also:

- [Eph 5:25-27](#) ↑
- ... *and Jesus Christ’s death cleanses us from sin*, p. 600
- “In” *Jesus Christ God’s people are sanctified*, p. 782

Jesus Christ’s sacrifice is the basis both for being forgiven of sin on coming to faith and for ongoing forgiveness – i.e. both being deemed holy initially and continuing to be deemed holy. In conjunction with this, it allows for Christians’ characters to increasingly reflect their holy status.

Heb 10:10, 14, 19, 22 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ☞ ... ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. ☞ ... ¹⁹Therefore, brothers,^s since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ☞ ... ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, *with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* ☞

^s Or *brothers and sisters*

Being able to enter into God’s holy presence (vv. 19, 22) is indicative of God’s people having been made holy, for one cannot do so without being holy. The phrase “with our hearts sprinkled clean” (v. 22) alludes to the sprinkling with blood of Aaron and his sons to consecrate them (cf. Ex 29:21; Lev 8:30). Here it is used to refer to the parallel concept of the cleansing of God’s people – making them holy – by the shedding of Jesus Christ’s blood (v. 19; cf. vv. 10, 14; **1Pet 1:2** ↓).

Heb 13:12 So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ☞

Col 1:21-22 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, a doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ... ☞

Heb 2:9-11 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.^t That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,^u ... ☞

^t Greek *all are of one*

^u Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verse 12

The reference to Jesus Christ’s death in v. 9 implies that this is in view as the means by which he sanctifies God’s people (v. 11).

1Pet 1:1b-2 To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to *Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood*: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. ☞



The clause "sprinkling with his blood" appears to primarily refer to being cleansed (cf. Heb 9:13-14), as in OT sacrificial practices, akin to being made holy.

Gal 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which^v the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* 

^v Or *through whom*

This speaks of God's people being set apart from worldly things – through Jesus Christ's death – an important aspect of holiness.

John 17:19 *And for their sake I consecrate myself,^w that they also may be sanctified^x in truth.* 

^w Or *I sanctify myself*; or *I set myself apart* (for holy service to God)

^x Greek *may be set apart* (for holy service to God)

In saying "I consecrate myself" – or "I sanctify myself" (cf. text note) – Jesus appears to be speaking of totally dedicating or giving himself to God's service (cf. text note, CEV, GNT, NLT), alluding to his approaching sacrifice of his life by which his followers would "sanctified in truth". Note that this final phrase appears to be referring to Jesus followers being either: "truly sanctified" (NIV®; cf. GNT); sanctified to/for the truth (CEV, NCV); or "sanctified by the truth" (NKJV).

Heb 10:29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned *the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified*, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 

The "blood of the covenant" is Jesus Christ's blood, shed in instituting the new covenant between God and his people. The verse is speaking of one who deliberately keeps on sinning after having received the knowledge of the truth (cf. v. 26).

† **Jesus Christ establishes our hearts "blameless in holiness" before God:**

1Thes 3:12-13 ... and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. 

God's people are being made like God . . .

See also:

▪ **Col 2:9-10** 

Eph 3:19 ... and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that *you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* 

Commentators differ widely on their interpretation of exactly what the final clause refers to. However it can be said that it appears to be referring to believers growing in God's communicable attributes – basically his personal characteristics (cf. **Eph 4:24** ; **1Jn 4:17** .

Eph 4:24 ... and to put on *the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.* 

This is not so much saying that believers are being made like God. Rather, though not dissimilarly, Paul is encouraging his readers to take on their new selves which have been created like God. As believers do this more and more, their likeness to God becomes increasingly apparent.

Col 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self^y with its practices ¹⁰and have put on *the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.* 

^y Greek *man*; also as supplied in verse 10

In saying that "the new self" is "being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator", Paul appears to mean either that: through knowledge we are being renewed in God's image; or we are being renewed in knowledge in accordance with the image of God.

2Pet 1:4 ... by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that *through them you may become partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 

1Jn 4:17 By this is *love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.* 

As love is made complete among us, we become like God.



... God's people are being transformed to be like Jesus Christ

See also:

- *On Jesus Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ*, p. 734

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 

2Cor 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^z are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 

^z Or reflecting the glory of the Lord

Paul has the development of the believer's sanctification in view, with their characters growing more like Christ. As such believers increasingly reflect and even manifest Christ's glory.

Gal 4:19 ... my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! 

Paul is speaking of "Christ's nature" (GNT) being formed in the Galatian believers (cf. NCV, NLT).

Eph 4:11-13 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^a and teachers,^b ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^c to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ... 

^a Or pastors

^b Or the shepherd-teachers

^c Greek to a full-grown man

Note that this is probably primarily referring to the spiritual maturity of "the body of Christ" (v. 12), rather than to the individual believer, but it is still applicable to individuals.

Phil 3:10 ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ... 

The final clause possibly means that Paul wanted to become like Christ as exemplified in his death, perfectly submissive and obedient to God. A different interpretation (not as relevant to this subsection) is that, following on from the preceding phrase, Paul is indicating that he was prepared to suffer for Christ's cause even to the point of dying like he did (cf. CEV).

1Cor 2:16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. 

Paul's assertion that believers "have the mind of Christ" concludes the preceding teaching that believers have the Holy Spirit who knows the thoughts of God (cf. vv. 10-13). This points to their minds being or growing to be like Christ's – and even God's.

✦ They are "filled" in Christ:

Col 2:9-10 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 

As Christ has all the fullness of deity (v. 9), through their union with him believers share in this fullness; they are "complete" (NKJV, NLT). These verses also point to the theme of the previous subsection, of believers being made like God.

Note: God's people are his workmanship

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. 

Isa 60:21 Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.^d 

^d Or that I might display my beauty

The renewed Israel, composed of all God's people, is in view here.

Isa 64:8 But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. 

Jer 18:4-6 And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do. ⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me: ⁶"O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. 

Bear in mind that this speaks of Israel as a whole. (For further comment see *God disciplines his people to rid them of sin*, p. 871.)

John 15:2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 

Rom 9:20-24 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? ²²What if God, desiring to



show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for *vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory*—²⁴ *even us whom he has called*, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? 

This passage – which has Jeremiah 18:4-6 above in view – speaks of all people as God's workmanship. Verses 21, 23-24 in particular show that God's people are his workmanship. For further comment on this passage see *Note: God's mercy and people's destiny*, p. 764.

✦ God will complete his good work in his people:

Phil 1:6 And I am sure of this, that *he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ*. 

The term "good work" would appear to refer to sanctification, which would make the inclusion of this verse here complimentary to the theme of this subsection. But note that a number of commentators understand it to refer more generally to salvation.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God Teaches His People

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit teaches God's people . . .*, p. 845
- *. . . The Holy Spirit teaches God's people about all things*, p. 846
- *d) Wisdom and Knowledge* [spiritual attributes], p. 894

Subsections

- God teaches his people
- God teaches his people how to live
- God enables his people to know the truth
- God makes known things about himself to his people . . .
- . . . and God makes known other things of his to his people
- God reveals unknown and concealed things to his people
- Note: God's word and truth dwell in his people – but not in others



God teaches his people

Ps 51:6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and *you teach me wisdom in the secret heart*. 

Ps 71:17 *O God, from my youth you have taught me*, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. 

Ps 94:12 Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and *whom you teach out of your law*, ... 

Ps 119:102 I do not turn aside from your rules, for *you have taught me*. 

Isa 30:20 And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet *your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher*. 

Following a period of discipline, God their Teacher would reveal himself to his people. Presumably then they would be responsive to his teaching unlike previously when they were "unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD" (v. 9).

Isa 54:13 *All your children shall be taught by the LORD*, and great shall be the peace of your children. 

This refers to the future renewed Jerusalem, but is given a current application by Jesus below in John 6:45.

John 6:45 It is written in the Prophets, 'And *they will all be taught by God*.' *Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me*— 

Phil 3:15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, *God will reveal that also to you*. 

2Tim 2:7 *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything*. 

Rev 2:7 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God*. 

Jesus Christ's first statement here is a refrain used a further half dozen times in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation (cf. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). It is indicative of Jesus Christ (in conjunction with the Holy Spirit) being the source of the teachings – largely exhortations and revelations – for various churches contained therein, such as the teaching in the second statement here.

Ps 16:7 I bless *the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me*.^e 

^e Hebrew *my kidneys instruct me*

Even at night God instructed David through his thoughts and “conscience” (GNT).

✦ **Jesus opened his disciples’ minds so they could understand the Scriptures:**

Luke 24:45 Then *he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ...* 

God teaches his people how to live

Ex 24:12 The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with *the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.*” 

God’s law and commands contain his teaching about how we should live.

Deut 8:3 And *he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word^f that comes from the mouth of the LORD.* 

^f Hebrew *by all*

We should live on God’s word, following its instructions regarding how we ought to live our lives.

Deut 33:3-4 Yes, he loved his people,^g all his holy ones were in his^h hand; so they followedⁱ in your steps, *receiving direction from you, ⁵when Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob.* 

^g Septuagint; Hebrew *peoples*

^h Hebrew *your*

ⁱ The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

The “direction” (v. 3b) appears to be in relation to the law (v. 4a), i.e. it likely speaks of direction or teaching regarding how to live, rather than guidance for particular circumstances.

Ps 25:8-9, 12 Good and upright is the LORD; therefore *he instructs sinners in the way. ⁹He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.*  ... ¹²Who is the man who fears the LORD? *Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.* 

In v. 8 “sinners” refers to repentant sinners, such as David (as the context shows). God’s “way” (vv. 8, 9; cf. **Ps 32:8 ↓**; **Isa 48:17 ↓**) refers to God’s way/s for people to live.

Ps 32:8 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.* 

Ps 119:171 My lips will pour forth praise, for *you teach me your statutes.* 

Isa 48:17-18 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “*I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go.*” ¹⁸Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; ... 

The references in v. 18 to God’s commands and the people’s righteousness suggests that v. 17 is primarily speaking of God teaching his people how to live, as opposed to giving guidance in making isolated decisions. Note that “teaches you to profit” has the sense “teaches you what is best for you” (NIV®).

1Thes 4:9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for *you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, ...* 

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²*training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ...* 

Isa 28:26 For *he is rightly instructed; his God teaches him.* 

The reference is actually to God instructing a farmer to know the various things to do to produce crops (cf. vv. 24-25). There is an obvious parallel between this and God instructing his people and teaching them the right way to live.

✦ **God made known to David “the path of life”:**

Ps 16:11 *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* 

Although it may be an allusion to eternal life (cf. Acts 13:35), here “life” quite possibly refers to a full and fruitful life. Thus David may be speaking of God making known to him the way to live so as to obtain or be granted such life. Alternatively David may simply be primarily referring to God delivering him from death.

God enables his people to know the truth

Note that in at least most of the following references, “the truth” corresponds largely to the gospel and/or related matters.



John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* 

John 16:13 *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.* 

The Holy Spirit guides believers "into all truth", making known truth from Jesus Christ and ultimately God (cf. vv. 14-15).

1Tim 2:3-4 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, *"who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* 

This points to the fact that it is only because of what God has done as "our Savior" that we can be saved and, in conjunction with this, "come to the knowledge of the truth" (cf. 2Tim 2:25 ↓; James 1:18 ↓). Thus, God enables his people to know the truth.

2Tim 2:25 ... correcting his opponents with gentleness. *God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ...* 

Titus 1:1 *Paul, a servantⁱ of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ...* 

ⁱ Or slave; Greek *bondservant*

As God's servant and a commissioned messenger of Jesus Christ, Paul was used by God and Jesus Christ to impart "knowledge of the truth" to those to whom he ministered.

James 1:18 Of his own will *he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.* 

This implies that God enables believers to comprehend the truth.

2Pet 1:12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though *you know them and are established in the truth that you have.* 

God is of course the ultimate source of this truth believers have.

1Jn 2:20-21 But *you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.*^k *²¹I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.* 

^k Some manuscripts *you know everything*

Verse 21 indicates that "knowledge" (v. 20) refers to knowledge of the truth. Verse 20 appears to imply that it is through this anointing from God – the Holy Spirit – that his people know the truth (cf. GNT, NCV).

God makes known things about himself to his people . . .

See also:

- *d) Epilogue: God's Self-Revelation to People*, p. 239
- *d) God's Judgment Reveals God*, p. 434
- *Jesus came to enable us to know God*, p. 511
- *God and Jesus Christ enable their people to know them*, p. 811
- *e) God Is Revealed in Saving His People*, p. 921

Deut 4:34-35 Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? *³⁵To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.* 

Josh 3:10, 13 And Joshua said, *"Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites."*  *... ¹³And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap."* 

The reference is to God stopping the waters of the Jordan from flowing (v. 13; cf. vv. 15-17), emphatically making known to the Israelites that the living God was among them (v. 10).

Ps 103:7 *He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.* 

Isa 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, *that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.*" 

God enables his people to know him (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, Nlrv, NLT) and that he is the only God.



Isa 52:6 *Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I.*



God promised that his people would “learn who I am” (CEV; cf. NCV) and that it was he who had foretold their redemption (cf. v. 3).

2Cor 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” *has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

This is speaking of God enabling believers to know his glory through his revelation of himself in Christ.

Matt 16:15-17 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶*Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For *flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*

Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, *he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

John 17:7-8 *Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.* ⁸*For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.*

Eph 3:14-19 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family¹ in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶*that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,* ¹⁷*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,* ¹⁸*may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,* ¹⁹*and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

¹ Or *fatherhood*; the Greek word *patria* is closely related to the word for *Father* in verse 14

Here Paul appears to pray that the Ephesians would know and experience Jesus Christ’s love. The fact that he prays for this is indicative that he saw God as ultimately the source of such knowledge (cf. 1:18-19a ↴), through the presence of his Spirit and Christ in believers (vv. 16-17). For comment on “the breadth and length and height and depth” (v. 18), see the comment on **Eph 3:17-19** – under *Jesus Christ is loving*, p. 104.

... and God makes known other things of his to his people

Ps 25:14 The friendship^m of the LORD is for those who fear him, and *he makes known to them his covenant.*

^mOr *The secret counsel*

1Chr 17:19 For your servant’s sake, O LORD, and according to your own heart, *you have done all this greatness, in making known all these great things.*

The “great things” included God’s plans and promises concerning David (cf. vv. 3-14).

Amos 3:7 *For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.*

Obviously this is speaking of revelation given to prophets. However they in turn were usually given such revelations of God’s plans to pass on to the whole of God’s people. To some degree at least, this is applicable to those with the spiritual gift of prophecy and their ministry in today’s church.

Luke 1:76-77 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷*to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ...*

God would first give his people “knowledge of salvation” through John the Baptist, in preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants,ⁿ for the servant^o does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for *all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

ⁿ Greek *bondservants*

^o Greek *bondservant*; also verse 20

Eph 1:16-19 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,* ¹⁸*having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,* ¹⁹*and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ...*

Gal 1:11-12 For I would have you know, brothers, that *the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel.*^p ¹²For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*



^p Greek *not according to man*

By Jesus Christ the gospel of God was made known to Paul.

Col 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, *asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will* in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ...

God reveals unknown and concealed things to his people

See also:

- *The gospel reveals God's hidden mystery concerning Jesus Christ*, p. 1761

Deut 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but *the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever*, that we may do all the words of this law.

The "things that are revealed" appears to primarily refer to the law – unknown to other nations (cf. **Ps 147:19-20** ↓).

Ps 147:19-20 *He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules^q to Israel.* ²⁰*He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules.*^r Praise the LORD!

^q Or *and just decrees*

^r Or *his just decrees*

Isa 48:6 You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? *From this time forth I announce to you new things, hidden things that you have not known.*

Matters of the future – such as Israel's restoration – are primarily in view here and in Jeremiah 33:3 immediately below.

Jer 33:3 Call to me and I will answer you, and *will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.*

Dan 2:22-23, 47 ... *he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.* ²³To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, *for you have made known to us the king's matter.* ... ⁴⁷The king answered and said to Daniel, *"Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."*

This refers to God revealing to Daniel the mystery of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. As well as speaking of the king's own kingdom of Babylon, the dream spoke of the rise and fall of future kingdoms.

Matt 11:25-27 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that *you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children*; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.^s ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and *no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

^s Or *for so it pleased you well*

In v. 25 Jesus is referring to God concealing matters from the religious leaders, yet revealing them to Jesus' lowly, humble followers. The "things" in question would appear to be matters of God's kingdom (cf. **Matt 13:11** ↓), including the significance of Jesus' mission; revelation of God (v. 27) may also be in view.

Matt 13:11, 17 And he answered them, *"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.* ... ¹⁷For truly, I say to you, *many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.*

Jesus revealed what had been God's hidden teachings of the kingdom of heaven, previously hidden even from the prophets (v. 17). These were revealed to his disciples but not to others in the crowd (v. 11) – presumably in part at least because the others were not open to believing and/or were not prepared to intently seek the truth.

1Cor 2:9-10 But, as it is written, *"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"*— ¹⁰*these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.* For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

2Cor 12:1, 7 I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to *visions and revelations of the Lord.* ... ⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,^t a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

^t Or *hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited*

Paul was given extraordinary visions and revelations, in which "he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter." (v. 4b)

Col 2:1-3 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged,



being knit together in love, *to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,*³ *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* 

When one comes to know the mystery of God – Jesus Christ – then in turn one has access to the vast treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are stored up and “hidden” in him.

Job 12:22 *He uncovers the deeps out of darkness and brings deep darkness to light.* 

This may be speaking of God bringing mysteries and secrets things to light (cf. [Dan 2:22-23](#) ) – possibly referring to “evil plans” (Nlrv®); hence its inclusion here. Alternatively, it is possibly simply speaking of shining physical light into places of physical darkness and shadows (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

✦ **God takes the upright into his confidence:**

Prov 3:32 ... for the devious person is an abomination to the LORD, but *the upright are in his confidence.* 

Note: God's word and truth dwell in his people – but not in others

1Jn 2:14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and *the word of God abides in you*, and you have overcome the evil one. 

2Jn 1:1-2 The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom *I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth,*² *because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: ...* 

Truth is more than simply a body of teaching that one can know. As reflected in 1 John 2:14b above, in a sense the truth “abides in” (v. 2) believers – “all who know the truth” (v. 1). As such it plays an active roll in their lives (cf. [1Thes 2:13](#) ) , renewing and directing them.

1Thes 2:13 And we also thank God constantly^u for this, that when *you received the word of God*, which you heard from us, *you accepted it* not as the word of men but as what it really is, *the word of God, which is at work in you believers.* 

^u Or *without ceasing*

John 5:38 ... and *you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.* 

God's word does not dwell in unbelievers – as can also be inferred from the following verses.

John 8:37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because *my word finds no place in you.* 

1Jn 1:8, 10 *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*  ... ¹⁰*If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* 

1Jn 2:4 *Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ...* 

✦ **God's promise that his words (and Spirit) will not leave his people:**

Isa 59:21 “And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My Spirit that is upon you, and *my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,*” says the LORD, “*from this time forth and forevermore.*” 

Israel's future renewal may primarily be in view, but this still has an application to believers in the present.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons

See also:

- *God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves,* p. 875

Subsections

- When his people turn to sin, God punishes and disciplines them . . .
- . . . By punishment and discipline God causes his people to seek him again
- God disciplines his people to rid them of sin
- God disciplines his people to save them from sin's consequences
- However, hard times from God are not always due to sin
- God also tests his people to show if they will obey him and remain faithful
- Further reasons why God disciplines and tests his people



When his people turn to sin, God punishes and disciplines them . . .

See also:

- *God's punishment of his people is warranted . . .*, p. 876
- *. . . and God's punishment is often less than what his people's sins really deserve*, p. 877
- *God punishes sin, which can mean physical suffering and emotional anguish . . .*, p. 1832
- *. . . along with various other troubles*, p. 1833

Note that in some of the follow verses the wicked among those who are supposedly God's people appear to be primarily in view and the punishment spoken of seems to be of a final nature (bringing death) rather than simply disciplinary. But even so the teaching and principles involved are applicable to a large degree to God's disciplinary punishment of any of his people for sin.

Ps 39:11 *When you discipline a man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely all mankind is a mere breath! Selah* 

Ps 89:32 *... then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, ...* 

Jer 9:7-9 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do, because of my people? ⁸Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully; with his mouth each speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart he plans an ambush for him. ⁹Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?" 

Jer 14:10 Thus says the LORD concerning this people: "They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the LORD does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins." 

Jer 30:11b, 14 *I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished.*  *... ¹⁴All your lovers have forgotten you; they care nothing for you; for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy, the punishment of a merciless foe, because your guilt is great, because your sins are flagrant.* 

Hos 5:2 *And the revolvers have gone deep into slaughter, but I will discipline all of them.* 

Hos 10:10 *When I please, I will discipline them, and nations shall be gathered against them when they are bound up for their double iniquity.* 

Their "double iniquity" appears to denote multiple sins.

Amos 3:2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore *I will punish you for all your iniquities.* 

Mic 7:9 *I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.* 

Ps 99:8 O LORD our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but *an avenger of their wrongdoings.* 

. . . By punishment and discipline God causes his people to seek him again

See also:

- *Prelude: God seeks to draw his wayward people back to him*, p. 1848

Hos 5:14-15 For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. *I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue.* ¹⁵*I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.* 

1Ki 8:35 *When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, if they pray toward this place and acknowledge your name and turn from their sin, when you afflict them, ...* 

2Chr 15:3-4 For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law, ⁴but when *in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him*, he was found by them. 

Verse 3 is probably referring to the period of the judges, when the Israelites – "without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law" – repeatedly turned away from God and sinned. This brought God's punishment and hence the distress, leading the people to seek him (v. 4).

2Chr 33:9-12 Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel. ¹⁰The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. ¹¹*Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of*



the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. ¹²And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 

Ps 78:32, 34 In spite of all this, they still sinned; despite his wonders, they did not believe.  ... ³⁴When he killed them, they sought him; they repented and sought God earnestly. 

Ps 107:10-13 Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, ¹¹for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. ¹²So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. ¹³Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 

Isa 17:4, 7 And in that day the glory of Jacob will be brought low, and the fat of his flesh will grow lean.  ... ⁷In that day man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will look on the Holy One of Israel. 

Verse 4 speaks of how Israel would be invaded by the Assyrians – a consequence of their idolatry and their alliance with the ungodly Damascus. The resultant devastation (v. 4) would move them to turn to God (v. 7).

Isa 26:16 O LORD, in distress they sought you; they poured out a whispered prayer when your discipline was upon them. 

Jer 31:18 I have heard Ephraim grieving, ‘You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the LORD my God. 

Ezek 14:4-5 Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, *I the LORD will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols,* ⁵that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols. 

The latter part of v. 4 alludes to God’s disciplinary action, which would turn the people’s hearts back to him (v. 5).

✦ The Egyptian’s turning to God in response to punishment:

Isa 19:22 And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them. 

This appears to speak of Egypt’s submission to God in the end times.

God disciplines his people to rid them of sin

2Chr 32:25-26 But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem. ²⁶But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah. 

God’s disciplinary action led Hezekiah to get rid of his sinful pride.

Ps 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. 

Isa 1:25 I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. 

Here God speaks of removing impurity from his people.

Isa 4:4 ... when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.^v 

^v Or purging

Jer 18:3-6 So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. ⁴And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do. ⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me: ⁶“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. 

When the pot he was making from the clay became flawed, the potter remolded the clay into another pot, shaping it as he wanted (v. 4). In the same way when his people’s flaws became such that his people would not become what he wanted, God indicated that he would remold them (v. 6). Such remolding includes discipline to remove sinful flaws.

Mal 3:2-3 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.^w 

^w Or and they will belong to the LORD, bringers of an offering in righteousness



The reference appears to be to Christ purifying his people of sin – the people of Judah and the priests in particular – on his return (cf. v. 1). The imagery suggests that it will be a severe disciplinary process.

Zec 13:1-2, 8-9 “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. ²“And on that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness. ... ⁸In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. ⁹And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

The punishment and refinement in vv. 8-9 appear to be associated with the purification attained in vv. 1-2. Together these verses depict the discipline and resulting purification of Israel in the end times. Note that the “fountain” (v. 1) signifies a form of purification, though unlikely a disciplinary one.

Heb 12:9-11 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but *he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.* ¹¹For the moment *all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

Such holiness (v. 10) and righteousness (v. 11) is indicative of discipline cleansing one of sin. Note that v. 9 implies that God's discipline saves us from spiritual death, and so is pertinent to the following subsection.

1Pet 4:1-2 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,^x arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for *whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,* ²*so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.*

^x Some manuscripts add *for us; some for you*

The suffering of Christians referred to here – “whoever has suffered in the flesh” – is according to God's will, though as a result of doing good rather than sin (cf. 3:17). But even so sin is not totally absent from the lives of those who do good. These verses make the point that a significant effect of being faithful to God in the midst of such suffering, is disregard for whatever such sin that one may have previously entertained.

As such, one “has ceased from sin” (v. 1) and does not live for “human passions” (v. 2).

✦ **God used Paul's affliction to keep him from sin:**

2Cor 12:7 *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,^y a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.*

^y Or *hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited*

God, or Christ (cf. vv. 8-10), used Paul's affliction, which apparently came from Satan, not so much as a disciplinary measure as a preventative measure – to keep him from becoming conceited.

God disciplines his people to save them from sin's consequences

See also:

▪ [Heb 12:9](#) ↑

Job 33:19-20, 29-30 *Man is also rebuked with pain on his bed and with continual strife in his bones,* ²⁰*so that his life loathes bread, and his appetite the choicest food.* ... ²⁹*“Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man,* ³⁰*to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life.*

Job 36:8-12, 15-16 *And if they are bound in chains and caught in the cords of affliction,* ⁹*then he declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they are behaving arrogantly.* ¹⁰*He opens their ears to instruction and commands that they return from iniquity.* ¹¹*If they listen and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness.* ¹²*But if they do not listen, they perish by the sword and die without knowledge.* ... ¹⁵*He delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity.* ¹⁶*He also allured you out of distress into a broad place where there was no cramping, and what was set on your table was full of fatness.*

The “chains and ... the cords of affliction” (v. 8) are imposed by God, so as to be used by him in exhorting those concerned (vv. 9-10). In the light of the earlier verses, the suffering mentioned in v. 15 appears to be suffering used by God for correction. The “distress” (v. 16) may be referring to the suffering itself, but alternatively it may well speak of the troubles that sin would have eventually resulted in.



Psa 94:12-13 *Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law, ¹³to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked.* 📖

Those who respond to God's discipline are spared the trouble that comes on the wicked (cf. [Isa 38:17](#) ↓) in the time of God's judgment.

Isa 38:17 *Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.* 📖

Here Hezekiah speaks of a time of intense suffering, which he attributes to God's punishment or discipline for sin (cf. [2Chr 32:25-26](#) ↑). His words point to the fact that those who respond appropriately to God's discipline are forgiven for their sins and no longer face destruction.

1Cor 11:32 *But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined^a so that we may not be condemned along with the world.* 📖

^a Or when we are judged we are being disciplined by the Lord

However, hard times from God are not always due to sin

Job 2:3 *And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason."* 📖

Job's hard times were not deserved – "without cause" (NLT; cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV, NLT). They were to vindicate his righteousness in the face of Satan's accusations of Job only being godly to obtain God's blessings (cf. 1:8-12).

Psa 44:14-22 *You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock^a among the peoples. ¹⁵All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face ¹⁶at the sound of the taunter and reviler, at the sight of the enemy and the avenger. ¹⁷All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten you, and we have not been false to your covenant. ¹⁸Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way; ¹⁹yet you have broken us in the place of jackals and covered us with the shadow of death. ²⁰If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, ²¹would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart. ²²Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.* 📖

^a Hebrew *a shaking of the head*

Not only was the people's suffering from God not due to sin (vv. 17-18, 20-21), but it was because of their faithfulness to him that they were looked upon as objects suitable for abuse and even death (v. 22). This illustrates that discipline or suffering is not necessarily due to sin. Often the reason may in fact not be apparent.

John 9:1-3 *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."* 📖

1Pet 3:17 *For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.* 📖

↳ **Illness is not always due to sin:**

James 5:15 *And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.* 📖

The final statement indicates that sometimes sickness is due to sin, but its conditional first clause also shows that this is not the case with all sickness.

God also tests his people to show if they will obey him and remain faithful

See also:

- . . . *For faith is tested*, p. 1086

God tests his people to show or see if they will obey him, not in the sense that he wants to find out – as he knows all things – but more in the sense of proving or affirming their obedience. This can involve hard times and is not necessarily due to sin.

Gen 22:1-2, 12 *After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ²He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." 📖 ... ¹²He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."* 📖

In being prepared to sacrifice his son in response to God's testing instruction, Abraham proved his fear of God (v. 12) and thus, in association, his obedience to God.



Ex 16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, *that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.*"

Deut 8:2 And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, *testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.*

Deut 13:1-4 If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ²and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' ³you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For *the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.* ⁴You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.

Here the reason given for God's testing is to find out whether they loved him completely – as opposed to following other gods (vv. 2-3). Such love involves obedience to him, as implied by v. 4.

Judg 2:20-22 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he said, "Because this people has transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, ²¹I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, ²²*in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not.*"

God would use the remaining nations to keep testing Israel's obedience to him (cf. **Judg 3:4** ↓), to prove whether they were committed to him, in the face of the lure of the ungodly practices of these other nations.

Judg 3:4 *They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD,* which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

2Chr 32:31 And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, *God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.*

God left Hezekiah alone (cf. NASB, NCV) to speak with these envoys, to see how true his heart was to God (cf. CEV). Regrettably Hezekiah revealed pride and/or a lack of trust in God (cf. 2Ki 20:12-18).

Job 23:10 But he knows the way that I take; *when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.*

This verse is often interpreted as referring to the purification brought about by testing, but more likely Job is expressing his confidence that when God has tested him, God will find him to be pure (cf. GNT) – i.e. pronounce him innocent (cf. NLT).

✦ **As fire tests silver and gold, so the LORD tests the heart:**

Prov 17:3 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and *the LORD tests hearts.*

Just as fire tests precious metals – both verifying their worth and improving their quality – so God tests the heart.

Further reasons why God disciplines and tests his people

See also:

- [Rejoice because trials develop Christian character and virtues](#), p. 2015

Deut 8:3, 16 *And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word^b that comes from the mouth of the LORD.* ... [God:] ¹⁶who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, *that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.*

^b Hebrew *by all*

In the desert, God caused the Israelites to hunger. Lacking bread, they had to rely on God's miraculous provision by his word, with which he commands nature. This forced them to realize that it is not enough to rely on bread alone to sustain one's life (v. 3). For God's word is paramount to life, the ultimate source of fulfillment of all one's needs. And so, by such testing, the Israelites would benefit "in the end" (v. 16).

Psa 119:71 *It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.*

As elsewhere in this subsection, affliction appears to be spoken of here as being instigated by God as a disciplinary measure or to test his people.

Isa 38:13-17 I calmed myself^c until morning; *like a lion he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end.* ¹⁴Like a swallow or a crane I chirp; I moan like a dove. My eyes are weary with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; be my pledge of safety! ¹⁵What shall I say? For he



has spoken to me, and *he himself has done it. I walk slowly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.* ¹⁶O Lord, *by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit.* Oh restore me to health and make me live! ¹⁷*Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.* 

^c Or (with Targum) *I cried for help*

In v. 16a, Hezekiah acknowledges that such God-given trials (cf. vv. 13-15) are vital not only for people's natural life but also for the life of their spirits, or their spiritual life. (Note, however, that the Hebrew text for v. 16a is apparently not clear.) One reason for such trials is that they teach humility – quite possibly in view in v. 15b (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT) – along with forgiveness of sin (v. 17b).

John 15:1-2 I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and *every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.* 

The reference to pruning suggests that God uses discipline or trials so as to make his people more fruitful.

Heb 12:9-11 Besides this, *we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?* ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but *he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.* ¹¹For the moment *all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* 

Verse 9 indicates that God disciplines his people so that they may "live" – most likely referring to spiritual or eternal life.

James 1:2-3, 12 Count it all joy, my brothers,^d when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that *the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*  ... ¹²*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.* 

^d Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verses 16, 19

Note that James does not specifically say that such trials and testing are necessarily instigated by God. But what he says is applicable to all trials and testing. Moreover, God works in all things for his purposes.

✦ Those who God corrects are blessed:

Job 5:17 Behold, *blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) God Disciplines His People (II): Insights

Subsections

- God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves
- God's discipline is characterized by faithfulness and justice
- God's punishment of his people is warranted . . .
- . . . and God's punishment is often less than what his people's sins really deserve
- God's discipline and testing are temporary . . .
- . . . Due to his mercy and compassion, God limits his people's punishment
- God's discipline and testing can be intense, but God brings his people through

God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves

Deut 8:5 Know then in your heart that, *as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.* 

Prov 3:11-12 My son, *do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof,* ¹²*for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.* 

Heb 12:5-8 And have you forgotten *the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.* ⁶*For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."* ⁷*It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?* ⁸*If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.* 



2Sam 7:14-15 *I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.*

Rev 3:19 *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*

✦ **Because they are his people God punishes them:**

Amos 3:1-2 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: ²*"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

The term "known" appears to be indicative of his close relationship with them and/or that he has chosen them (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT). As they are the ones he has "known", God punishes and disciplines his people for their sins. Verse 2 may also allude to the fact that as they are his people, their sin is all the more reprehensible and in committing it they are more culpable.

God's discipline is characterized by faithfulness and justice

See also:

- [c\) God's Judgment Is Just](#), p. 427

Psa 119:75 I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that *in faithfulness you have afflicted me.*

In disciplining his people God is being faithful. For true to his promises he is working for their greater good, notably in purifying them and consolidating their relationship with him, which in turn leads to great blessing.

Neh 9:30-31, 33 *Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. ³¹Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God. ... ³³Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly.*

As well as speaking of his patience and mercy, vv. 30-31 beautifully illustrate God's faithfulness and justice in his discipline and dealings with his people, affirmed in v. 33.

Isa 30:17-18 *A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on*

the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill. ¹⁸Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.

"For the LORD is a God of justice" (v. 18b) may have in view his discipline (v. 17) because of his people's sin (vv. 8-16), as well as his mercy (v. 18a) – underlining that God always does the right thing by his people.

Jer 30:11 For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. *I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished.*

Note that the contents of this verse is repeated almost verbatim in 46:28, including the segment: "I will discipline you in just measure".

Dan 9:14 *Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice.*

God's righteousness is of course associated with his justice (cf. NLT).

God's punishment of his people is warranted . . .

See also:

- [Neh 9:30](#)
- [God judges and repays people according to what they have done](#), p. 430

Jer 21:14 *I will punish you according to the fruit of your deeds, declares the LORD; I will kindle a fire in her forest, and it shall devour all that is around her.*

Ezek 16:59 For thus says the Lord GOD: *I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, ...*

Jer 13:22 *And if you say in your heart, 'Why have these things come upon me?' it is for the greatness of your iniquity that your skirts are lifted up and you suffer violence.*

The latter part of the verse figuratively describes Judah's sufferings at the hands of foreign invaders. Some commentators say that the reference is to the public disgracing of a prostitute.



Jer 30:15 Why do you cry out over your hurt? Your pain is incurable. *Because your guilt is great, because your sins are flagrant, I have done these things to you.*

Israel had no valid reason to cry out or protest about the punishment God had inflicted on her – it was well deserved.

Ezek 14:23 *They will console you, when you see their ways and their deeds, and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, declares the Lord GOD.*

God assured Ezekiel that when he saw the ungodliness of those who had previously remained in Jerusalem, he would realize that God had done nothing in his destruction of it without good cause.

Ezek 39:23-24 And the nations shall know that *the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword.* ²⁴*I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.*

. . . and God's punishment is often less than what his people's sins really deserve

Ps 103:10 *He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

Ezra 9:13 And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that *you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved* and have given us such a remnant as this, ...

Job 33:19, 26-28 Man is also rebuked with pain on his bed and with continual strife in his bones, ... ²⁶*then man^e prays to God, and he accepts him; he sees his face with a shout of joy, and he restores to man his righteousness.* ²⁷*He sings before men and says: 'I sinned and perverted what was right, and it was not repaid to me.* ²⁸*He has redeemed my soul from going down into the pit, and my life shall look upon the light.'*

^e Hebrew *he*

In the second clause of v. 26, the speaker may well mean that he did not get what he deserved (cf. NCV, NIV).

Job 11:6b For he is manifold in understanding.^f *Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.*

^f The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

The final statement in effect means that God "has punished you less than you deserve" (CEV; cf. GNT, NCV). Note that although generally at least what Zophar says is true, Zophar's implication that Job was being punished was not actually correct.

God's discipline and testing are temporary . . .

Ps 30:5 *For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.^g Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.*

^g Or *and in his favor is life*

Such references to God's anger (cf. **Ps 103:9** ↓) point to his discipline and punishment.

Ps 103:9 *He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.*

Lam 4:22 *The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished; he will keep you in exile no longer;^h but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish; he will uncover your sins.*

^h Or *he will not exile you again*

Nah 1:12-13 Thus says the LORD, "Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away. *Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more.* ¹³*And now I will break his yoke from off you and will burst your bonds apart.*"

1Pet 1:6 In this you rejoice, though *now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ...*

Note that in contrast to the above verses and the ones in the following subsection, the trials and suffering mentioned here and in 5:10 below were not necessarily due to sin. They were quite possibly a form of testing rather than punishment.

1Pet 5:10 *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

. . . Due to his mercy and compassion, God limits his people's punishment

See also:

- *Note: God's restraint of his judgment shows his compassion and love,* p. 439
- *Being merciful and compassionate, God saves us from the consequences of our sin,* p. 1849



Neh 9:26-28 Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. ²⁷Therefore you gave them into the hand of their enemies, who made them suffer. And in the time of their suffering they cried out to you and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hand of their enemies. ²⁸But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies. 

Ps 78:38-39 Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath. ³⁹He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again. 

Verse 38b indicates that God – at times at least – limits the ferocity of his discipline. Due to his compassion, God's discipline is both tempered and temporary. Verse 39 further reflects God's compassion.

Isa 30:17-20 A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill. ¹⁸Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. ¹⁹For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. ²⁰And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. 

Along with vv. 18-19, v. 20 points to the people's deliverance.

Isa 54:7-8 For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. ⁸In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer. 

Lam 3:31-32 For the Lord will not cast off forever, ³²but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; ... 

God's apparent rejection (v. 31) and punishment (v. 32) of his people are not permanent – he does again show compassion.

Ps 106:43-46 Many times he delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purposes and were brought low through their iniquity. ⁴⁴Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry. ⁴⁵For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love. ⁴⁶He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive. 

This indicates that God "showed compassion" (NRSV) in discontinuing his people's punishment – along with his steadfast love (v. 45).

✦ **God does not like to punish people:**

Lam 3:33 ... for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. 

God's discipline and testing can be intense, but God brings his people through

Deut 4:20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day. 

The use of the phrase "iron furnace" in reference to the Israelites' time in Egypt, points to this time of great suffering as being one of refinement and purification, i.e. a time of testing or discipline.

Ps 66:10-12 For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. ¹¹You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; ¹²you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance. 

Ps 71:20-21 You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. ²¹You will increase my greatness and comfort me again. 

Ps 118:18, 21 The LORD has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death.  ... ²¹I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. 

Isa 30:26 Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow. 



Isa 40:1-2 *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfareⁱ is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.* 📖

ⁱ Or time of service

In v. 2a, "her warfare" likely speaks of suffering from warfare.

In v. 2b, "double" may well be hyperbole to indicate that God had punished the Israelites "in full" (GNT, NLT) for their sin.

Jer 30:4-8 These are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: ⁵"Thus says the LORD: *We have heard a cry of panic, of terror, and no peace. ⁶Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale? ⁷Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it. ⁸And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him.*"^j 📖

^j Or serve him

This may be ultimately speaking of the end times. It tells of the intense suffering of Israel – or possibly God's people in general – and God's subsequent deliverance of them out of it.

Mic 4:10 *Writhe and groan,^k O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.* 📖

^k Or push

Mic 7:9 *I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.* 📖

✚ **God brought Jonah through his corrective ordeal in the sea:**

Jonah 2:3-6 *For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. ⁴Then I said, 'I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.' ⁵The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head ⁶at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Spiritual Attributes

The spiritual attributes that God bestows on his people far exceed anything that this world can offer. Attributes or blessings such as love, hope, joy, peace and wisdom are longed for by most people, and sought after in many ways. But it is only from God that they can be gained in their highest form.

a) Love, Faith and Hope

See also:

- *l. Faith and Hope*, p. 1084
- *d) Love Each Other (I): General*, p. 1313
- *e) Love Each Other (II): How*, p. 1316
- *31. Love*, p. 1537

Love, faith and hope form a key triad of spiritual graces or attributes. They are linked a number of times in the NT, most famously in 1 Corinthians 13:13.

Subsections

- God gives his people love . . .
- . . . God enables his people to love
- God gives his people faith
- God gives his people hope – especially by what he has done through Jesus Christ
- God's promises give his people hope
- God's promises to his people include promises for the present life . . .
- . . . and promises for the afterlife – notably eternal life

God gives his people love . . .

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit gives God's people love and faith*, p. 844

Eph 6:23 Peace be to the brothers,^a and *love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* 

^a Or *brothers and sisters*

2Tim 1:7 ... for *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* 

1Jn 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for *love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.* 

1Tim 1:14 ... and *the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.* 

Gal 5:22-23 But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*²³*gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* 

2Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers,^b rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another;^c agree with one another, live in peace; and *the God of love and peace will be with you.* 

^b Or *brothers and sisters*

^c Or *listen to my appeal*

The expression “the God of love and peace” may well be alluding to God as the God “who gives love and peace” (CEV, NIRV), “the Source of affection, goodwill, love, and benevolence toward men” (AMP). The final clause would then be indicative of God giving such things primarily to those whom he is with – hence the verse’s inclusion here. Alternatively “the God of love and peace” could be simply referring to love and peace as characteristics of God.

. . . God enables his people to love

See also:

- [Col 1:5](#) ↴

1Thes 4:9 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for *you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, ...* 

1Jn 4:7, 16-17, 19 Beloved, let us love one another, for *love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.*  ... ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. *God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* ¹⁷*By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.*  ... ¹⁹*We love because he first loved us.* 

Those who have been “born of God” and know God (v. 7b) – living in God, with God living in them (v. 16b) – love others in accordance with this relationship with God who “is love” (v. 16). By this they love others with a love that is “perfected” (v. 17a). Note that in v. 19, “love” quite possibly includes love for God as well as for others.



1Thes 3:12 ... and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ...



Such blessings (cf. **2Thes 3:5** ↓) – which are effectively prayers – are indicative that the Lord does do such things.

2Thes 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

This appears to be speaking of the Lord directing them into an “ever deeper understanding” (NLT; cf. GNT) of God’s love, so as to love with his love (cf. CEV).

John 17:26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

In saying that “the love with which you have loved me may be in them”, Jesus is probably referring to believers reflecting God’s love, the love he has for Christ (cf. NCV) – through Jesus Christ making God known to them. As such it seems to be alluding to believers loving others in this way, although possibly loving Christ is primarily in view. Note that alternatively some understand this to be speaking of believers as the object of God’s love.

Deut 30:6 And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Just as God enables us to love others, he also enables us to love him, by changing our hearts – as metaphorically depicted here.

God gives his people faith

See also:

- *God enables people to believe*, p. 763
- *The Holy Spirit gives God’s people love and faith*, p. 844

Rom 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

The “measure of faith” – given by God to each of his people – is commonly understood to refer to the amount of faith one has (in God). More specifically, some think it refers in particular to our faith as applied to serving others, and especially to the gifts we have been given (cf. vv. 6-8). Others take it to refer to the Christian faith, the body of truth that Christians believe.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ...

The “gift of God” may be referring to faith in particular or more generally to the whole process of salvation.

Eph 6:23 Peace be to the brothers,^d and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

^d Or *brothers and sisters*

1Tim 1:14 ... and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Arguably this and 2 Timothy 1:13 immediately below suggest that the believer’s faith and love emanate from his or her union with Jesus Christ. They certainly reflect the importance of the believer’s union with Christ for the sustaining and continuance of this faith and love.

2Tim 1:13 Follow the pattern of the sound^e words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

^e Or *healthy*

Heb 12:2 ... looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The reference to Jesus being the “perfecter of our faith” is often understood to indicate that Jesus Christ is the one who perfects the believer’s faith or brings it to completion – making the verse very pertinent to this subsection. But some commentators, pointing out that “our” does not appear in the Greek, raise the possibility that with the description of Christ as the “founder”, it is actually referring to Jesus as the one who originated and perfected the way of faith.

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?



This implies that God gives such faith to those who are poor in the world’s eyes.

2Pet 1:1 Simeon^f Peter, a servant^g and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ...



^f Some manuscripts *Simon*

^g Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

Here “faith” most likely refers to the capacity and will to believe, although it could instead be speaking of the



Christian faith. The phrase "obtained a faith" suggests that this faith has been given (cf. GNT, NLT).

Ps 22:9 Yet you are he who took me from the womb; *you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.*

Acts 3:16 And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and *the faith that is through Jesus^h* has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

^h Greek *him*

This may be saying more than that we can have faith because of what Jesus has done (although this may possibly be the case). It suggests that our faith comes "through *and* by Him" (AMP).

✦ **Faith and love are due to our hope for what God has stored up for us in heaven:**

Col 1:3-5a We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard *of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,* ⁵*because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.*

The hope of what believers are to receive from God in the life to come stimulates faith and love, leading them to both believe God's promises and act in accordance with them.

God gives his people hope – especially by what he has done through Jesus Christ

See also:

- **Col 1:5a**
- *Reasons to have hope in God: God's steadfast love and faithfulness; . . .*, p. 1108
- *. . . and the deeds of God, our Savior*, p. 1109

Ps 62:5 For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for *my hope is from him.*

Rom 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

The phrase "the God of hope" implies that God is "the source of hope" (GNT), "the God who gives hope" (NCV™, cf. CEV, NLT), as suggested in the latter part of the verse. God imparts hope to his people by "the power of the Holy Spirit".

2Thes 2:16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and *God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,* ...

The hope is spoken of as being given by God (cf. CEV, NCV).

1Pet 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ...

Through Jesus Christ's resurrection, God has brought believers into a "living hope" – encompassing the hope of their own resurrection (v. 3), and an inheritance (v. 4).

Col 1:27 To them *God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

By what God has made possible through Christ, he has given believers the hope of sharing in his glory (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Heb 6:19-20 *We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,* ²⁰*where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf,* having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Verses 19b-20 appear to mean either: that our hope extends into God's very presence, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner on our behalf – giving us an assured hope that we will be able to follow; or that our hope is based on Jesus' ministry for us in God's presence, in his role as high priest. The preceding verses (vv. 17-18) indicate that God is the originator of this hope that we have through Jesus Christ.

Heb 7:18-22 For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, *a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.* ²⁰*And it was not without an oath.* For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹*but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'"* ²²*This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.*

God made Jesus Christ high priest forever, on oath (vv. 20-21). In doing so God has effectively introduced a better hope for us (v. 19), with Jesus Christ's role as high priest guaranteeing a better covenant (v. 22) or relationship between God and his people.

✦ **God calls his people to a hope:**

Eph 1:18 ... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is *the hope to which he has called you,* what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ...



The “hope to which he has called you” is basically that which is based on God’s promises of salvation, a salvation based on what he has done through Jesus Christ. In speaking of God calling people “to a hope”, this reflects the fact that God gives his people hope.

God’s promises give his people hope

See also:

- [Heb 7:18-22](#) ↑
- *Put your hope in God’s promises*, p. 1106

The hope that God gives his people rests on his promises.

Ps 119:49 Remember *your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.* 📖

God’s “word” here is primarily his “promise” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Jer 29:11 For *I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfareⁱ and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.* 📖

ⁱ Or *peace*

Speaking of his plans for them, God effectively gives the people of Judah a promise of a good future, giving them hope.

Jer 31:16-17 Thus says the LORD: “Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for *there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.* ¹⁷*There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country.* 📖

These promises of God (v. 16, v. 17b) gave his people hope (v. 17a).

Hos 2:15 And there *I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achorⁱ a door of hope.* And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. 📖

ⁱ *Achor* means *trouble*; compare Joshua 7:26

The people of Israel would pass through the Valley of Achor on their return from exile. As such it would act as a door provided by God to the hope that would be theirs as they returned to their land, the hope for a blessed future in accordance with God’s promises along with their deliverance from exile, itself a fulfillment of promises of God.

Heb 6:17-18 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his

purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 📖

This indicates that “the hope set before us” (v. 18) by God is based on, or comes from, the promise of his referred to and his confirmation of it with an oath – the “two unchangeable things” (v. 18). The referred-to promise is one made to Abraham, in the context applied to all God’s people – “the heirs” (v. 17) – pertaining to their salvation. Note that the phrase “fled for refuge” appears to refer to taking refuge in God, with quite possibly his great promises for our future primarily in view as the reason for taking refuge in him.

✦ **Without God and his promises, people are without future hope:**

Eph 2:12 ... remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and *strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* 📖

Paul is referring to the Gentiles who formerly did not participate in “the covenants of promise” that God had made with Israel. Without God and his covenant promises, people are without a realistic future hope. Thus this verse also implies that God’s promises give his people hope.

God’s promises to his people include promises for the present life . . .

Num 10:29 And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law, “We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, ‘I will give it to you.’ Come with us, and we will do good to you, for *the LORD has promised good to Israel.*” 📖

God’s promises to his people in the OT often reflect the more physical or tangible nature of the first covenant’s blessings (cf. [Deut 15:6](#) ↓; [Deut 26:19](#) ↓). Such promises are not necessarily applicable to God’s people now under the new covenant in their original sense, though many of these have a spiritual application.

Deut 15:6 For *the LORD your God will bless you, as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.* 📖

Deut 26:18-19 And the LORD has declared today that *you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, ¹⁹and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above*



all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised. 

Deut 29:13 ... that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 

Ps 119:41, 58, 76, 116, 154, 170 Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise;  ... ⁵⁸I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.  ... ⁷⁶Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant.  ... ¹¹⁶Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!  ... ¹⁵⁴Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise!  ... ¹⁷⁰Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word. 

In these verses “your promise” refers to a promise/s of salvation.

Acts 2:33, 38-39 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father *the promise of the Holy Spirit*, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.  ... ³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” 

Rom 1:1-2 Paul, a servant^k of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for *the gospel of God*, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ... 

^k Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

Note that the promised gospel itself contains promises, both regarding the present life and the afterlife.

2Tim 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to *the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus*, ... 

Here “life” appears to refer to spiritual life that one has in Jesus Christ. This spiritual life is inclusive of eternal life, spoken of further in the following subsection.

... and promises for the afterlife – notably eternal life

See also:

▪ **Rom 1:1-2** ; **2Tim 1:1** 

Acts 3:20-21 ... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 

This future restoration was “promised long ago” (CEV, NIV, NLT) by God.

2Pet 3:13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 

Heb 4:1 Therefore, while *the promise of entering his rest* still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 

This appears to primarily have in view the eternal rest for God's people in the afterlife.

Heb 9:15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive *the promised eternal inheritance*, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.¹ 

¹ The Greek word means both *covenant* and *will*; also verses 16, 17

The “promised eternal inheritance” – fulfilled through the work of Jesus Christ – may have primarily in view “eternal redemption” (v. 12).

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of *the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him*? 

Titus 1:2 ... in hope of *eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began*^m ... 

^m Greek *before times eternal*

1Jn 2:25 And this is the promise that he made to usⁿ—eternal life. 

ⁿ Some manuscripts *you*

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive *the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him*. 



✦ **Godliness gives one promise “for both the present life and the life to come”:**

1Tim 4:8 ... for while bodily training is of some value, *godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.* 

One can infer from this that godliness brings the promise of eternal life, amongst other things.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Peace

See also:

- ... *and through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God*, p. 594

OT references to the peace that God gives to his people encompass both inner peace (including being at ease) and outer peace (the absence of war and adversity). In addition to peace with God, the NT speaks of God giving his people an inner, spiritual peace – even amidst adversity. The NT also speaks of God engendering peace or harmony amongst groups of believers.

Subsections

- God gives his people peace
- God provides his people with rest
- Jesus Christ gives his people peace and rest
- God’s people have great peace
- God’s people have peace and rest even in death
- Note: God is the God of peace

God gives his people peace

See also:

- *God fosters unity and peace in the church body*, p. 793
- *The church’s unity is linked with it having one God, one Lord and one Spirit*, p. 794
- *The Holy Spirit gives God’s people joy and peace*, p. 845
- c) *Deliverance and Everlasting Peace*, p. 991

Num 6:26 ... *the LORD lift up his countenance^o upon you and give you peace.* 

^o Or *face*

This is from what is often called “The Aaronic Benediction” (cf. vv. 22-25), a blessing that the priests were to bestow on the people. One’s “countenance” is one’s face or facial expression. The segment “lift up his countenance upon you” refers to God looking favorably on the people, to act accordingly – as illustrated by the last phrase.

Ps 4:8 *In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.* 

Ps 29:11 *May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless^p his people with peace!* 

^p Or *The LORD will give . . . The LORD will bless*

Ps 85:8 *Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.* 

Prov 16:7 *When a man’s ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.* 

It is debatable as to whether “he” refers to the LORD (cf. NIV) or to the man whose ways are pleasing to the LORD (cf. GNT). Even if it is the latter, the verse would indicate that such peace comes indirectly from God, through following his ways.

Isa 26:12 *O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works.* 

Isa 57:19b *Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the LORD, “and I will heal him.* 

Those who are spoken of as being “far” away are quite possibly exiled Jews, with the return of God’s repentant people after the Babylonian exile probably at least partially in view. Alternatively the Gentiles may be in view; Paul at least applies this to the Gentiles (cf. Eph 2:17).

Nah 1:15 ^a *Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feasts, O Judah; fulfill your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off.* 

^a Ch 2:1 in Hebrew

The term “publishes peace” is speaking of proclaiming peace, here done by people bringing the good news of the peace that God had brought about. The reference is to the destruction of Nineveh and the end of the Assyrian threat. Some of God’s promises of peace are given prior to or in troubled times, looking forward to peace in the future.



Mal 2:5 *My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him.* It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. 

This probably is speaking of God's covenant with the priest Phinehas. He acted zealously for the honor of God, and in so doing turned God's anger away from the Israelites (cf. Num 25:6-13).

Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and *on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*"^r 

^r Some manuscripts *peace, good will among men*

The angels spoke of an inner peace, inclusive of peace with God – granted to his people, "with whom he is pleased".

Col 1:2 To the saints and faithful brothers^s in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and *peace from God our Father.* 

^s Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Heb 12:10-11 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but *he disciplines us for our good*, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later *it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* 

Lev 26:6 *I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land.* 

These are part of the blessings promised to the Israelites for obeying God's commands under the first covenant.

2Chr 14:6-7 He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest. *He had no war in those years, for the LORD gave him peace.* ⁷And he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God. We have sought him, and *he has given us peace on every side.*" So they built and prospered. 

God provides his people with rest

See also:

▪ [2Chr 14:6](#) 

Ex 33:14 And he said, "My presence will go with you, and *I will give you rest.*" 

Josh 1:13 Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, '*The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest* and will give you this land.' 

Deut 12:9-10 ... for you have not as yet come *to the rest and to the inheritance that the LORD your God is giving you.* ¹⁰But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and when *he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety,* ... 

The following verses from Joshua and 1 Kings attest to the fulfillment of this promise.

Josh 21:44 And *the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers.* Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. 

Josh 23:1 A long time afterward, when *the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies,* and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, ... 

1Ki 5:4 But now *the LORD my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune.* 

1Ki 8:56 *Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised.* Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. 

Ps 116:7 *Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* 

Isa 28:12 ... to whom *he has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose";* yet they would not hear. 

If the people had have been faithful to God, they would have experienced the promised rest.

Jer 6:16a Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and *walk in it, and find rest for your souls.*" 



Prov 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life, and *whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.* 

Ps 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. *He leads me beside still waters.*^t 

^t Hebrew *beside waters of rest*

The Hebrew rendered as “still waters” means “waters of rest” (cf. text note). As such the last statement speaks of God providing his people with rest.

Jesus Christ gives his people peace and rest

See also:

- *... and through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God*, p. 594
- *“In” Jesus Christ God’s people have peace and other spiritual “fruits”*, p. 785

John 14:27 *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.* Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. 

Unlike the superficial peace that the world gives, the peace Jesus Christ gives is real, deep and lasting. Thus believers need not be troubled or afraid.

John 16:33 *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.* In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. 

The phrase “these things” appears to refer to all that Jesus had told them throughout his discourse (cf. chs 14-16). The verse as a whole indicates that because Jesus Christ has overcome the world, in him believers have peace amidst the trouble that the world causes them.

John 20:19-21, 26 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, *Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”*²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹*Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”*  ... ²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, *Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”* 

Being spoken by Jesus, the greeting “Peace be with you” conveys the imparting of his peace.

Rom 1:7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* 

Such blessings of grace and peace from God and Jesus Christ (cf. **2Jn 1:3** ↓) occur frequently throughout the NT, especially at the start of Paul’s letters.

Col 3:15 *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.* And be thankful. 

The “peace of Christ” is the “peace that comes from Christ” (CEV, NLT, cf. NCV, GNT). Some understand it to denote inner peace, while others take it to primarily be referring here to peace amongst Christian groups – which should rule the way we relate to each other.

2Jn 1:3 *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son, in truth and love.* 

God and Jesus Christ give peace – along with grace and mercy – to those “who live in truth and love” (NLT).

Mic 5:4-5a *And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.* ⁵*And he shall be their peace.* 

Jesus Christ is in view here as the Messiah. This prophecy of peace will ultimately be fulfilled on his second coming.

Matt 11:28-30 *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* 

Here “rest” appears to encompass (or at least be applicable to) rest from: trying to obey the OT law in order to be righteous before God, particularly with how it was embellished by the Jews; the burden of sin; and any troubles in our lives that weary and burden us. For further comment see *Note: God’s and Jesus Christ’s commands are not too difficult or burdensome*, p. 1181.

Mark 6:30-31 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹*And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.”* For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 

Jesus was calling on the disciples to go with him to a quiet place to rest. Application can be made of this to believers resting with Jesus.



God's people have great peace

Ps 37:11 But the meek shall inherit the land and *delight themselves in abundant peace.* 

Ps 119:165 *Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.* 

Isa 26:3 *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.* 

The one who trusts in God is kept in "perfect peace" – a "true" (NCV™) and complete peace.

Isa 48:18 Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then *your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; ...* 

Rom 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.* 

Phil 4:6-7 ...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* 

The peace of God is so great that it is beyond comprehension. As such it guards the hearts and minds of believers from anxiety (cf. v. 6) – and from anything else detrimental to their life in Christ.

2Thes 3:16 *Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.* 

As is the case with some of the other verses elsewhere in this section on peace, this is primarily speaking of peace amongst believers.

2Pet 1:2 *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* 

✦ Peace brings health:

Prov 14:30 *A tranquil^u heart gives life to the flesh, but envy^v makes the bones rot.* 

^u Or *healing*

^v Or *jealousy*

God's people have peace and rest even in death

See also:

- *God's people are with Jesus Christ even in death*, p. 808

Isa 57:1-2 The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For *the righteous man is taken away from calamity; ²he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness.* 

Num 23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part^w of Israel? *Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his!* 

^w Or *dust clouds*

Balaam's wish points to the blessed state of God's people even in death, probably encompassing the thought that the righteous "die in peace" (GNT; cf. CEV).

2Ki 22:20 Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and *you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place.*^z And they brought back word to the king. 

Ps 16:9-10 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^x rejoices; *my flesh also dwells secure.* ¹⁰*For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.*^y 

^x Hebrew *my glory*

^y Or *see the pit*

The phrase translated as "dwells secure" can also be rendered "rests secure" (NIV®, NRSV; cf. CEV, NKJV, NLT). David may be speaking here more of resting securely in the face of death – when under threat from enemies – rather than actually in death. However in Acts 2:24-33 it is used in the latter sense, being applied there to Jesus Christ.

Prov 14:32 The wicked is overthrown through his evildoing, but *the righteous finds refuge in his death.* 

Dan 12:13 But go your way till the end. And *you shall rest* and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days. 

This suggests that for God's people the time between death and resurrection at the end of the age is one of rest.

Luke 2:29 Lord, now you are letting your servant^z depart in peace, according to your word; ... 

^z Greek *bondservant*

It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Christ (v. 26). On seeing



the child Jesus he joyfully realized the promise was fulfilled, and so was ready to die – in peace.

Luke 16:22, 25 *The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.*^a The rich man also died and was buried, ¶ ... ²⁵But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now *he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.* ¶

^a Greek *bosom*; also verse 23

"Abraham's side" (v. 22) apparently refers to a blessed place or state – one of comfort (cf. v. 25b), inclusive of peace and rest – to which the righteous are understood to enter on death.

Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.*" "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" ¶

The "rest" here could well refer to or be inclusive of rest throughout eternity, following the resurrection (cf. [Heb 4:1-1 ↓](#)).

Job 3:11-13, 17-18 Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? ¹²Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse? ¹³For *then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then I would have been at rest,* ¶ ... ¹⁷There the wicked cease from troubling, and *there the weary are at rest.* ¹⁸*There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the taskmaster.* ¶

This speaks of death bringing rest initially in some sense to all people.

✦ The promised future rest for believers:

Heb 4:1-11 Therefore, while *the promise of entering his rest still stands,* let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.^b ³For *we who have believed enter that rest,* as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest," although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴*For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."* ⁵*And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest."* ⁶*Since therefore it remains for some to enter it,* and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words

already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." ⁸For *if Joshua had given them rest, God^c would not have spoken of another day later on.* ⁹*So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,* ¹⁰*for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.* ¹¹*Let us therefore strive to enter that rest,* so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¶

^b Some manuscripts *it did not meet with faith in the hearers*

^c Greek *he*

The rest spoken of here is primarily the eternal rest that believers will have in the afterlife (v. 11a). However, vv. 3-4 may be implying that believers in a sense have this rest now. It seemingly speaks of the rest in a present tense (v. 3a) and refers to God's rest – the rest in which believers can or will share – as having been a reality since the creation of the world (vv. 3b-4). In vv. 2-6, the need to respond to the gospel message in belief is emphasized by the contrasting unbelief and disobedience of the Israelites during the desert wanderings. This cost that generation the opportunity of entering the promised land and the rest God had promised (cf. 3:7-11). In v. 10, "his works" probably refers to good works done in Christ, from which believers will rest in the afterlife; although some think it may refer to or be inclusive of attempts to work for salvation, from which believers have rest now.

Note: God is the God of peace

In describing God as the God of peace, these verses are generally understood to be primarily indicating that God is the source of peace. However, in some at least the thought may be more that peace is a characteristic of God, with him providing peace being an implication.

Rom 15:33 *May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.* ¶

The reference to the "God of peace" being with them (cf. [2Cor 13:11 ↓](#)) suggests that Paul may have in view God's presence facilitating peace in or amongst them.

Rom 16:20 *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.* ¶

2Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers,^d rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another,^e agree with one another, live in peace; and *the God of love and peace will be with you.* ¶

^d Or *brothers and sisters*

^e Or *listen to my appeal*

1Thes 5:23 Now may *the God of peace* himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¶



Note that in addition to this and the above references, the ascription "the God of peace" is also used of God in Philippians 4:9 and Hebrews 13:20.

1Cor 14:33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, ...

Judg 6:22-24 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." ²³But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." ²⁴Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, *The LORD Is Peace*. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

Ps 46:9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire.

Such actions (cf. Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3) illustrate that God is the God of peace.

✦ **Jesus Christ is the Lord of peace:**

2Thes 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Joy

See also:

- *e) How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing*, p. 1261

Subsections

- God gives joy to his people
- God gives his people fullness of joy
- The joy is present even in trouble
- Promises of God replacing sorrow with joy
- Note: Joy strengthens people

God gives joy to his people

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit gives God's people joy and peace*, p. 845

1Pet 1:8-9 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, *you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory*, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The magnitude of the joy is heightened by it being described as not only "inexpressible" but also "filled with glory" – a "glorious (triumphant, heavenly) joy" (AMP).

Ezra 6:22 And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Neh 12:43 And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

Likewise 8:17b speaks of the great joy of the people in celebrating God's blessing at this Feast of Tabernacles – "And there was very great rejoicing."

Ps 4:7 You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

Ps 21:6 For you make him most blessed forever; *f you make him glad with the joy of your presence*.

^f Or make him a source of blessing forever

God's presence brings joy (cf. Ps 16:11 ↓) – here making the king glad.

Ps 97:11 Light is sown^g for the righteous, and *joy for the upright in heart*.

^g Most Hebrew manuscripts; one Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint, Syriac, Jerome *Light dawns*

Ps 105:43 So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing.

Ps 132:9, 16 Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and *let your saints shout for joy*. ... ¹⁶Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and *her saints will shout for joy*.



Ecc 2:26 For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.



Ecc 5:19-20 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. ²⁰For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

This appears to be an observation rather than an actual claim that God does this all the time for every one of his people. It is also not necessarily referring exclusively to his own people (cf. Acts 14:17 ↓).

Acts 14:17 Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

The reference here is not just to God's people. Through his provision of food, God gives all people gladness or joy (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Gen 21:6-7 And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." ⁷And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Ps 34:5 Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

Being "radiant" reflects joy. The second part of the verse implies that this radiance and joy lasts.

Ps 46:4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

The river is understood by a number of commentators to symbolize God's blessing, possibly even alluding to God's presence. Such blessing makes glad the people of God.

Ps 90:14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

The psalmist appears to be praying for restoration during a time of discipline, including restoration of the people's relationship with God, from which would flow joy and gladness all of their days.

✦ Finding God's kingdom brings great joy:

Matt 13:44 The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

God gives his people fullness of joy

This subsection contains both references to God and Jesus Christ filling their people with joy in an ongoing sense and references to them doing so on particular occasions.

Ps 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

John 15:10-11 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Following Jesus Christ (v. 10) results in our joy being "the fullest possible joy" (NCV™).

John 16:24 Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

John 17:13 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Here Jesus speaks of his followers having all of his joy in them, giving them a complete joy – i.e. having "the same complete joy that I do" (CEV).

Rom 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Deut 16:15 For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

Ps 126:1-3 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. ²Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." ³The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

This may be implying – and certainly is reflective of the fact – that God fills his people with joy through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 15:13 ↑).

2Cor 7:4 I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.



This and the following references do not speak of believers' joy as coming "directly" from God or Christ, but as coming from this related source of other believers.

1Jn 1:3-4 ... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our^h joy may be complete. ☞

^h Some manuscripts *your*

By telling of what they had seen and heard, John and others sought to bring their readers into fellowship with not only themselves, but more importantly with God and Jesus Christ – thus making their own joy complete. (Note that, rather than their own joy, the reference may be to their readers' joy – as per the text note.)

2Jn 1:12 Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead *I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.* ☞

✦ **John's great joy at the commencement of Jesus' ministry:**

John 3:29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, *rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.* ☞

What John had been working towards – and no doubt looking forward to – had begun. Hence his great joy.

The joy is present even in trouble

See also:

- **c) Rejoice** [what to do in persecution], p. 2015

2Cor 6:10 ... as *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. ☞

In their work for the gospel there was much that caused Paul and his co-workers sorrow, yet they always had reason to rejoice. Such reasons would have included the promises and hope they always had in Christ, and the fruit of their work (cf. **2Cor 7:4** ↓).

2Cor 7:4 I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. *In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.* ☞

The spiritual growth of his converts gave Paul reason for great joy amidst trouble.

2Cor 8:2 ... for *in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy* and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ☞

1Thes 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for *you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,* ... ☞

Heb 10:34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and *you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.* ☞

1Pet 1:3-9 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,* ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and *rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,* ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ☞

Ps 28:1, 6-7 To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, *I become like those who go down to the pit.* ☞ ... ⁶Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. ⁷The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; *my heart exults,* and with my song I give thanks to him. ☞

Because he believes God has heard his cry (v. 6) and as God is his strength and shield in which he trusts (v. 7), the psalmist's "heart leaps for joy" (NIV®, v. 7) despite his troubles (v. 1).

Ps 94:19 *When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.* ☞

Note that the Hebrew translated here as "consolations" can also be rendered "comforts" (NKJV; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).



Promises of God replacing sorrow with joy

See also:

- *God's people will have great joy . . .*, p. 742
- *. . . There will be no more sorrow*, p. 743
- *Joy will accompany God's renewal of Israel . . .*, p. 989
- *. . . Israel's sorrow will be no more*, p. 990

Ps 30:5 For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.ⁱ *Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.* 

ⁱ Or *and in his favor is life*

This speaks of the sorrow brought by consequences of sin, and the joy brought by God's restoration.

Ps 126:5-6 *Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! ⁶He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.* 

This psalm was written for the exiles who had returned from Babylon, apparently encouraging them with a promise of their land's restoration, despite the initial pains in tending it. Note that the concept of sowing in tears and reaping with joy is sometimes applied to the hardships encountered in spreading the gospel and the joy experienced in seeing people saved.

Isa 9:1-4 ^j But *there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish.* In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.^k ²¹The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. ³You have multiplied the nation; *you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.* ⁴For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 

^j Ch 8:23 in Hebrew

^k Or *of the Gentiles*

^l Ch 9:1 in Hebrew

Note that among the reasons given for this promised joy include the shattering of the yoke that burdened the people (v. 4), that would eventuate through the coming of the Messiah (cf. vv. 6-7).

Isa 35:10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; *everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* 

As with Jeremiah 31:11-13 below, this probably initially referred to the people's return from exile in Babylon. Many understand that it is to be consummately fulfilled in the future renewal of Israel (cf. above cross references).

Isa 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;^m he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;ⁿ ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; *to comfort all who mourn; ³to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;* that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.^o 

^m Or *afflicted*

ⁿ Or *the opening [of the eyes] to those who are blind;*

Septuagint and recovery of sight to the blind

^o Or *that he may display his beauty*

Here the work of the Messiah is primarily in view. Jesus applied vv. 1-2a to himself in Luke 4:19-20. Commentators generally interpret Jesus concluding his quotation immediately prior to "the day of vengeance of our God" to imply that he will fulfill the remainder of the prophecy on his second coming. Note that "a faint spirit" (v. 3) speaks of "a spirit of despair" (NIV®; cf. NLT).

Jer 31:11-13 For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ¹²*They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more.* ¹³*Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.* 

The clause "they shall languish no more" (v. 12b) can be rendered as "they shall sorrow no more at all" (NKJV; cf. NIV, NLT).

John 16:20-22 Truly, truly, I say to you, *you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.* ²¹*When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for*



joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²²So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. 

The disciples' sorrow on Jesus' death would be replaced by joy on his resurrection.

Job 8:20-21 Behold, God will not reject a blameless man, nor take the hand of evildoers. ²¹He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting. 

Although Bildad said this with the underlying incorrect assumption that Job must be guilty of evil or wrongdoing to suffer as he did, his words do reflect the assertion that God does replace sorrow with joy.

✦ An example of God replacing sorrow with joy:

Ps 30:11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, ... 

Note: Joy strengthens people

Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." 

The grief of the people would be offset through them drawing strength from the joy they had in the LORD, or the "joy that the LORD gives" (GNT, cf. CEV).

Prov 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. 

2Cor 8:2 ... for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 

This illustrates the power of joy amidst troubles. Despite "a severe test of affliction" and "their extreme poverty", such was their joy that rather than be overcome by their own problems, the Macedonian churches had the strength of character and desire to be very generous with what little they had.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Wisdom and Knowledge

See also:

- [Having the Holy Spirit is linked with having wisdom and knowledge](#), p. 847
- [c\) God Teaches His People](#), p. 864

Subsections

- [God gives his people wisdom](#)
- [God gives his people knowledge](#)
- [God's people are given spiritual sight . . .](#)
- [. . . They have spiritual light instead of spiritual darkness](#)
- [Note: The exceptional wisdom and knowledge that God gave to Solomon, Daniel and others](#)

God gives his people wisdom

See also:

- [Eccl 2:26a](#) ↓; [Isa 33:6](#) ↓; [Col 2:2-3](#) ↓
- [Ask God for wisdom . . .](#), p. 1637
- [. . . For it is God who gives wisdom](#), p. 1637

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 

Ps 51:6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. 

The "secret heart" refers to one's "inmost being" (NLT), presumably one's "mind" (GNT); it appears to have a similar sense or meaning as the earlier phrase "inward being".

Col 1:28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 

The wisdom referred to is understood as having been given to Paul and his associates by God (cf. [2Pet 3:15](#) ↓) – "all the wisdom God has given us" (NLT).

2Pet 3:15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ... 



Acts 7:9-10 And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him ¹⁰and rescued him out of all his afflictions and *gave him favor and wisdom* before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. 

Ezra 7:25 And you, Ezra, according to *the wisdom of your God that is in your hand*, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach. 

Dan 9:22 He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, *“O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding.* 

The speaker here is the angel Gabriel, sent by God.

Luke 21:15 ...for *I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.* 

Col 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, *asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ...* 

Paul asks God to fill the Colossians with the knowledge of his will through instilling in them “all spiritual wisdom and understanding”.

✦ Traits of the wisdom that comes from God:

James 3:17 But *the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.* 

God gives his people knowledge

See also:

- Col 1:9 
- Isa 32:3-4 ; Eph 1:18-19 
- c) *God Teaches His People*, p. 864

In the Bible, particularly in the NT, “knowledge” generally refers to spiritual knowledge, indicative of a clear comprehension of things of God.

Eccl 2:26a For *to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge* and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. 

Isa 33:6 ... and *he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge*; the fear of the LORD is Zion’s^p treasure. 

^p Hebrew *his*

This speaks of God as “providing a rich store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge” (NLT; cf. NIV) for his people.

Matt 13:11 And he answered them, *“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.* 

Luke 1:76-77 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷*to give knowledge of salvation to his people* in the forgiveness of their sins, ... 

God would give knowledge of salvation to his people through John the Baptist’s ministry.

Rom 15:14 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers,^a that you yourselves are full of goodness, *filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.* 

^a Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 30

The phrase “filled with all knowledge” presumably does not literally mean that Paul thought his readers knew everything. He appears to speak of them having a sound knowledge (cf. NLT), perhaps all the knowledge that they needed (cf. CEV, NCV). Paul presumably had God in mind as the ultimate source of this knowledge. Note that being “able to instruct one another” is reflective of having such knowledge.

2Cor 4:6 For God, who said, *“Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* 

This is speaking of God enabling believers to know his glory through his revelation of himself in Christ.

Col 2:2-3 ... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, *to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* 

When one comes to know the mystery of God – Jesus Christ – then in turn one has access to the vast treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are stored up and “hidden” in him.

Col 3:10 ... and have put on the new self, which is being *renewed in knowledge* after the image of its creator. 

The phrase “being renewed in knowledge” means either that our knowledge is being renewed (by God), or that through knowledge we are being renewed.



2Tim 2:7 Think over what I say, for *the Lord will give you understanding in everything.* 

Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant^r of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and *their knowledge of the truth*, which accords with godliness, ... 

^r Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

It can be argued that God is seen as the ultimate source of the knowledge referred to here and in 2 Peter 1:2 below, as is clearly the case in other references to knowledge in this subsection.

2Pet 1:2 *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* 

✦ **Now our knowledge is imperfect, but it will be made complete:**

1Cor 13:8-12 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; *as for knowledge, it will pass away.* ⁹*For we know in part and we prophesy in part,* ¹⁰*but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.* ¹¹*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.* ¹²*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.* 

In v. 8, "knowledge" may refer to the spiritual gift of knowledge (cf. NCV, NLT); in any case the "knowledge" referred to is partial or imperfect, as opposed to complete truth (cf. AMP). As such it will pass away. The difference in our present knowledge and the knowledge that we will have is contrasted in v. 11 with the change in knowledge from childhood to adulthood. In v. 12, the phrase "I shall know fully" is most likely meaning that we shall have a complete knowledge, but it could more specifically be referring to knowing God fully.

God's people are given spiritual sight . . .

See also:

▪ **Acts 26:18** 

Ps 119:18 *Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.* 

God willingly opens his people's eyes to spiritual truth.

Isa 29:18 *In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.* 

Along with 32:3-4 and 35:5 below, this appears to have an eschatological setting or final fulfillment. However in view of 42:6-7 below, these passages arguably have a partial fulfillment in Christ's first mission. As such they would be readily applicable to spiritual sight being given to believers in the current age.

Isa 32:3-4 *Then the eyes of those who see will not be closed, and the ears of those who hear will give attention. ⁴The heart of the hasty will understand and know, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak distinctly.* 

Isa 35:5 *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ...* 

Isa 42:6-7 I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, *a light for the nations,* ⁷*to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.* 

The work of the Messiah is in view. Verse 7 speaks of him giving spiritual sight and also spiritual release from the darkness of sin.

Matt 13:16-17 *But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.* 

God's people are given spiritual sight/insight by God (v. 16) – even more so since Jesus Christ's fuller revelation of truth that earlier people of God had longed for (v. 17).

2Cor 3:14-16 *But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because *only through Christ is it taken away.* ¹⁵Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶But *when one^s turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.* *

^s Greek *he*

When listening to the old covenant being read, the people's minds and hearts were in a sense covered so that they could not see the significance of the old covenant, with its transitory nature probably being what Paul had foremost in mind. One can infer from these verses that whenever anyone turns to the Lord any "veil" blocking spiritual insight is taken away.

Eph 1:18-19 *... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power*



toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ...

Luke 24:45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ...

... They have spiritual light instead of spiritual darkness

See also:

- *Light* [blessings of God's word], p. 316
- *Jesus came to bring spiritual light into the world . . .*, p. 510
- *. . . Jesus came to bring truth*, p. 511
- *Instead of living in darkness, live according to the light and truth . . .*, p. 1862
- *. . . Insights on living in darkness and living in God's light and truth*, p. 1863

Isa 42:16 And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.

Initially at least, this appears to be referring to God bringing the exiles back to their homeland. But additionally, particularly in view of vv. 6-7 in the previous subsection, this may well be alluding to spiritual blindness and spiritual darkness/light (cf. vv. 18-19).

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The light that Jesus gives enables one to recognize and avoid "darkness" or falsehood – including false ideologies and ways of life – and it shows the way to spiritual life.

Acts 26:17-18 ... delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

2Cor 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God who at creation commanded light to "shine out of darkness", has made his spiritual light shine in the previously

darkened hearts of believers, enabling them to know the glory of God that is seen in Christ.

Eph 5:8a, 13-14 ... for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. ... ¹³But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

The references to sleep and death in v. 14 allude to spiritual darkness. The verse speaks of waking from a state of spiritual darkness to the light which Christ provides. With v. 14a saying that "anything that becomes visible is light", v. 14b may more precisely be indicating that through Christ's light shining on them, believers become light – as per v. 8a – rather than just simply receiving light.

Col 1:12-13 ... giving thanks^t to the Father, who has qualified you^u to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ...

^t Or *patience, with joy giving thanks*

^u Some manuscripts *us*

1Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

2Pet 1:19 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ...

God's word gives light amidst darkness. The latter part of the verse is understood to be speaking of the coming of the day and light of the return of Jesus Christ – "the morning star". It is debatable as to what "rises in your hearts" means. Possibilities include: the purifying transformation of Christians by Christ's light; and the illumination and perhaps also joy of the realization of the Christian's hope.

1Jn 2:8 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because^v the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

^v Or *that*

The "true light" is associated with the "new commandment", the command to love. The truth or validity of the command is seen in Jesus and also believers. As such, the final clause may refer to the fact that the true light is shining in and through believers – a result of following this command. Alternatively it may simply mean that because God's true



light is shining, the truth of the command can be seen in Jesus and believers.

Heb 10:32 But recall the former days when, after *you were enlightened*, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ...



This is speaking of the spiritual enlightenment received in becoming a believer. Similarly 6:4 refers to "those who have once been enlightened".

‡ **Believers belong to the light rather than the darkness:**

1Thes 5:4-5 But *you are not in darkness, brothers*, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵*For you are all children^w of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.*

^w Or sons; twice in this verse

Note: The exceptional wisdom and knowledge that God gave to Solomon, Daniel and others

1Ki 4:29-34 And *God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore,* ³⁰*so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.* ³¹*For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.* ³²*He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.* ³³*He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish.* ³⁴*And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.*

1Ki 3:22, 24-28 But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." Thus they spoke before the king. ... ²⁴*And the king said, "Bring me a sword."* So a sword was brought before the king. ²⁵*And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other."* ²⁶Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death." But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him." ²⁷*Then the king answered and said, "Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother."* ²⁸*And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in*

awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

1Ki 10:1-8, 23-24 Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, *she came to test him with hard questions.* ²She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. ³*And Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her.* ⁴And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, ⁵the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the LORD, *there was no more breath in her.* ⁶*And she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, ⁷but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard.* ⁸Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! ... ²³Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. ²⁴And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.

Dan 1:17, 20 As for these four youths, *God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.* ... ²⁰And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, *he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.*

The others referred to along with Daniel (cf. **Dan 5:11-12** ↓) are Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Dan 5:11-12 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods.^x In the days of your father, *light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him*, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, ¹²*because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel*, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.

^x Or Spirit of the holy God



Gen 41:39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “*Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.*” 

‡ Elisha’s God-given, supernatural knowledge of the enemies’ plans:

2Ki 6:8-12 Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, *he took counsel with his servants, saying, “At such and such a place shall be my camp.”*⁹*But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, “Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there.”*¹⁰And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him. *Thus*

*he used to warn him, so that he saved himself there more than once or twice.*¹¹And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing, and he called his servants and said to them, “Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?”¹²And one of his servants said, “None, my lord, O king; but *Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.*” 

Pray for persecuted Christians



God's Care of His People

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I. God's Saving of His People

See also:

- [13. Salvation through Jesus Christ](#), p. 587

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

In reading this chapter about God's saving and preservation of his people, one should bear in mind that the Bible also speaks of God's people experiencing sufferings common to all people (cf. [39. Hard Times](#), p. 1933) and also persecution for their faith (cf. [40. Persecution](#), p. 1981). God can and does save and preserve his people, but also does allow or even ordain difficult experiences for his people – often for reasons that may not be clear.

Promises given in the OT of God saving and preserving his people are still very much relevant under the new covenant – as is reflected in a number of NT passages. But they are more applicable in a spiritual sense – in keeping with the greater spiritual nature of the second covenant in contrast to the often more tangible aspects of the first covenant. As such we should bear in mind C. H. Spurgeon's words: "It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord...Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach his honour, death is his gain". (See also the introductory comment under [e\) Epilogue: God's Care of the Needy](#), p. 951.)

a) God's Capacity to Save His People

Subsections

- [God is able to save his people – no matter what the circumstances](#)
- [God has mighty power to save his people . . .](#)
- [. . . God can perform awesome deeds to save his people](#)
- [God does not need to use any other means but himself to save his people](#)
- [Note: Salvation belongs to God – for he is the only savior](#)

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

James 4:12 There is only one lawgiver and judge, *he who is able to save* and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

Heb 5:7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus^a offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to *him who was able to save him from death*, and he was heard because of his reverence.

^a Greek *he*

Dan 3:15-17 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good.^b But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And *who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?*" ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, *our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.*"^c

^b Aramaic lacks *well and good*

^c Or *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king.*

2Pet 2:4-9 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell^d and committed them to chains^e of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵*if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;* ⁶*if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;* ⁷*and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked* ⁸*(for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);* ⁹*then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,*^g and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ...

^d Greek *Tartarus*

^e Some manuscripts *pits*

^f Some manuscripts *an example to those who were to be ungodly*

^g Or *temptations*



1Sam 14:6 Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the LORD will work for us, for *nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few.*"



Ps 55:18 *He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me.*

David was confident that God would save him "even though many" (NIV®, NLT) opposed him.

Judg 7:7, 22 And the LORD said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home."

...²²When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man's [Midianite's] sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah,^h as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.



^h Some Hebrew manuscripts *Zeredah*

In order that Israel would not boast that her own strength had saved her (cf. v. 2), God saved the Israelites with only 300 men against an army of at least tens of thousands.

✦ **God saved all of the Israelites from Egypt – laden with riches:**

Ps 105:37 *Then he brought out Israel with silver and gold, and there was none among his tribes who stumbled.*

The final clause indicates that God saved all of the people – "no one was left behind" (CEV).

God has mighty power to save his people . . .

Deut 9:26 And I prayed to the LORD, 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy your people and *your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.*

Neh 1:10 They are your servants and your people, *whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.*



Ps 20:6 Now I know that *the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand.*

God's "saving might" is all-surpassing. Note that God's "right hand" signifies his mighty power, with the right hand usually being spoken of as the stronger hand.

Ps 74:12-13 Yet *God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.* ¹³*You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the sea monstersⁱ on the waters.*

ⁱ Or *the great sea creatures*

Note that "the sea monsters" apparently is drawing upon Canaanite mythology, possibly in reference to Egypt in its defeat at the Red Sea.

Ps 79:11 Let the groans of the prisoners come before you; *according to your great power, preserve those doomed to die!*



The "prisoners" may well be the exiles in Babylon (cf. vv. 1-3, 7). In calling on God to preserve the lives of his people condemned to die there, the psalmist indicates that God has great power to do so.

Ps 106:8 Yet *he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.*

Isa 50:2-3 Why, when I came, was there no man; why, when I called, was there no one to answer? *Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst.* ³*I clothe the heavens with blackness and make sackcloth their covering.*

Isa 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching *in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."*

Zeph 3:17 *The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.*

Acts 13:17 The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and *with uplifted arm he led them out of it.*

The phrase "uplifted arm" points to God's "mighty power" (CEV, NIV; cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

. . . God can perform awesome deeds to save his people

Ex 14:21-23, 26-27, 30 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and *the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.* ²²*And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their*



right hand and on their left. ²³The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ³⁰Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

^j Hebrew shook off

Deut 26:8 And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror,^k with signs and wonders.

^k Hebrew with great terror

2Sam 22:13-18 Out of the brightness before him coals of fire flamed forth. ¹⁴The LORD thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice. ¹⁵And he sent out arrows and scattered them; lightning, and routed them. ¹⁶Then the channels of the sea were seen; the foundations of the world were laid bare, at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. ¹⁷He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. ¹⁸He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.

Here David uses references to natural phenomena – probably volcanoes (v. 13), storms (vv. 14-15) and an earthquake (v. 16) – to metaphorically depict God's mighty deeds in rescuing him.

Ps 65:5 By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; ...

Ps 66:5-6a Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. ⁶He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot.

Ps 118:14-16 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. ¹⁵Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly, ¹⁶the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!"

In saying that God "does valiantly", the psalmist speaks of God doing "mighty things" (NCV™, NIV®; cf. GNT, NLT).

Isa 64:3-4 When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. ⁴From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.

Verse 4 implies that the "awesome things that we did not look for" (v. 3) were done by God to deliver his people.

Dan 6:27 He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

Particularly in this context, presumably the "signs and wonders" primarily denote the awesome deeds that God has performed in saving his people.

Hab 3:11-13 The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. ¹²You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. ¹³You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck.¹ Selah

¹ The meaning of the Hebrew line is uncertain

This is a poetic illustration of God's awesome power and deeds in saving his people.

✦ God can do many good things in saving his people:

Ex 18:9 And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

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

1Sam 17:46-47 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.

Isa 31:8 And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man; and a sword, not of man, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor.



Assyria was a mortal threat to God's people, but God would crush it without need of human force, and so would save his people.

Isa 52:3, 9-10 For thus says the LORD: "You were sold for nothing, and *you shall be redeemed without money.*" ...
⁹Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; *he has redeemed Jerusalem.* ¹⁰*The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

God does not need to use material means such as money to redeem his people (v. 3). For he redeems them by his own "holy power" (GNT, NCV, NLT), for all to see (v. 10).

Isa 63:3, 5 *I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood^m spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.* ... ⁵*I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me.*

^mOr *their juice*; also verse 6

This speaks of God executing judgment on enemy forces (v. 3) in saving his people (v. 5). Similar to v. 3a, in v. 5 God appears to be speaking of there being no one to help him (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NRSV) realize salvation. As such this illustrates that God does not need human help to save his people.

Hos 1:7 But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and *I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.*

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

Zec 4:6-7 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.* ⁷Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"

This is referring to God helping his people accomplish a particular task (the rebuilding of the temple) rather than actually saving them. It is included here to further demonstrate that God does not need to use any other means but himself to accomplish his purposes.

‡ No other "god" can save the way God can:

Dan 3:29 Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for *there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.*

Note: Salvation belongs to God – for he is the only savior

See also:

- *God is the Savior of his people . . .*, p. 906
- *. . . God is the one who their salvation is in*, p. 906

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

Jonah 2:9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. *Salvation belongs to the LORD!*

Ps 3:8 *Salvation belongs to the LORD;* your blessing be on your people! Selah

Ps 68:20 *Our God is a God of salvation, and to GOD, the Lord, belong deliverances from death.*

Rev 7:10 ... and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Rev 19:1-2 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! *Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,* ²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."ⁿ

ⁿ Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

Isa 43:11 I, I am the LORD, and *besides me there is no savior.*

Isa 45:21 Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, *a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.*

Although the final clause may primarily have in view God being the only God, as per the first clause in the statement, quite possibly it also alludes to the fact that ultimately he the only "Savior".



Hos 13:4 But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and *besides me there is no savior*.



✦ **One is not saved simply through mortal strength:**

Ps 33:16-17 *The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. ¹⁷The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue.*

Similarly 1 Samuel 2:9 says, "... for not by might shall a man prevail." The implication in both of these references is that ultimately it is God who has control over one's deliverance, rather than human strength or any other power.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Saves His People – from All Things

Subsections

- God is the Savior of his people . . .
- . . . God is the one who their salvation is in
- God saves his people out of all troubles
- God saves his people from all their enemies
- On delivering them, God may even honor or exalt his people
- Note: God is the light of his people, giving them light . . .
- . . . God gives his people light even amidst darkness

God is the Savior of his people . . .

See also:

- *God is the Redeemer of his people . . .*, p. 911

Isa 60:16 You shall suck the milk of nations; you shall nurse at the breast of kings; and *you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*

Isa 63:8 For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely." And *he became their Savior.*

Jer 14:8 *O you hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble, why should you be like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?*

During a time of drought in Judah (cf. vv. 1-2), Jeremiah acknowledges and calls upon God as "its savior in time of trouble".

1Tim 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of *God our Savior* and of Christ Jesus our hope, ...

Note that the phrase "God our Savior" is also used in the NT in 1 Timothy 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; and 3:4. See also Jude 1:25 below.

Jude 1:25 ... *to the only God, our Savior*, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Deut 33:29 Happy are you, *O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph!* Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.

As the one who helps and enables them to triumph, God is the Savior of Israel, "a people saved by the LORD".

. . . God is the one who their salvation is in

Jer 3:23b *Truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.*

Ps 18:2 *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

The "horn" refers to "the horns of a bull" (CEV text note), one of the strongest animals in ancient Israel.

Ps 25:5 Lead me in your truth and teach me, for *you are the God of my salvation*; for you I wait all the day long.

Ps 37:39 *The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.*

Ps 62:7 *On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.*

Ps 68:19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; *God is our salvation.* Selah

Ps 95:1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to *the rock of our salvation!*

Isa 12:2 "*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD^o is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.*"

^o Hebrew for Yah, the LORD



Isa 59:16 He saw that there was no man, and wondered that *there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation*, and his righteousness upheld him. 

Arguably this points to the fact that God is the ultimate source of his people's salvation. With no one to intervene on behalf of his people (cf. 63:3-5), here God takes decisive action to save them.

✦ The salvation of his people comes from God alone:

Ps 62:1-2 *For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. ²He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.* 

A number of the above verses also suggest that the salvation of his people comes from God alone. Psalm 4:8 likewise points to this – “In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.”

God saves his people out of all troubles

See also:

▪ 2Ki 17:39 ↓

The following verses do not speak of God saving his people from experiencing any troubles. A number of them speak of situations in which his people had experienced much suffering, in some cases for a number of years. Believers are not immune to experiencing trouble. But God promises to save them out of it, whether this is realized in this life or in the ultimate salvation of the afterlife (cf. 2Tim 4:17-18 ↓).

Ps 34:4-6, 17, 19 I sought the LORD, and *he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.* ⁵Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. ⁶This poor man cried, and *the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.*  ... ¹⁷When the righteous cry for help, *the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.*  ... ¹⁹*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.* 

Ps 54:7 *For he has delivered me from every trouble*, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies. 

Gen 41:51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. “For,” he said, “*God has made me forget all my hardship* and all my father's house.”^p 

^p *Manasseh* sounds like the Hebrew for *making to forget*

Here Joseph in effect acknowledges that God had saved him out of all his trouble or suffering (cf. Acts 7:9 ↓). Note that his reference to forgetting his father's household probably has primarily in view the pain of separation from them. The

emotional scarring from what his brothers had done to him is another possibility.

Gen 48:15-16 And he blessed Joseph and said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, ¹⁶*the angel who has redeemed me from all evil*, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude^a in the midst of the earth.” 

^a Or *let them be like fish for multitude*

The “angel” (v. 16) appears to be a reference to God, or at least to the angel of the Lord (cf. 16:7-11; 22:11, 15), closely associated with God.

Ex 18:8 Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, *all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the LORD had delivered them.* 

1Sam 10:19a But today you have rejected your *God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses*, and you have said to him, “Set a king over us.” 

1Ki 1:29 And the king swore, saying, “*As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my soul out of every adversity, ...*” 

Acts 7:9-10 And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him ¹⁰and *rescued him out of all his afflictions* and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. 

2Tim 3:10-11 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹*my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.* 

2Tim 4:17-18 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So *I was rescued from the lion's mouth.* ¹⁸*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.* To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 

The Lord had rescued Paul from physical danger (v. 17) – in fact he had done so many times (cf. 2Tim 3:11 ↑). However in light of vv. 6-8 which indicate that Paul's death was near, it appears that in v. 18 Paul is not this time referring to a



physical rescue but a spiritual one – where the Lord would bring him “safely into his heavenly kingdom”.

Ps 25:22 *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.*

David's plea to God to save Israel from all their troubles, implies that God is able to do so.

✦ **God gives his people an abundance of salvation:**

Isa 33:5-6 The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, and *he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion's^r treasure.*

^r Hebrew *his*

God saves his people from all their enemies

See also:

- *God redeems his people from enemies*, p. 912
- *d) God Helps His People against Enemies*, p. 915

Note that many of the verses in the previous subsection probably primarily also have enemies in view.

2Ki 17:39 ... but you shall fear the LORD your God, and *he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.*

1Sam 10:18 And he said to the people of Israel, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and *I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.*’

1Sam 12:11 And the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Barak^s and Jephthah and Samuel and *delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety.*

^s Septuagint, Syriac; Hebrew *Bedan*

2Sam 7:9-11a *And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies.*

2Sam 18:31 And behold, the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, “Good news for my lord the king! For *the LORD has delivered you this day from the hand of all who rose up against you.*”

2Chr 32:22 *So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side.*

Ps 6:9-10 *The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer. ¹⁰All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.*

Ps 106:10-11 *So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy. ¹¹And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left.*

Isa 41:11-12 *Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. ¹²You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all.*

Mic 6:4-5 *For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. ⁵O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.*

The people are called upon to remember how God saved them from their enemies, in taking them from slavery in Egypt to settlement in the promised land.

Luke 1:68-75 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for *he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷²to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

The salvation spoken of here is inclusive of both spiritual salvation and salvation from the oppression of enemies (vv. 71, 74) – which will be consummately fulfilled by the final deliverance of God's people on Jesus Christ's return.

Acts 26:16-17 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷*delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ...*



On delivering them, God may even honor or exalt his people

See also:

- Ps 84:11 ↴
- *Note: God honors and gives glory to his people*, p. 1243

In speaking of God honoring his people after delivering them from a time of trouble, the verses below illustrate the extent of what God's salvation can comprise.

Ps 91:15 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; *I will rescue him and honor him.* 📖

Ps 71:20-21 You who have made me see many troubles and calamities *will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.* ²¹*You will increase my greatness and comfort me again.* 📖

Ps 3:2-3 ... *many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.* Selah^t ³*But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.* 📖

^t The meaning of the Hebrew word *Selah*, used frequently in the Psalms, is uncertain. It may be a musical or liturgical direction

The implication is that God would deliver him, bestowing glory on him.

Ps 18:35, 48 *You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great.* 📖 ... ⁴⁸*who delivered me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you rescued me from the man of violence.* 📖

In v. 35b, "your gentleness made me great" appears to refer to God being prepared to "stoop down" (NIV®; cf. NCV) to make David great. In v. 48b David is quite possibly speaking of God setting him over his enemies, either in authority or greatness (cf. CEV, NCV) – hence the verse's inclusion here. However, he could instead be speaking of lifting him "beyond the reach" of his enemies (NLT; cf. GNT).

Ps 37:32-34 The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. ³³*The LORD will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.* ³⁴*Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.* 📖

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

See also:

- Mic 7:8 ↴

OT verses that speak of God giving light to his people generally use "light" to represent that which extends from God's favor, such as salvation and well-being. By such things, metaphorically speaking the darkness of one's circumstances is turned to light. (See also the comment below on Psalms 27:1.)

2Sam 22:29 *For you are my lamp, O LORD, and my God lightens my darkness.* 📖

Ps 27:1 *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold^u of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* 📖

^u Or *refuge*

"The LORD is my light" is acknowledgment of God as the source of that which "light" represents, here salvation and well-being (cf. NSB).

Ps 84:11 *For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.* 📖

The description of God as a "sun" is indicative of him being "our light" (NLT) – bestowing favor and honor, withholding no good thing.

Isa 10:16-17 Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory *a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire.* ¹⁷*The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day.* 📖

Here the portrayal of God as his people's light is one of destructive power against her enemies, in contrast but complimentary to portrayals of his light shining on her in providing salvation.

Isa 60:1-3, 19-20 Arise, shine, for *your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.* ²For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but *the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.* ³*And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.* 📖 ... ¹⁹The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light;^v but *the LORD will be your everlasting light,* and your God will be your glory.^w ²⁰Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for *the LORD will be your*



everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.



^v Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint, Targum add *by night*

^w Or *your beauty*

As reflected in Revelation 21:23 and 22:5 below, the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy regarding Zion – vv. 19-20 particularly – will be in the new Jerusalem. A present day application is that this reflects that God's people experience his continued presence and the associated blessings; God's everlasting light transforms all aspects of their lives (cf. ZBC).

Ps 4:6 There are many who say, "Who will show us some good? *Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!*"

The "light of your face" speaks of the light of God's favor in him watching over his people.

Ps 36:9 For with you is the fountain of life; *in your light do we see light.*

Ps 43:3 *Send out your light* and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!

Ps 97:11 *Light is sown^x for the righteous*, and joy for the upright in heart.

^x Most Hebrew manuscripts; one Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint, Syriac, Jerome *Light dawns*

This seems to speak of light along with joy being sewn in the lives of the righteous, so as to produce significant blessing.

Ps 118:27a The LORD is God, and *he has made his light to shine upon us.*

Rev 21:23 *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light*, and its lamp is the Lamb.

Rev 22:5 *And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light*, and they will reign forever and ever.

... God gives his people light even amidst darkness

In the following verses "darkness" is used as a metaphor for difficult times.

Job 29:3 ... when *his lamp shone upon my head*, and by his light I walked through darkness, ...

Ps 18:28 For *it is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness.*

In saying that "it is you who light my lamp", David indicates that God brings light to his life (cf. NLT), as reflected in the second clause.

Ps 112:4 *Light dawns in the darkness for the upright*; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

Isa 42:16 And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. *I will turn the darkness before them into light*, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.

Initially at least, this is referring to God bringing the exiles back to their homeland from Babylon. Possibly the people are called "the blind" to indicate their helplessness in the face of dark circumstances, but note that some commentators interpret it to be referring to their spiritual blindness (cf. vv. 18-19).

Isa 58:8-10 *Then shall your light break forth like the dawn*, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, *then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.*

Mic 7:8-9 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; *when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.* ⁹I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. *He will bring me out to the light*; I shall look upon his vindication.

Ezra 9:8 But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant and to give us a secure hold^y within his holy place, *that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery.*

^y Hebrew *nail*, or *tent-pin*

Ezra is referring to God arranging the return of a remnant of Jews to Jerusalem, from exile and bondage in Babylon. The phrases "brighten our eyes" and "in our slavery" reflect that God gives his people light even in the midst of darkness.

✦ **The contrasting light and dark paths of the righteous and the wicked:**

Prov 4:18-19 *But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.* ¹⁹The



way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble. 

Being precise, the “path” (and “way”) refers either: to the path one chooses to take – that of righteousness with spiritual light or that of spiritual wickedness with darkness, producing either well-being or trouble; or to the path which one’s life takes as a result of righteousness or wickedness – containing light (well-being) or darkness (trouble).

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God Redeems His People

See also:

- c) *Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin*, p. 596
- c) *Release from the Law through Jesus Christ*, p. 651

In the OT (from which most of the verses in this section come), references to God redeeming his people generally speak of God saving them or setting them free from oppression. Occasionally they may involve the concept of exchanging a substitute or ransom, which is prominent in the NT usage.

Subsections

- God is the Redeemer of his people . . .
- . . . God redeems his people
- God redeems his people from enemies
- God sets his people free from suffering and things that imprison
- God will redeem his people from death
- Note: God vindicates his people

God is the Redeemer of his people . . .

See also:

- *God is the Savior of his people . . .*, p. 906

Ps 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, *O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.* 

Ps 78:35 They remembered that God was their rock, *the Most High God their redeemer.* 

Isa 41:14 Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; *your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.* 

Isa 47:4 *Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is his name—* is the Holy One of Israel. 

Isa 49:26 I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. *Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.* 

Isa 54:5 For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and *the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.* 

Isa 63:16 For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, *our Redeemer from of old is your name.* 

Job 19:25 For *I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.*^z 

^z Hebrew *dust*

Job states his conviction that God would show himself to be his Redeemer, vindicating him in the end, even if that should be after his death. Note that some commentators see this verse as pointing to Jesus Christ as “Redeemer”.

. . . God redeems his people

Neh 1:10 *They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.* 

Ps 31:5 Into your hand I commit my spirit; *you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.* 

Ps 34:22 *The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.* 

Ps 71:23 My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; *my soul also, which you have redeemed.* 

Isa 1:27 *Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.* 

Isa 35:9-10 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but *the*



redeemed shall walk there. ¹⁰And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The future renewed Israel is primarily in view here as in 62:12 below – and possibly ultimately in view in some of the other following references from Isaiah.

Isa 43:1, 3-4 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for *I have redeemed you*; I have called you by name, you are mine. ... ³For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. *I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.* ⁴Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, *I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.*

The second half of v. 4 is referring to what was said in v. 3, suggesting that in exchange for allowing the exiles to return home, God would allow the Persians to usurp the countries mentioned in v. 3b. As such God speaks of giving these countries to the Persians as a ransom to redeem his people.

Isa 44:22-23 I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for *I have redeemed you.* ²³Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For *the LORD has redeemed Jacob*, and will be glorified^a in Israel.

^a Or will display his beauty

Isa 52:3, 9 For thus says the LORD: “You were sold for nothing, and *you shall be redeemed without money.*” ... ⁹Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; *he has redeemed Jerusalem.*

Isa 62:12 And they shall be called *The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD*; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.

Isa 63:9 In all their affliction he was afflicted,^b and the angel of his presence saved them; *in his love and in his pity he redeemed them*; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

^b Or he did not afflict

Zec 10:8 I will whistle for them and gather them in, for *I have redeemed them*, and they shall be as many as they were before.

Luke 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for *he has visited and redeemed his people* ...

Ps 25:22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

† With God is plentiful redemption:

Ps 130:7 O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and *with him is plentiful redemption.*

God redeems his people from enemies

Note that the contexts of most of the verses in the previous subsection show that they likewise have redemption from enemies in view. Some of the verses in the following subsection do too, speaking of freedom from such things as imprisonment by enemies.

Ex 6:6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and *I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you* with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

Ps 106:10 So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy.

Ps 107:2-3 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble^c ³and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

^c Or from the hand of the foe

The alternative rendering in the text note makes clear that redemption from enemies is in view (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT).

Isa 48:20 Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, “*The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!*”

Jer 15:21 I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

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

Jer 50:33-34 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah with them. All who took them captive have held them fast; they refuse to let them go.* ³⁴*Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.*



Isa 9:4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 

The last phrase refers to Gideon's remarkable defeat of the Midianites, through God's power, by which the Israelites were freed from Midian's oppression of them. Note that in the subsequent chapter Isaiah similarly says – in regard to the Assyrian's oppression of his people – “And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken because of the fat.” (10:27)

God sets his people free from suffering and things that imprison

See also:

- *Jesus Christ gave himself as a ransom for us, to redeem us from sin*, p. 596
- *Jesus Christ's death sets us free from sin's control . . .*, p. 598

Ps 44:1-2 O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old: ²you with your own hand drove out the nations, but them you planted; you afflicted the peoples, but *them you set free*; ... 

Ps 81:6 I relieved your^d shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. 

^d Hebrew *his*; also next line

This refers to God setting the Israelites free from enforced labor, their time of slavery of in Egypt.

Ps 102:18-20 Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD: ¹⁹that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven *the LORD looked at the earth*, ²⁰to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die, ... 

Here the psalmist has his own anticipated deliverance partially in view.

Ps 116:16 O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. *You have loosed my bonds*. 

Ps 118:5 Out of my distress I called on the LORD; *the LORD answered me and set me free*. 

Ps 119:32, 45 I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!^e  ... ⁴⁵and I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts. 

^e Or *for you set my heart free*

The Hebrew rendered “you enlarge my heart” (v. 32) may be referring to an increased understanding (cf. CEV, GNT, NRSV). However the rendering in the text note – “for you set my heart free” (cf. NIV) – may be preferable, making it relevant to this subsection. Verse 45 indicates that following God's teachings brings “freedom” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT; cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV, NRSV). Note that similarly Job 36:16 speaks of God bringing Job “out of distress into a broad place where there was no cramping ...”

Isa 14:3 *When the LORD has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, ...* 

Isaiah speaks of God giving his people rest from these things, effectively setting them free from such things (cf. CEV).

Isa 51:14 *He who is bowed down shall speedily be released; he shall not die and go down to the pit, neither shall his bread be lacking*. 

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;^f he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim *liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound*;^g ... 

^f Or *afflicted*

^g Or *the opening [of the eyes] to those who are blind; Septuagint and recovery of sight to the blind*

Here the work of the Messiah is primarily in view. Jesus applied vv. 1-2a to himself in Luke 4:19-20. As such it largely speaks of spiritual freedom and release.

Zec 9:11 As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, *I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit*. 

Luke 13:10-13, 16 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹And there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “*Woman, you are freed from your disability.*” ¹³And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.  ... ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be *loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?*” 



God will redeem his people from death

See also:

- *Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life as opposed to death*, p. 614
- *Jesus Christ saves people from the power of death*, p. 615
- *b) Eternal Life*, p. 733

There are at least two ways in which the Bible speaks of God redeeming his people from death. One way is deliverance from premature physical death, (cf. [Ps 103:4 ↓](#); [Lam 3:58 ↓](#)). A second way is redemption or salvation from the eternal state of death, as per the above cross references. This is most likely the sense in Psalms 49:15 below; also see Hosea 13:14 and Romans 8:21 below, and the accompanying comments.

Ps 103:2-4 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ...

Lam 3:58 You have taken up my cause, O Lord; *you have redeemed my life*.

Ps 49:15 But *God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol*, for he will receive me. Selah

The use of "ransom" implies that redemption is in view – "redeem my soul" (NASB, NKJV; cf. NIV, NLT).

Hos 13:14 *Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death?* O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes.

Because of Israel's great sin, God is indicating here that he will not redeem them from death. However, as such it reflects that he can do so and even suggests that he will do so for those who truly are his (cf. NIV, NKJV). This assertion is supported by the fact that in 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 Paul applies the verse to the believer's victory over death through Jesus Christ.

‡ The freedom of God's people in the afterlife:

Rom 8:21 ... that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain *the freedom of the glory of the children of God*.

This freedom of God's children would appear to encompass freedom from decay as well as being at least applicable to freedom from sin and its consequences (notably death) – and any danger.

Note: God vindicates his people

See also:

- *To vindicate God's people* [reasons for God's judgment], p. 425

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

Ps 135:14 For *the LORD will vindicate his people* and have compassion on his servants.

Isa 50:7-8 But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. ⁸*He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.*

Vindication of the Messiah is foremost in view here.

Jer 51:10 *The LORD has brought about our vindication*; come, let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

Ps 37:6 *He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.*

This most likely speaks of God causing his people's "vindication" (NRSV) to be as clear as the shining of the sun (cf. CEV).

Isa 54:17 ... *no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication^h from me, declares the LORD.*

^h Or righteousness

Mic 7:9-10 I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, *until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.* ¹⁰*Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will look upon her; now she will be trampled down like the mire of the streets.*

God vindicates his people, establishing justice for them and saving them (v. 9). As such God proves to their enemies: the validity of his people's cause; and the reality of himself as their God who cares for them as his people (v. 10).

‡ The LORD will not let the righteous be condemned when brought to trial:

Ps 37:32-33 The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death. ³³*The LORD will not abandon him to his power or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial.*



Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God Helps His People against Enemies

See also:

- *God saves his people from all their enemies*, p. 908
- *God redeems his people from enemies*, p. 912
- *God sets his people free from suffering and things that imprison*, p. 913
- *God protects his people from enemies*, p. 941

Subsections

- God helps his people in need, including against enemies
- God consistently helps his people in need
- God helps his people by upholding them and delivering them from enemies
- God helps his people defeat enemies
- For God fights for his people, giving victory over enemies . . .
- . . . as God fought for the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan
- God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world, including Satan
- Further examples of God saving his people from enemies
- Further promises of God saving his people from enemies

God helps his people in need, including against enemies

Although not always specifically referred to in a number of the verses in this and the following subsection, it is help against enemies that is primarily in view in most of the verses.

1Chr 12:18 Then the Spirit clothed Amasai, chief of the thirty, and he said, "We are yours, O David, and with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers! *For your God helps you.*" Then David received them and made them officers of his troops. 

2Chr 32:8 With him is an arm of flesh, but *with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.*" And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. 

Ps 27:9 Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, *O you who have been my help.* Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation! 

In a prayer for help against enemies, David speaks of God's past help.

Ps 86:17 Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because *you, LORD, have helped me* and comforted me. 

David asks for "a sign of your favor" that would shame his enemies. The past tense of "helped" and "comforted" may allude to God's past help and comfort of David, or primarily reflect David's confidence that God would help and comfort him again with such goodness.

Ps 115:9-11 O Israel,ⁱ trust in *the LORD! He is their help* and their shield. ¹⁰O house of Aaron, trust in *the LORD! He is their help* and their shield. ¹¹You who fear the LORD, trust in *the LORD! He is their help* and their shield. 

ⁱ Masoretic Text; many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac *O house of Israel*

Ps 121:1-2 I lift up my eyes to the hills. *From where does my help come?* ²*My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* 

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

Ps 124:8 *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* 

The "name" of the LORD denotes his presence, here with the implication that all his wondrous attributes are on hand to help his people.

Luke 1:54-55 *He has helped his servant Israel*, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever. 

Heb 13:6 So we can confidently say, "*The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?*" 

Deut 33:26 *There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help*, through the skies in his majesty. 

Not only does God help his people, there is no one like him, who can help like he can.



God consistently helps his people in need

Ps 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, *a very presentⁱ help in trouble.* 

ⁱ Or *well proved*

Acts 26:21-22 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²*To this day I have had the help that comes from God,* and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ... 

1Sam 7:12-13 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen^k and *called its name Ebenezer;*¹ *for he said, "Till now the LORD has helped us."* ¹³So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. *And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.* 

^k Hebrew; Septuagint, Syriac *Jeshanah*

¹ *Ebenezer* means *stone of help*

Samuel set up a type of monument and called it "Ebenezer" (v. 12), which as the text note states means "stone of help". He did this as an acknowledgment that up to that point in time God had helped the Israelites "every step of the way" (NirV®; cf. GNT). Following this occasion God continued to help the Israelites against the Philistines, doing so all throughout Samuel's lifetime (v. 13b).

Ps 68:19 Blessed be *the Lord, who daily bears us up;* God is our salvation. Selah 

✦ **God works all things together for the good of his people:**

Rom 8:28 And we know that *for those who love God all things work together for good,*^m *for those who are called according to his purpose.* 

^mSome manuscripts *God works all things together for good, or God works in all things for the good*

Note the alternative renderings in the text note.

God helps his people by upholding them and delivering them from enemies

See also:

▪ **Deut 33:29** 

Verses regarding God's help in physical warfare/adversity are readily applicable to spiritual warfare and dealing with various kinds of adversaries and opposition.

Ps 46:5 God is in the midst of her; *she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.* 

Here "her" refers to Jerusalem.

Ps 54:3-4 For *strangersⁿ have risen against me; ruthless men seek my life;* they do not set God before themselves. Selah ⁴*Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.* 

ⁿ Some Hebrew manuscripts and Targum *insolent men* (compare Psalm 86:14)

Isa 41:10-14 ... fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; *I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* ¹¹*Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish.* ¹²*You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all.* ¹³*For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."* ¹⁴*Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.* 

2Chr 18:31-32 As soon as the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is the king of Israel." So *they turned to fight against him. And Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; God drew them away from him.* ³²For as soon as the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. 

Ps 37:40 *The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them,* because they take refuge in him. 

Ps 94:16-17 *Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers?* ¹⁷*If the LORD had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.* 

Isa 50:7-9 But *the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.* ⁸*He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.* ⁹*Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.* 

This is from one of Isaiah's servant songs, and so is ultimately referring to the Messiah.



‡ With God as their helper, his people need not fear anyone:

Heb 13:6 So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

God helps his people defeat enemies

Ps 118:7, 12-13 The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. ... ¹²They surrounded me like bees; they went out like a fire among thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off! ¹³I was pushed hard,^o so that I was falling, but the LORD helped me.

^o Hebrew You (that is, the enemy) pushed me hard

Gen 49:23-25 The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, ²⁴yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms^p were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd,^q the Stone of Israel), ²⁵by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty^r who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

^p Hebrew the arms of his hands

^q Or by the name of the Shepherd

^r Hebrew Shaddai

Deut 33:29 Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.

Josh 14:12 So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.

2Chr 26:6-7 He went out and made war against the Philistines and broke through the wall of Gath and the wall of Jabneh and the wall of Ashdod, and he built cities in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. ⁷God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians who lived in Gurbaal and against the Meunites.

Ps 18:29, 32-36, 39-40 For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. ... ³²the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. ³³He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. ³⁴He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can

bend a bow of bronze. ³⁵You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. ³⁶You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip. ... ³⁹For you equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me. ⁴⁰You made my enemies turn their backs to me,^s and those who hated me I destroyed.

^s Or You gave me my enemies' necks

The “wall” (v. 29) would most likely be a wall of his enemies, presumably for their defenses (cf. GNT), perhaps a city wall (cf. CEV).

For God fights for his people, giving victory over enemies . . .

See also:

▪ **Ps 18:39-40** ↑

Note that the references below from Exodus 14 and 2 Chronicles 20 speak of God defeating Israel's enemies without the Israelites even having to fight. Most of the other references speak of God fighting with the Israelites, to enable them to be victorious over their enemies.

Ex 14:13-14, 23-28 And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.” ... ²³The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵clogging^t their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.” ²⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw^u the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained.

^t Or binding (compare Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac); Hebrew removing

^u Hebrew shook off



Judg 4:14-16 And Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which *the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the LORD go out before you?*" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him. ¹⁵And *the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword.* And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot. ¹⁶And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim, and *all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.* 

In saying that the LORD had gone out before them (v. 15; cf. **1Chr 14:15** ↓), Deborah spoke of the LORD "marching ahead" (NLT) of the Israelites, leading them in the attack, to route their enemies at their advance (v. 16).

2Sam 8:14 Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And *the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.* 

1Chr 14:15-16 And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then go out to battle, for *God has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines.* ¹⁶And David did as God commanded him, and *they struck down the Philistine army* from Gibeon to Gezer. 

2Chr 20:15, 17, 22, 29 And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for *the battle is not yours but God's.*' ... ¹⁷*You will not need to fight in this battle.* Stand firm, hold your position, and *see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf,* O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."  ... ²²And when they began to sing and praise, *the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.*  ... ²⁹And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that *the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.* 

Note that the "ambush" (v. 22) appears to have involved the enemy forces destroying each other (cf. v. 23), seemingly in confusion orchestrated by God.

2Chr 32:8 With him is an arm of flesh, but *with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.*" And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. 

Neh 4:20 In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. *Our God will fight for us.* 

Here Nehemiah gives his strategy should his people be attacked while rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. He confidently asserts that if they are attacked God would fight for them.

Ps 60:12 *With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes.* 

Ex 17:15 And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, *The LORD Is My Banner,* ... 

God is his people's banner amidst the battle – the base or source of victory. As such the title "The LORD Is My Banner" effectively means: "The Lord Gives Me Victory." (CEV)

... as God fought for the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan

Deut 9:1-3 Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves, cities great and fortified up to heaven, ²a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?' ³*Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.* 

Deut 20:4 ... for *the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.* 

Josh 10:10-14 And *the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel, who^v struck them with a great blow at Gibeon* and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. ¹¹And *as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.* ¹²*At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."* ¹³And *the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.* Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? *The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.* ¹⁴There has been no day like it before or



since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, *for the LORD fought for Israel.* 

^v Or *and he*

There are many explanations of what is being described in vv. 12-13, such as a solar eclipse occurring or that the phrase “stood still” may in fact mean “stopped shining”. But most commentators understand it to literally mean that the sun’s position in relation to the earth did not change for about a day.

Josh 10:42 *And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.* 

Josh 23:3-5, 10 *And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you.* ⁴Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. ⁵*The LORD your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight.* And you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.  ... ¹⁰*One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you.* 

Ps 44:3-7 ... *for not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them, but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them.* ⁴You are my King, O God; ordain salvation for Jacob! ⁵*Through you we push down our foes; through your name we tread down those who rise up against us.* ⁶For not in my bow do I trust, nor can my sword save me. ⁷*But you have saved us from our foes and have put to shame those who hate us.* 

The psalmist parallels God giving the Israelites victory in their conquest of Canaan (v. 3) with his own experience of – and/or belief in – God giving the people victory in his own lifetime (vv. 4-7).

God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world, including Satan

Rom 8:31, 35, 37 *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be^w against us?*  ... ³⁵*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*  ... ³⁷*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* 

^w Or *who is*

Verse 31b implies that if God is for us then no one can effectively oppose us. In all adversity we are more than conquerors through Christ (v. 37; cf. CEV, NIRV, NLT).

Luke 10:19-20 *Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.* ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that *the spirits are subject to you*, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. 

Here “serpents and scorpions” (v. 19) most likely is a reference to evil spirits (v. 20). The “enemy” is Satan (cf. CEV). There is disagreement among commentators as to what degree this authority – given here to the disciples – is given to believers generally.

1Jn 2:14 *I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.* 

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

1Jn 4:4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 

This speaks of overcoming false prophets, who are ultimately inspired by “the spirit of the antichrist” (v. 3). The one “who is in you” is most likely referring to the Holy Spirit, but it could be referring to God or Jesus Christ. The one “who is in the world” refers to Satan.

1Jn 5:3-5 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* 

To “overcome the world” means to rise above its sinful way of life. This victory is our faith (v. 4), or won through our faith, which is essentially believing that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 5) and acting accordingly.

Rev 12:10-11 *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers^x has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of*



their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 

^x Or *brothers and sisters*

This appears to be saying that these believers overcame Satan by their belief in and testimony to Jesus Christ's death and its significance. As such it is applicable to all believers in their conflict with Satan.

Ps 91:13 *You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.* 

The lions and snakes (cf. [Luke 10:19](#) ↑) denote dangers or foes, possibly implying both powerful ones (the lions) and insidious ones (the snakes). As such they are applicable to both physical and spiritual enemies.

Isa 54:15, 17 If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; *whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you.*  ... ¹⁷*no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment.* This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication^y from me, declares the LORD. 

^y Or *righteousness*

These promises are made to Jerusalem in its time of future renewal.

✦ **Despite trouble, God's people have peace in Jesus Christ – who has overcome the world:**

John 16:33 *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* 

Although the world causes his followers trouble, in him – the one who has overcome the world – they have peace amidst the trouble.

Further examples of God saving his people from enemies

1Sam 17:37, 47-49, 51b And David said, *"The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."* And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"  ... ⁴⁷and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. *For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.* ⁴⁸When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹And *David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead,*

and he fell on his face to the ground.  ... ⁵¹ ... *When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.* 

2Sam 22:17-20 *He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters.* ¹⁸*He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.* ¹⁹*They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support.* ²⁰*He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.* 

Ezra 8:31 Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. The hand of our God was on us, and *he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambushes by the way.* 

Ps 18:47-48 ... the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, ⁴⁸*who delivered me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you rescued me from the man of violence.* 

Ps 116:6, 8 The LORD preserves the simple; *when I was brought low, he saved me.*  ... ⁸*For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; ...* 

The deliverance spoken may well have been from enemies (cf. v. 11).

Ps 129:1-4 "Greatly^z have they afflicted me from my youth"— let Israel now say— ²"Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet *they have not prevailed against me.* ³The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows." ⁴The LORD is righteous; *he has cut the cords of the wicked.* 

^z Or *Often*; also verse 2

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

Isa 63:9 In all their affliction he was afflicted,^a and *the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.* 

^a Or *he did not afflict*

This is probably speaking of the Israelite's deliverance from the Egyptians.



Acts 12:11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that *the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.*" 

2Cor 1:10 *He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.* 

It is not known to what "deadly peril" Paul was referring; enemies are certainly a strong possibility.

Further promises of God saving his people from enemies

See also:

- c) *Deliverance and Everlasting Peace*, p. 991

Deut 23:14 Because *the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you*, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you. 

2Ki 20:6b *I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake.* 

Isa 49:25 For thus says the LORD: "*Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.*" 

Jer 15:20-21 And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; *they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD.* ²¹*I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.* 

Jer 39:16-17 Go, and say to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will fulfill my words against this city for harm and not for good, and they shall be accomplished before you on that day. ¹⁷*But I will deliver you on that day, declares the LORD, and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid.*" 

Ezek 34:12b, 27 *I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.*  ... ²⁷*And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their*

land. And they shall know that I am the LORD, *when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them.* 

↳ **Promise of imminent salvation:**

Isa 56:1 Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for *soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.*" 

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) God Is Revealed in Saving His People

See also:

- d) *God's Judgment Reveals God*, p. 434

Subsections

- God's saving of his people makes known his salvation to the nations
- God's saving of his people makes known that he is the LORD – the only God
- God's saving of his people reveals God's great power
- God's saving of his people reveals God's glory
- God's saving of his people evidences God's love and faithfulness
- God's saving of his people shows God's holiness and righteousness . . .
- . . . God's righteousness is closely associated with his salvation

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

Note that throughout the following subsections there are a number of verses which speak of God's saving of his people making known to the nations either God or various things about him (e.g. **1Ki 8:59-60** ↕; **2Ki 19:19, 35** ↕; **1Sam 17:46** ↕).

Ps 98:1-3 Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for *he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.* ²*The LORD has made known his*



salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. ³He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. 

God's working of salvation for his people is referred to in each of these three verses.

Isa 52:9-10 Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for *the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.* ¹⁰*The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.* 

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

Isa 49:26 *I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.* 

In conjunction with making known his salvation, by saving his people God makes known to all nations that he is the Savior of his people.

Psa 67:1-2 *May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah* ²*that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.* 

The reference to God's "saving power" in v. 2, suggests that the request for God's favor in v. 1 has his saving of his people at least partially in view. Thus his "way" (v. 2) that such favor to his people would make known throughout the earth would include his salvation. This is also implied by his "saving power" being spoken of in conjunction with his "way".

✦ All nations will see God's salvation in Jesus Christ:

Luke 3:6 ... and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 

This verse quotes from Isaiah 40:5, applying it to the salvation that would come through Jesus Christ.

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

See also:

- *God's deeds show that he is the only God . . .*, p. 248
- *. . . God's deeds show that he is indeed the LORD*, p. 249
- *God's judgment shows his might and his sovereignty . . .*, p. 435
- *. . . God's judgment makes known that he is the LORD*, p. 436

Ex 6:6-7 Say therefore to the people of Israel, '*I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.* ⁷*I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.* 

By redeeming Israel out of Egypt with mighty acts (v. 6) and taking them as his own (v. 7a), Israel would know that he was the LORD their God (v. 7b). Deuteronomy 4:34-35 below has similar teaching.

Deut 4:32-35 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and *ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of.* ³³*Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live?* ³⁴*Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?* ³⁵*To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.* 

1Ki 20:13, 21, 28-30a And behold, a prophet came near to Ahab king of Israel and said, "*Thus says the LORD, Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will give it into your hand this day, and you shall know that I am the LORD.*"  ... ²¹*And the king of Israel went out and struck the horses and chariots, and struck the Syrians with a great blow.*  ... ²⁸And a man of God came near and said to the king of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because the Syrians have said, "The LORD is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys," therefore *I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.*'" ²⁹And they encamped opposite one another seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle was joined. *And the people of Israel struck down of the Syrians 100,000 foot soldiers in one day.* ³⁰*And the rest fled into the city of Aphek, and the wall fell upon 27,000 men who were left.* 

Ezek 28:24 *And for the house of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD.* 



1Ki 8:59-60 Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, ⁶⁰that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. 

Solomon's request encompassed God saving Israel from her enemies.

2Ki 19:19, 35-36 So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone."  ... ³⁵And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁶Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. 

2Chr 33:11-13 Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. ¹²And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ¹³He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God. 

Isa 43:12 I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and I am God. 

The fulfillment of God's declaration of what was to come and his salvation would affirm that he is "the only God" (NLT; cf. AMP, NIV).

Joel 2:26-27 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. ²⁷You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame. 

✦ Israel's defeat of the Philistines would make known to the whole world that there was a God in Israel:

1Sam 17:46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ... 

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

See also:

- *God's great power is shown in his deeds*, p. 36
- *God's judgment shows his might and his sovereignty . . .*, p. 435
- *God has mighty power to save his people . . .*, p. 903
- *. . . God can perform awesome deeds to save his people*, p. 903

Ex 14:30-31 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses. 

Ps 67:1-2 May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah ²that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. 

Ps 106:8 Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power. 

Jer 32:20-21 You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day. ²¹You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror. 

God had gained renown among all nations for the powerful "signs and wonders" he had performed, notably in saving his people out of Egypt.

Isa 52:9-10 Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 

This speaks of God's coming salvation of Jerusalem. The term "his holy arm" (v. 10) refers to God's holy power, here revealed in his salvation.

Ex 34:10 And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. 

The reference appears to be primarily to driving out enemy nations before Israel in the Promised Land (vv. 11), in a sense



saving his people from them – and demonstrating his awesome power.

1Sam 17:46-47, 50-52 *This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,*⁴⁷ *and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.*"  ...⁵⁰*So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David.* ⁵¹*Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.* ⁵²*And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath^b and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron.* 

^b Septuagint; Hebrew *Gai*

All those gathered would realize that it is not by human power that God saves (vv. 47, 50b), but by rather his own mighty power, as implied in v. 47 and subsequently demonstrated in vv. 50-52.

✦ **God's restoration of his people made known among the nations that he has done great things for them:**

Ps 126:1-2 *When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.* ²*Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."* 

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

See also:

- *God's glory is reflected in his powerful deeds*, p. 18
- *God's judgment evidences his glory – and also brings him glory*, p. 436
- *Israel's renewal will bring God glory*, p. 1017

Ex 16:6-8 So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt,⁷ and *in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD*, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against

us?" ⁸And Moses said, "*When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full*, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD." 

God would miraculously provide meat and bread for the Israelites in the desert (v. 8) – saving them from perishing – thereby displaying his glory (v. 7). It would also underline the fact that it was he who had delivered them out of Egypt (v. 6).

Ps 57:3, 5 *He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah* God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!  ... ⁵*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!* 

In v. 5 David appears to be meaning that God's glory would be made apparent throughout the earth by God's deliverance of him from powerful enemies (v. 3).

Ps 85:9 *Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.* 

The verse may mean that on accomplishing their salvation, God's glorious presence – God himself – would remain with his people in the land (cf. GNT). Alternatively, or additionally, it could be speaking of God's glory being displayed by effecting his people's salvation. As such the verse would pertain to the theme of this subsection.

Isa 40:3-5 A voice cries:^c "*In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.* ⁵*And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together*, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." 

^c Or *A voice of one crying*

This initially refers to God's deliverance of the Jews from captivity in Babylon, with vv. 3-4 speaking of the preparation for God's way in which his people would return. It is also understood to apply to God's redemption that would come through Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 3:4-6).

Isa 44:23 Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For *the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and will be glorified^d in Israel.* 

^d Or *will display his beauty*

The latter part of the verse may well speak of God displaying his glory by his redemption of Israel (cf. NASB, NCV, NIV).



✦ **What God has done for believers through Jesus Christ, is to the praise of his glory:**

Eph 1:11-14 *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴who is the guarantee^e of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,^f to the praise of his glory.* 

^e Or down payment

^f Or until God redeems his possession

The fact that what God has done for believers through Jesus Christ is for "the praise of his glory" (vv. 12b, 14b) indicates that what he has done exhibits or reflects his glory. Note that the final clause (v. 14b) may have in view God sealing believers with the Holy Spirit (v. 13b), as well as them acquiring their inheritance (v. 14a), being "to the praise of his glory".

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

See also:

- [God shows his love for his people in delivering them . . .](#), p. 817
- [. . . and God shows his love for his people in protecting them](#), p. 818
- [God shows his faithfulness in helping and blessing his people](#), p. 822

Most of the following verses do not specifically say that God's saving of his people actually shows his love and faithfulness, but they do at least correlate it with one or both of these characteristics.

Ps 17:7 *Wondrously show^g your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.* 

^g Or Distinguish me by

Ps 40:10 *I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.* 

The psalmist asserts that he tells others of God's salvation, along with God's faithfulness and love, as manifested in his salvation.

Ps 57:3 *He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!* 

Ps 98:3 *He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.* 

Zec 8:7-8 Thus says the LORD of hosts: behold, *I will save my people from the east country and from the west country,⁸and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.* 

✦ **God's saving of his people is indicative of his mercy:**

Hos 1:7 *But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.* 

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

See also:

- [Zec 8:7-8](#) 
- [God's judgment reveals his holiness](#), p. 437

Note that God's saving of his people shows God's holiness in part at least in that it demonstrates his faithfulness to them and his righteousness.

Ezek 28:25 *Thus says the Lord GOD: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall dwell in their own land that I gave to my servant Jacob.* 

This likely means that God would manifest his holiness in his people by gathering from the nations (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV), i.e. by rescuing them from exile.

Ezek 39:27 *...when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of many nations.* 

Ps 98:1-2 Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! *His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.²The LORD has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.* 



1Sam 12:7-8, 11 Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning *all the righteous deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your fathers*.⁸When Jacob went into Egypt, and *the Egyptians oppressed them*,^h then your fathers cried out to the LORD and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. ...¹¹And the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Barakⁱ and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety.

^h Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *and the Egyptians oppressed them*

ⁱ Septuagint, Syriac; Hebrew *Bedan*

The reference to God's acts of salvation (vv. 8, 11) as his "righteous deeds" (v. 7) implies that they show his righteousness.

Ps 65:5 *By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; ...*

Ps 129:4 *The LORD is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked.*

. . . God's righteousness is closely associated with his salvation

God's righteousness is often associated even correlated with his salvation, for in bringing salvation God is doing what is right; his salvation is a product of his righteousness.

Isa 51:5-6, 8 *My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.* ⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;^j but *my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.* ...⁸For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but *my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.*

^j Or *will die like gnats*

Isa 59:16-17 He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then *his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.* ¹⁷*He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.*

The clause "his righteousness upheld him" (v. 16b) may speak of God's righteousness spurring him on, in affecting salvation.

Ps 71:15 *My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.*

Isa 1:27 *Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.*

This may be meaning that God in his justice and righteousness will redeem the people of Jerusalem (cf. GNT, NLT), hence its inclusion here. Alternatively it may mean that God will redeem the people when they themselves repent and then act justly and righteously (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NIV).

Isa 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? *"It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."*

Isa 45:8 Shower, O heavens, from above, and *let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it.*

The last clause indicates that such salvation and righteousness is produced on earth by God.

Isa 46:13 *I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory.*

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. God's Preservation of His People

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

a) God Meets His People's Needs

Subsections

- God cares for his people
- God sustains his people
- God meets his people's physical needs . . .
- . . . God satisfies his people's physical needs
- God meets their physical needs even in harsh circumstances . . .
- . . . Further specific examples
- God satisfies his people's spiritual hunger and thirst
- God will provide for all his people's needs – they will not lack anything
- Note: God is his people's portion

God cares for his people

Note that this subsection points to the overall theme of this chapter. As such it is reflected in and pertinent to the whole chapter.

Deut 32:10-12 He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; *he encircled him* [Israel], *he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.* ¹¹*Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,* ¹²*the Lord alone guided him,* no foreign god was with him. 

The reference is to the Israelites as a whole.

1Sam 25:29a *If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the LORD your God.* 

Job 10:12 You have granted me life and steadfast love, and *your care has preserved my spirit.* 

Zec 10:3 My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders;^a *for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah, and will make them like his majestic steed in battle.* 

^a Hebrew *the male goats*

1Pet 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷*casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.* 

In contrast to the above verses, Peter is talking about God caring about his people (cf. NCV, NLT, NirV) rather than actually taking care of them. However the latter is implied (cf. AMP).

Hos 13:5 *It was I who knew you in the wilderness, in the land of drought; ...* 

This indicates that God "cared for" (NASB, NCV, NIV; cf. CEV, GNT, NLT) Israel, during her desert ordeal.

Hos 14:8 O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? *It is I who answer and look after you.*^b I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit. 

^b Hebrew *him*

Zeph 2:7 The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah, on which they shall graze, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. *For the LORD their God will be mindful of them* and restore their fortunes. 

The suggestion is that "God will care for them" (NASB, NIV).

God sustains his people

Neh 9:21 *Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.* 

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

Ps 41:3 *The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.*^c 

^c Hebrew *you turn all his bed*



The reference is to "one who considers the poor" (v. 1).

Ps 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD, and *he will sustain you*; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. 

Isa 50:4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, *that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary*. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. 

The words of this prophecy are attributed to the Messiah. As such it indicates that Jesus Christ sustains God's people.

1Cor 1:7b-8 ... as you wait for the revealing of *our Lord Jesus Christ*, ⁸*who will sustain you to the end*, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 

God meets his people's physical needs . . .

1Tim 6:17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on *God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy*. 

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

Deut 8:10 And *you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you*. 

Such promises are characteristic of God's covenant with Israel.

Deut 11:15 And *he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full*. 

Deut 32:13-14 He made him ride on the high places of the land, and *he ate the produce of the field, and he suckled him with honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock*. ¹⁴*Curds from the herd, and milk from the flock, with fat^d of lambs, rams of Bashan and goats, with the very finest^e of the wheat— and you drank foaming wine made from the blood of the grape*. 

^d That is, with the best

^e Hebrew *with the kidney fat*

The "honey out of the rock" (v. 13b) refers to honey being found in cracks in rocks and in between rocks. The subsequent phrase, the "oil out of the flinty rock", speaks of olive trees growing in rocky soil (cf. CEV, GNT, NlrV).

Neh 9:25 And they captured fortified cities and *a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance*. *So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness*. 

Ps 37:25 I have been young, and now am old, yet *I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread*. 

Ps 81:10 I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. *Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it*. 

The people are encouraged to look to God to fulfill their needs – and he will do so, fully.

Ps 111:5 *He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever*. 

Ps 147:14 He makes peace in your borders; *he fills you with the finest of the wheat*. 

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

Ezek 34:14 *I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel*. 

Joel 2:23 Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for *he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before*. 

. . . God satisfies his people's physical needs

See also:

- [Isa 58:11](#) ↓
- [. . . God's provision satisfies his creation](#), p. 210

While a number of the verses in the adjacent subsections reflect that God satisfies his people's physical needs, the verses in this section specifically say that God "satisfied" or "satisfies" his people's physical needs. Note that the contexts of some indicate a future fulfillment. Also note that some of the verses in this and the following subsection clearly have a spiritual application.

Ps 22:26 *The afflicted^f shall eat and be satisfied*; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever! 



^f Or *The meek*

Ps 103:5 ... [God] *who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* 

The meaning of the Hebrew in the first half of the verse is unclear (cf. text notes of CEV, GNT, NRSV). It appears to be saying either that God satisfies us with good things (cf. NCV, NRSV) or that God fills our lives with good things (cf. NCV, NLT). The "good" probably refers to physical provisions and other blessings.

Ps 107:9 *For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.* 

Ps 132:15 *I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread.* 

Jer 31:14, 25 *I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the LORD.*  ... ²⁵*For I will satisfy the weary soul, and every languishing soul I will replenish.* 

Food appears to be primarily in view here.

Jer 50:19 *I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead.* 

Joel 2:19 The LORD answered and said to his people, "*Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.*" 

Joel 2:26 *You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.* 

Matt 15:36-37 ... *he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.* ³⁷*And they all ate and were satisfied.* And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. 

God meets their physical needs even in harsh circumstances . . .

Neh 9:21 *Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell.* 

Deuteronomy 8:4 likewise says of Israel's time in the desert: "Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years." God's provision for the Israelites in the desert is further referred to below in Psalms 78:23-29 and Isaiah 48:21.

Ps 23:5 *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* 

Even amidst adversaries, God provided for David – as implied by the clauses "prepare a table before me" and "my cup overflows". Note that the anointing of a guest's head with oil was a way of welcoming or honoring the guest (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Ps 33:18-19 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ¹⁹that he may deliver their soul from death and *keep them alive in famine.* 

Ps 37:19 ... *they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance.* 

Ps 78:23-29 Yet *he commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven, ²⁴and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven. ²⁵Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance. ²⁶He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and by his power he led out the south wind; ²⁷he rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas; ²⁸he let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. ²⁹And they ate and were well filled, for he gave them what they craved.* 

Isa 48:21 *They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and the water gushed out.* 

The reference is to the incidents in Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:2-11).

Isa 35:6 ... then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For *waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ...* 

This and the remaining passages, from Isaiah, all may well have both literal and figurative (or spiritual) applications. Some of the passages are often understood to refer initially to the return from exile in Babylon, with the making of a way through the desert and provision of water in it. The passages have both literal and spiritual applications today, with the references to provision of water applicable to spiritual blessings. Some commentators think they will have a final fulfillment at the end of this age, with the accompanying deliverance for God's people and the renewal of creation.



Isa 41:17-18 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, *I the LORD will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.* ¹⁸*I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.* ☞

Isa 43:19-21 Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? *I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.* ²⁰The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for *I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people,* ²¹the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. ☞

Isa 44:2-3 Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. ³*For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.* ☞

Isa 49:9-10 ... saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' *They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture;* ¹⁰*they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.* ☞

The work of the messianic servant (cf. vv. 1-8) is ultimately in view here. As such this may simply be using physical images to portray spiritual blessings.

Isa 58:11 And the LORD will guide you continually and *satisfy your desire in scorched places* and make your bones strong; and *you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.* ☞

Here "desire" is probably referring to – or at least applicable to – spiritual needs as well as physical ones.

... Further specific examples

Gen 21:14-19 So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and *wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.* ¹⁵*When the water in the skin was gone,* she put the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, "Let me not look on the death of the

child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation." ¹⁹*Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.* ☞

Gen 45:6-7, 10-11 For *the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.* ⁷*And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.* ☞ ... ¹⁰You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹*There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.* ☞

Ruth 1:6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that *the LORD had visited his people and given them food.* ☞

This is speaking of God providing food for his people when there had been a famine (cf. v. 1).

Ruth 4:14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be *the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer,* and may his name be renowned in Israel!" ☞

A "redeemer" had a responsibility to care for any needy amongst their extended family. The one referred to here was a newly born boy (cf. v. 13), related to Naomi through Ruth. Naomi had been widowed and her future was bleak. But through loyal Ruth's marriage to Boaz, God provided for Naomi in her widowhood – first by Ruth's marriage to the wealthy Boaz, and here by the birth of their son.

1Ki 17:7-9 And after a while *the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.* ⁸*Then the word of the LORD came to him,* ⁹*"Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you."* ☞

2Ki 3:8-9, 16-17, 20 Then he said, "By which way shall we march?" *Jehoram answered, "By the way of the wilderness of Edom."* ⁹So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. And *when they had made a circuitous march of seven days, there was no water for the army or for the animals that followed them.* ☞ ... ¹⁶And he [Elisha] said,



"Thus says the LORD, 'I will make this dry streambed full of pools.'¹⁷For thus says the LORD, 'You shall not see wind or rain, but that streambed shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, you, your livestock, and your animals.' ...²⁰The next morning, about the time of offering the sacrifice, behold, water came from the direction of Edom, till the country was filled with water. 

2Ki 4:1-7 Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD, but the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."²And Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me; what have you in the house?" And she said, "Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil."³Then he said, "Go outside, borrow vessels from all your neighbors, empty vessels and not too few.⁴Then go in and shut the door behind yourself and your sons and pour into all these vessels. And when one is full, set it aside."⁵So she went from him and shut the door behind herself and her sons. And as she poured they brought the vessels to her.⁶When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not another." Then the oil stopped flowing.⁷She came and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest." 

✦ **Without God no one can eat, or find enjoyment:**

Ecc 2:24-25 There is nothing better for a person than *that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment^g in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God,*²⁵for apart from him^h who can eat or who can have enjoyment? 

^g Or and make his soul see good

^h Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts *apart from me*

Note that this verse does not just refer to God's people.

God satisfies his people's spiritual hunger and thirst

As mentioned earlier, note that some of the previous subsections have verses which appear to have a spiritual application intended.

Psa 63:5 *My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, ...* 

In saying that his "soul will be satisfied" David appears to be referring to the spiritual satisfaction he experiences in association with praising God (v. 5b; cf. vv. 3-4) – quite possibly with his deliverance in view.

Psa 65:4 Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!* 

The "goodness of your house" may refer to – and is at least applicable to – the spiritual blessings that come from God's presence, where one can have communion with God.

Isa 55:1-3 *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.* 

This is primarily speaking of spiritual thirst, hunger and nourishment, as indicated in v. 3. Jesus Christ similarly uses thirst/water and hunger/bread imagery in a spiritual sense (cf. [Matt 5:6 ↓](#); [John 4:14 ↓](#); [John 6:35 ↓](#); [John 7:37 ↓](#)), perhaps alluding to this passage from Isaiah. Note that the fact that God does satisfy one's spiritual needs is underlined here by the reference to other things not satisfying (v. 2).

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

John 4:13-14 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.¹ The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 

¹ Greek forever

Those who are nourished with spiritual "water" – who absorb and live on Jesus' teaching – will gain spiritual, eternal life.

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*" 

Jesus speaks of himself as the source of spiritual life. The phrases "shall not hunger" and "shall never thirst" indicate that one's spiritual needs will always be satisfied in him.

John 7:37-39 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as¹ the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*"³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. 



^j Or *let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As*

John 10:9-10 *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

In v. 9 Jesus claims to be the door leading into salvation, through which one can find pasture – provision for one's spiritual needs. Jesus' provision for one's needs is reflected by his claim to bring abundance of life (v. 10).

1Cor 10:3-4 ...and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. *For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.*

Here Paul refers to the manna and the water from out of a rock that was supplied to the Israelites in their journey through the desert. He may be speaking figuratively, referring to such "spiritual" food and drink to portray the spiritual sustenance that God gives to his people, ultimately through Christ (v. 4b). Alternatively the description of the food and drink as "spiritual" may refer to its supernatural provision and, as some commentators maintain, Paul may be asserting that the pre-incarnate Christ was actually the one who imparted the provisions to the Israelites.

‡ **In heaven, God's people will never again hunger or thirst:**

Rev 7:16 *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.*

This is applicable to both spiritual and physical hunger and thirst, although the absence of physical hardship resulting from faithfulness to God may primarily be in view.

God will provide for all his people's needs – they will not lack anything

See also:

- *God's people lack no good thing*, p. 1290

Gen 33:11 Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, *because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.* Thus he urged him, and he took it.

Jacob may well be implying that it was because of God's gracious dealings with him that he could say: "I have everything I need" (CEV; cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

2Cor 9:8 *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^k in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*

^k Or *all contentment*

Phil 4:19 *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

In the first part of the verse Paul is referring to the magnitude of God's provision. He speaks of it as being in accordance with or reflective of God's incredible riches emanating in and through Jesus Christ. Note that the phrase "in glory" may be referring to: the glory of his riches ("glorious riches" NIV, NLT); or God's glory, which encompasses his riches.

2Pet 1:3 *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to^l his own glory and excellence,^m ...*

^l Or *by*

^m Or *virtue*

God gives us "everything we need" (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) for life in general and for living a godly life.

2Chr 32:22 So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and *he provided for them on every side.*

As well providing for his people by giving them things – as per most of the other verses in this subsection – God provides his people with such things as protection.

Deut 2:7 For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He knows your going through this great wilderness. *These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing.*

Ps 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; *I shall not want.*

Luke 22:35 And he said to them, *"When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing."*

During the mission that Jesus had sent them on without any provisions (cf. 9:1-6; 10:1-4), the disciples did not lack anything.

1Cor 1:4-7 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷so that *you are not lacking in any spiritual gift*, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...

As a church the Corinthians did not lack any spiritual gift.



‡ “The LORD will provide”:

Gen 22:1-2, 7-14 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ²He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” ³... ⁷And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here am I, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” ⁸Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together. ⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ¹²He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” ¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”;ⁿ as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”^o 

ⁿ Or will see

^o Or he will be seen

Note: God is his people's portion

See also:

- *Note: Priests and Levites were given parts of the people's offerings, God being their inheritance*, p. 399

God is his people's portion – all that they need.

Ps 73:25-26 *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.* ²⁶*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength^p of my heart and my portion forever.* 

^p Hebrew rock

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

Ps 119:57 *The LORD is my portion; I promise to keep your words.* 

Ps 142:5 *I cry to you, O LORD; I say, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.”* 

Jer 10:16 Not like these is *he who is the portion of Jacob*, for he is the one who formed all things, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance; the LORD of hosts is his name. 

Just as he is the portion of each of his people, this speaks of God being the portion of his people as a whole.

Lam 3:24 *“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”* 

Knowing God to be his portion, Jeremiah could confidently wait for God to supply what he needed.

Ps 16:5 *The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.* 

David indicates here that God is – and is the source of – all he has (cf. GNT), needs (cf. NCV) or wants (cf. CEV).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Strengthens His People

See also:

- *c) God Works through His People (II): Empowerment*, p. 968
- *God's strength for his people* [reasons to exalt God], p. 1285

Subsections

- God is the strength of his people
- God strengthens his people
- God strengthens his people when they are weak . . .
- . . . God restores and renews his people
- God strengthens his people in the face of adversity
- God strengthens them spiritually, until Jesus Christ's return
- God encourages his people
- God heals his people
- God also supports and upholds his people . . .
- . . . God even carries his people



God is the strength of his people

The strength of God's people comes primarily from him. As such they look to him for strength and draw strength from him.

Ps 28:7-8 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. ⁸The LORD is the strength of his people;⁹ he is the saving refuge of his anointed.*

⁹ Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts *is their strength*

Ps 18:1 I love you, O LORD, my strength.

Ps 46:1 *God is our refuge and strength, a very present^r help in trouble.*

^r Or *well proved*

Ps 59:16 *But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.*

Ps 84:5, 7 *Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.^s ... ⁷They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.*

^s Hebrew lacks *to Zion*

This refers to the Israelites journeying to Jerusalem for religious festivals. The phrase "strength to strength" implies that the people grow stronger (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) in their journey.

Ps 89:17 *For you are the glory of their strength; by your favor our horn is exalted.*

The first clause suggests that the strength of God's people is in a sense glorious and comes from God.

Isa 45:24 *Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him.*

Hab 3:19a *GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.*

Zec 12:5 *Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.'*

God strengthens his people

Deut 33:25 *Your bars shall be iron and bronze, and as your days, so shall your strength be.*

This is from Moses' blessing on the tribe of Asher. He speaks of her towns (cf. CEV, GNT) being secure and God strengthening its people all of their days.

1Sam 2:10b *The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power^t of his anointed.*

^t Hebrew *horn*

1Chr 29:12 *Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.*

Ps 29:11 *May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless^u his people with peace!*

^u Or *The LORD will give . . . The LORD will bless*

Ps 89:21 *... so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.*

Ps 138:3 *On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased.^v*

^v Hebrew *you made me bold in my soul with strength*

Isa 41:10 *... fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Eph 3:14-16 *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family^w in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ...*

^w Or *fatherhood*; the Greek word *patria* is closely related to the word for *Father* in verse 14

2Thes 2:16-17 *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.*

Paul prays that the Thessalonians would be encouraged, and given strength – "strengthen your hearts" (NASB; cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV) in everything they did and said for the Lord.

Phil 4:13 *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*



Paul is referring to Jesus Christ strengthening him.

1Tim 1:12 *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ...* 

Deut 34:7 Moses was 120 years old when he died. *His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated.* 

1Sam 2:1 And Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; *my strength^x is exalted in the LORD.* My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. 

^x Hebrew *horn*

1Ki 18:44-46 And at the seventh time he said, "Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you.'" ⁴⁵And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. ⁴⁶*And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.* 

This illustrates God's strengthening of his people, as it suggests that Elijah runs for some distance ahead of Ahab who was in a chariot.

God strengthens his people when they are weak . . .

See also:

- [1Pet 5:10](#) ↓; [Zec 10:6](#) ↓

Isa 40:27-31 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? ²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹*He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.* ³⁰Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹*but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.* 

Note that Israel's dismay in v. 27 reflects its weakened state.

Ezek 34:16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and *I will strengthen the weak,* and the fat and the strong I will destroy.^y I will feed them in justice. 

^y Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate *I will watch over*

1Sam 2:4 The bows of the mighty are broken, but *the feeble bind on strength.* 

Ps 73:26 *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength^z of my heart and my portion forever.* 

^z Hebrew *rock*

1Ki 19:3-8 Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." ⁵And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. *And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat."* ⁶*And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again.* ⁷*And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you."* ⁸*And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.* 

. . . God restores and renews his people

See also:

- [a\) Return to the Land](#) [God's plans for Israel], p. 981
- [b\) Physical Renewal](#) [God's plans for Israel], p. 985

1Pet 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, *will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.* 

Ps 23:2-3 *He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*^a ³*He restores my soul.* He leads me in paths of righteousness^b for his name's sake. 

^a Hebrew *beside waters of rest*

^b Or *in right paths*

Ps 85:1 LORD, you were favorable to your land; *you restored the fortunes of Jacob.* 

Joel 2:23-26 Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for *he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before.* ²⁴*"The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.* ²⁵*I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great*



army, which I sent among you. ²⁶*"You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.* 䄂

God would restore Judah, sending her plentiful rain "as before" (v. 23). In so doing he would "restore" (v. 25) to the people the fruitfulness of the years which had been devastated by a horrendous locust plague.

Zec 1:16-17 Therefore, thus says the LORD, *I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.* ¹⁷*Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.* 䄂

The "measuring line" (v. 16) seems to refer to work involved in reconstruction, alluding to the restoration of Jerusalem. Restoration of Jerusalem is reflected in v. 17.

Zec 10:6 I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. *I will bring them back because I have compassion on them, and they shall be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.* 䄂

Ps 103:5 ... [God] *who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* 䄂

2Cor 4:16 So we do not lose heart. *Though our outer self^c is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.* 䄂

^c Greek *man*

Isa 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, *to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.*" 䄂

Jer 31:25 For I will satisfy the weary soul, and *every languishing soul I will replenish.* 䄂

✦ **Turning to God brings "times of refreshing" from the Lord:**

Acts 3:19 *Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ...* 䄂

The "times of refreshing" speaks of spiritual refreshing – "times of spiritual strength" (GNT).

God strengthens his people in the face of adversity

Ps 10:17 *O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear ...* 䄂

Ps 18:32-34, 39 ... *the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. ³³He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. ³⁴He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. 䄂 ... ³⁹For you equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me.* 䄂

Isa 28:5-6 In that day the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory,^d and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people, and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and *strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.* 䄂

^d The Hebrew words for *glory* and *hosts* sound alike

Isa 58:11 And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire *in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.* 䄂

Zec 10:11-12 He shall pass *through the sea of troubles* and strike down the waves of the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up. The pride of Assyria shall be laid low, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart. ¹²*I will make them strong in the LORD, and they shall walk in his name,"* declares the LORD. 䄂

A number of other modern translations interpret v. 11a as speaking of God's people passing through "the sea of troubles" (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV). If this is the case, then these verses would tell of God strengthening his people (v. 12) amidst "the sea of troubles" (v. 11).

Zec 12:3-5 On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. *And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.* ⁴On that day, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. ⁵*Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.'* 䄂

2Tim 4:16-17 *At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.* 䄂



2Thes 3:3 But the Lord is faithful. *He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.*^e 

^e Or *evil*

Paul is probably speaking of the Lord strengthening them (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV) – along with protecting them – in the face of Satan's attacks, i.e. the trials and temptations that Satan initiates.

Judg 7:10-11, 13-15 *But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. ¹¹And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.*" Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp.  ... ¹³When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade. And he said, "Behold, I dreamed a dream, and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat." ¹⁴And his comrade answered, "This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp." ¹⁵*As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand."* 

✦ God's strengthening of Samson amidst his enemies:

Judg 16:23, 25-30 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand."  ... ²⁵And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call Samson, that he may entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. ²⁶And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them." ²⁷Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained. ²⁸*Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes."* ²⁹*And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other.* ³⁰*And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in*

it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life. 

God strengthens them spiritually, until Jesus Christ's return

See also:

- [Ps 10:17](#) ; [2Tim 4:16-17](#) ; [2Thes 3:3](#) 
- [2Thes 2:16-17](#) 
- [God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own – until the end](#), p. 943
- [God and Jesus Christ strengthen their people amidst trials](#), p. 2001

A number of the verses in the previous subsections also have a spiritual application.

Rom 16:25 *Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ...* 

2Cor 1:21-22 *And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²²and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*^f 

^f Or *down payment*

The first clause points to God making us strong in Christ (cf. NCV), to stand firm in Christ (cf. CEV, NIV, NLT).

Col 1:11 *May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ...* 

1Cor 1:7b-8 ... as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸*who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 

1Thes 3:12-13 ... and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³*so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.* 

The first clause in v. 13 speaks of Christ spiritually strengthening believers so that they will be "blameless in holiness" (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NRSV).



1Thes 5:23-24 *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.* 

God sanctifies his people, which has the effect of making them stronger spiritually. In conjunction with this, he keeps them blameless – until Jesus Christ's return.

✦ **God will carry on his work in each of his people until it is completed on Jesus Christ's return:**

Phil 1:6 *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* 

God will finish the "good work" (of making believers more like Christ) that he has begun. One implication of this is that God will continue to sanctify (cf. **1Thes 5:23** ↑) and strengthen his people, until Christ returns.

God encourages his people

See also:

- *God's word encourages people*, p. 314
- *God comforts his people in hard times, and in delivering them*, p. 1976

Acts 28:15 *And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.* 

Paul thanking God for the appearance of these men suggests that he considered that God was ultimately behind their arrival and the encouragement that this brought him.

Rom 15:4-5 *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ...* 

The reference to God as the "God of endurance and encouragement" (v. 5) reflects that he is the source of "the encouragement of the Scriptures" (v. 4) – him being the originator of the Scriptures.

Phil 2:1 *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ...* 

One implication here is that believers do have encouragement in Christ.

Heb 6:17-18 *So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.* 

God gave his promise (one pertaining to salvation) and confirmed it with his oath to greatly encourage those who grasp the hope offered in the promise.

✦ **Jesus Christ and God our Father give believers much comfort:**

2Thes 2:16-17 *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.* 

In v. 16 Paul speaks of the "eternal comfort" along with the hope that God has given believers (cf. **Heb 6:18** ↑) through what he has accomplished in Jesus Christ.

God heals his people

See also:

- *Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders*, p. 561

The topic of healing is a somewhat controversial one. Does God promise to heal all illness, if we have faith that he will? Psalms 103:3 and James 5:14-16 support the affirmative. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 and the fact that numerous people of faith have remained ill after repeated prayer suggest otherwise. However we do know that God wants his people to take all such needs to him in prayer, in assurance that he will hear and act for one's ultimate good and in line with his will.

Note that spiritual and physical health (and healing) are often linked (cf. comment below on Ps 103:2-3). Some of the following verses may have both kinds of healing in view.

Ex 15:26 *... saying, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer."* 

Ps 30:2 *O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.* 

Ps 41:3 *The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.* 

‡ Hebrew *you turn all his bed*



This speaks of "one who considers the poor" (v. 1).

Ps 103:2-3 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, *who heals all your diseases*, ...

The coupling of healing and forgiveness may imply that the psalmist linked at least some diseases to sin (cf. [James 5:14-16](#) ↓).

Ps 107:20 *He sent out his word and healed them*, and delivered them from their destruction.

Phil 2:27 *Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him*, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

James 5:14-16 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵*And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.* And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another and *pray for one another, that you may be healed.* The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.^h

^h Or *The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power*

For comment, see [Acts 8:14-17](#) – under *Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted*, p. 1228.

Ps 147:3 *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.*

Emotional healing is in view here.

Ezek 34:16 I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and *I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak*, and the fat and the strong I will destroy.ⁱ I will feed them in justice.

ⁱ Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate *I will watch over*

As with Psalms 147:3 immediately above, this speaks of God healing people amongst the exiles of Israel that he had gathered and brought back home (cf. v. 2).

Mark 5:27-29, 34 She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. ²⁸For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." ²⁹And *immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.* ... ³⁴And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and *be healed of your disease.*"

For further examples of Jesus healing people during his mission, see *Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders*, p. 561.

✦ **The Lord did not remove Paul's "thorn":**

2Cor 12:7-9 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,ⁱ *a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.* ⁸*Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.* ⁹*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

ⁱ Or *hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited*

Paul's "thorn" in his flesh appears to have been a physical disorder. The Lord used Paul's affliction both to keep him from becoming conceited (v. 7) and to make him receptive to Christ's power working in him (v. 9).

God also supports and upholds his people . . .

See also:

- [Isa 46:3](#) ↓
- *God helps his people by upholding them and delivering them from enemies*, p. 916

2Sam 22:19 They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but *the LORD was my support.*

2Chr 16:9a For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, *to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.*

Ps 18:35 You have given me the shield of your salvation, and *your right hand supported me*, and your gentleness made me great.

As noted earlier in the chapter, God's "right hand" signifies his mighty power, with the right hand being spoken of as the stronger hand.

Ps 94:18 When I thought, "My foot slips," *your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.*

Ps 54:4 Behold, God is my helper; *the Lord is the upholder of my life.*



Ps 37:17, 23-24 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but *the LORD upholds the righteous*. ... ²³The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; ²⁴*though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand*.

Isa 41:10 ... fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, *I will uphold you with my righteous right hand*.

Ps 145:14 *The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down*.

Those “who are bowed down” appear to be ones who have buckled under the weight of their troubles – “those bent beneath their loads” (NLT).

Deut 33:3 Yes, he loved his people,^k *all his holy ones were in his^l hand*; so they followed^m in your steps, receiving direction from you, ...

^k Septuagint; Hebrew *peoples*

^l Hebrew *your*

^m The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

God's people are in his hand, which suggests that he upholds them – as well as “protects” them (CEV, GNT).

Deut 33:27 The eternal God is your dwelling place,ⁿ and *underneath are the everlasting arms*.^o And he thrust out the enemy before you and said, Destroy.

ⁿ Or *a dwelling place*

^o Revocalization of verse 27 yields *He subdues the ancient gods, and shatters the forces of old*

This portrays God as supporting and upholding his people.

Ps 73:23 Nevertheless, I am continually with you; *you hold my right hand*.

... God even carries his people

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

Ex 19:4 You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how *I bore you on eagles' wings* and brought you to myself.

God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and safely bringing them to their camp at Mount Sinai is here likened to how “a mighty eagle carries its young” (CEV; cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). Similar imagery is used below in Deuteronomy 32:10-11.

Deut 1:30-31 The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹and in the wilderness, *where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place*.

Deut 32:10-11 He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. ¹¹*Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, ...*

A bird's pinions are the outer parts of its wings.

Isa 40:11 He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; *he will carry them in his bosom*, and gently lead those that are with young.

Isa 46:3-4 Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, *who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb*; ⁴even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. *I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save*.

Isa 63:9 In all their affliction he was afflicted,^p and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; *he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old*.

^p Or *he did not afflict*

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God Protects His People (I): General

Subsections

- God preserves his people
- God protects his people from enemies
- God preserves his people's lives . . .
- . . . God keeps his people safe and secure
- God protects his people from all evil, including Satan
- God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own – until the end



God preserves his people

Josh 24:17 ... for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. 

1Sam 30:23 But David said, "You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us. *He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us.* 

Ps 32:7 You are a hiding place for me; *you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.* Selah 

Ps 31:23 Love the LORD, all you his saints! *The LORD preserves the faithful* but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride. 

Ps 34:19-20 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. ²⁰*He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.* 

Ps 37:28 For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. *They are preserved forever,* but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. 

Ps 116:6 *The LORD preserves the simple;* when I was brought low, he saved me. 

The "simple" are those who are honest, innocent and without deception. Some see in the term a reference to "those of childlike faith" (NLT).

Ps 145:20 *The LORD preserves all who love him,* but all the wicked he will destroy. 

2Pet 2:5 ... if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ... 

God protects his people from enemies

See also:

- [Ps 41:2](#) ↓
- [God saves his people from all their enemies](#) + ref., p. 908
- [d\) God Helps His People against Enemies](#), p. 915

Note that protection from enemies is also largely in view in a number of the verses in the other subsections in this section.

Ps 31:20 *In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.* 

Ps 91:14 Because he holds fast to me in love, *I will deliver him; I will protect him,* because he knows my name. 

Ps 105:14-15 ... *he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account,* ¹⁵*saying, "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"* 

Ps 124:1-6 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side— let Israel now say— ²*if it had not been the LORD who was on our side when people rose up against us,* ³*then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us;* ⁴*then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us;* ⁵*then over us would have gone the raging waters.* ⁶*Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to their teeth!* 

Isa 31:5 *Like birds hovering, so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it; he will spare and rescue it.* 

Zec 9:15 *The LORD of hosts will protect them, and they shall devour, and tread down the sling stones, and they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine, and be full like a bowl, drenched like the corners of the altar.* 

Note that the second part of the verse speaks of the people shedding the blood of their enemies.

Zec 12:8 *On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them.* 

This speaks of deliverance of Jerusalem in the end times.

Gen 35:5 And as they journeyed, *a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.* 

Ex 14:19-20 *Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them,* ²⁰*coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night^a without one coming near the other all night.* 

^a Septuagint and the night passed



Through "the angel of God" and the cloud that signified God's presence, the Egyptians were blocked throughout the night from attacking the Israelites.

1Sam 23:14 And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand. 

Jer 36:26 And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son and Seraiah the son of Azriel and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel to seize Baruch the secretary and Jeremiah the prophet, but the LORD hid them. 

Ps 20:1 May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! 

✦ God's revelation to Jeremiah of a plot against him:

Jer 11:18 The LORD made it known to me and I knew; then you showed me their deeds. 

God preserves his people's lives . . .

Note that following on from the previous subsection regarding God protecting his people from enemies, the following verses largely have in view God's preservation of his people's lives in the face of enemy threat.

Ps 41:2 ... the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. 

Ps 66:8-9 Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, ⁹who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip. 

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

1Sam 25:29 If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the LORD your God. And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. 

Ps 97:10 O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked. 

Gen 45:7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 

This speaks of God preserving his people's lives amidst a great famine.

Acts 28:3-5 When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. ⁴When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice^r has not allowed him to live." ⁵He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 

^r Or justice

Presumably Paul survived the deadly snakebite due to God's care of him, preserving his life.

Ps 119:93 I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. 

The psalmist appears to be speaking of the strength and meaning he found in God's word during his affliction, which had effectively preserved his life.

. . . God keeps his people safe and secure

Deut 33:12 Of Benjamin he said, "The beloved of the LORD dwells in safety. The High God^s surrounds him all day long, and dwells between his shoulders." 

^s Septuagint; Hebrew *dwells in safety by him. He*

The last phrase is either speaking of: the people dwelling in the safety of God's presence; or God dwelling in the midst of the people, to keep them safe.

Deut 33:28 So Israel lived in safety, Jacob lived alone,^t in a land of grain and wine, whose heavens drop down dew. 

^t Hebrew *the abode of Jacob was alone*

Ps 4:8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. 

Lev 25:18-19 Therefore you shall do my statutes and keep my rules and perform them, and then you will dwell in the land securely. ¹⁹The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and dwell in it securely. 

Ps 16:5, 8-10 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.  ... ⁸I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. ⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^u rejoices; my



flesh also dwells secure. ¹⁰*For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.*^v 

^u Hebrew *my glory*

^v Or *see the pit*

In v. 5, “hold my lot” can be rendered “maintain my lot” (AMP, NKJV), thus meaning: “you have made my lot secure” (NIV®). In v. 9-10 David appears to be speaking of being secure in the face of death, when under threat from enemies, rather than actually in death (cf. Acts 2:24-33).

Ps 62:2 *He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.* 

Ps 21:7 For the king trusts in the LORD, and *through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.* 

Ps 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; *he will never permit the righteous to be moved.* 

Ps 48:8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in *the city of our God, which God will establish forever.* Selah 

This speaks of God keeping Jerusalem safe for ever.

God protects his people from all evil, including Satan

See also:

▪ [John 10:28-29](#) ; [Rom 8:38-39](#) 

▪ *... For God and Jesus Christ are willing and able to help us withstand temptation,* p. 1855

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

^w Or *the valley of deep darkness*

A shepherd used a rod to fight off wild animals and a staff to guide and control the sheep. They are used here to portray God's care and protection (cf. GNT, NLT) and so his comfort of his people – even amidst evil.

Num 23:7-8, 23 And Balaam took up his discourse and said, “From Aram Balak has brought me, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains: ‘Come, curse Jacob for me, and come, denounce Israel!’⁸How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?  ...²³For there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, ‘What has God wrought!’ 

Balaam, a pagan seer or diviner, was powerless to curse Israel (v. 8) – or use sorcery or divination against her (v. 23) – as God had not cursed Israel (v. 8) but rather blessed them (v. 23). In fact Balaam was compelled to likewise bless them (cf. ch. 23-24; [Deut 23:5](#) .

Deut 23:5 But *the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you.* 

Matt 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^x I will build my church, and the gates of hell^y shall not prevail against it. 

^x The Greek words for *Peter* and *rock* sound similar

^y Greek *the gates of Hades*

The “gates of Hades” could be a reference to evil powers – “all the powers of hell” (NLT; cf. NIV text note, AMP) – but it may in particular denote “death” (CEV, GNT, NCV).

Luke 10:19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and *nothing shall hurt you.* 

As the first part of the sentence probably refers to evil spiritual powers (cf. vv. 17, 20) and to Satan, “the enemy”, it is a fair assumption that Jesus was primarily referring to such evil forces in saying that nothing would harm his followers.

2Thes 3:3 But the Lord is faithful. *He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.*^z 

^z Or *evil*

2Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.* To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 

1Jn 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but *he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.* 

The “he who was born of God” is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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

See also:

▪ *God strengthens them spiritually, until Jesus Christ's return,* p. 937

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



John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 

Jesus is speaking primarily of not losing any of all the people who God has given him (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT; [John 18:8-9 ↓](#)).

John 10:28-29 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and *no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me,^a is greater than all, and *no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.* 

^a Some manuscripts *What my Father has given to me*

John 18:8-9 Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go."⁹This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." 

The context shows Jesus to be referring firstly to physically not losing any of his disciples; but possibly the statement is also alluding to a spiritual dimension – applicable to not losing any of his followers. Note that the quotation attributed to Jesus in v. 9 (cf. [John 17:12 ↓](#)) is based on his words from 6:39 above.

John 17:11-12, 15 And I am no longer in the world, but *they are in the world*, and I am coming to you. *Holy Father, keep them in your name*, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹²*While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost* except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.  ... ¹⁵*I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.*^b 

^b Or *from evil*

This request, it being made by Jesus, is effectively a promise of God's protection from Satan (v. 15) and all that is in the world (v. 11).

Rom 8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?* ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For *I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* 

There is nothing in all creation that can separate believers from God's love which is theirs in or "through" (GNT) Christ.

This points to the fact that God and Jesus Christ keep their followers, in a right and close relationship with them.

1Pet 1:4-5 ... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵*who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* 

Jude 1:1 Jude, a servant^c of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and *kept for*^d *Jesus Christ:* ... 

^c Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

^d Or *by*

Jude 1:24 Now *to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,* ... 

The term "stumbling" would appear to mean falling into sin or error – both of which are grave dangers of false teachers who are so prominent in Jude's letter. The term could alternatively, or additionally, allude to actually falling away from the faith, the result of unchecked sin or error.

Jer 32:40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And *I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.* 

This is speaking of the renewed Israel of the end time, reflective of the fact that God keeps his people.

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and *I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*^e 

^e Or *what I have entrusted to him*; Greek *my deposit*

If the alternative rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), then Paul would appear to be speaking of trusting God to guard his ministry and its fruits, along with himself – even through death.

† **God is not willing that any of his "little ones" be lost:**

Matt 18:12-14 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴*So it is not the will of my^f Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.* 

^f Some manuscripts *your*



The term "little ones" is understood by most to refer to believers, possibly in particular to young or new ones.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God Protects His People (II): Depictions

Subsections

- God shields his people
- God surrounds his people
- God is a refuge for his people
- God is a rock for his people
- God guards and keeps his people . . .
- . . . God watches over his people, keeping his eyes on them
- God is a shepherd to his people . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ is a shepherd to his people
- Further depictions of God's protection

God shields his people

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, *I am your shield*; your reward shall be very great."

Deut 33:29 Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by *the LORD, the shield of your help*, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.

Ps 3:3 But *you, O LORD, are a shield about me*, my glory, and the lifter of my head.

Ps 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield*; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

Ps 33:20 Our soul waits for the LORD; *he is our help and our shield*.

Prov 2:7 ... he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *he is a shield to those who walk in integrity*, ...

Ps 91:4 *He will cover you with his pinions*, and under his wings you will find refuge; *his faithfulness is a shield and buckler*.

A "buckler" was a small shield.

Ps 140:7 O LORD, my Lord, the strength of my salvation, *you have covered my head in the day of battle*.

The phrase "covered my head" has the sense "shields my head" (NIV®). A similar point can be made regarding "covered" in Isaiah 51:16 immediately below.

Isa 51:16 And I have put my words in your mouth and *covered you in the shadow of my hand*, establishing^g the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, 'You are my people.'

^g Or *planting*

Ps 121:5 The LORD is your keeper; *the LORD is your shade on your right hand*.

In likening God to "shade", the psalmist is speaking of God as covering his people (cf. [Isa 51:16 ↑](#)), shielding them from harm.

God surrounds his people

See also:

- [Ps 3:3 ↑](#)

Deut 33:12 Of Benjamin he said, "The beloved of the LORD dwells in safety. *The High God^h surrounds him all day long, and dwells between his shoulders*."

^h Septuagint; Hebrew *dwells in safety by him. He*

As noted earlier, the last phrase is either speaking of: the people dwelling in the safety of God's presence; or God dwelling in the midst of the people, to keep them safe. If the first alternative is correct, the phrase is suggestive of the people being surrounded by God, as per the preceding clause.

Ps 125:2 *As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore*.

Ps 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but *steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD*.

God's steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts him, indicative of God himself surrounding them.

Ps 34:7 *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him*, and delivers them.



Zec 2:4b-5 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it. ⁵And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.'

Here the renewed future Jerusalem appears to be ultimately in view.

2Ki 6:15-17 When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and *behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

Verse 17 tells of Elisha's servant being enabled to see the surrounding heavenly forces – the "horses and chariots of fire".

Isa 58:8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; *your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.*

If "your righteousness" refers to God (cf. GNT, NCV, NRSV), this would speak of God both going before his people and being their rear guard, akin to surrounding them.

God is a refuge for his people

See also:

- [Ps 94:22](#)
- [God protects and is a refuge for the needy](#), p. 953
- [God is a refuge for his people, protecting them](#), p. 1128
- [Commit yourself to God and take refuge in him . . .](#), p. 1946
- [. . . For God saves and protects those who take refuge in him](#), p. 1947

Ps 36:7 How precious is your steadfast love, O God! *The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.*

Ps 62:7-8 On God rests my salvation and my glory; *my mighty rock, my refuge is God.* ⁸Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; *God is a refuge for us.* Selah

Ps 91:4 *He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.*

Ps 142:4-5 Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul. ⁵*I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."*

2Sam 22:2-3 He said, "*The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, ³my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence.*"

ⁱ Septuagint (compare Psalm 18:2); Hebrew lacks *my*

Similarly, in conjunction with God being a refuge, a number of the following verses speak of God as a "fortress" or a "stronghold" (or a "strong tower").

Prov 14:26, 32 *In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.* . . . ³²The wicked is overthrown through his evildoing, but *the righteous finds refuge in his death.*

Verse 26 indicates that when a man (or woman) fears God, his household will have a refuge in God. Verse 32b suggests that the righteous find a refuge "even in death" (AMP, NCV, NIV; cf. CEV), due to what will follow.

Jer 16:19 O LORD, my strength and *my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble*, to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say: "Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit."

Ps 28:8 The LORD is the strength of his people; *he is the saving refuge of his anointed.*

^j Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts *is their strength*

Ps 48:3 Within her citadels *God has made himself known as a fortress.*

Ps 59:16 But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For *you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.*

Ps 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? *The LORD is the stronghold^k of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

^k Or *refuge*



Ps 37:39 The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; *he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.*

Ps 61:3 ... *for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.*

Prov 18:10 *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.*

Ps 32:7 *You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*

Ps 90:1 *Lord, you have been our dwelling place¹ in all generations.*

¹ Some Hebrew manuscripts (compare Septuagint) *our refuge*

As reflected in the text note, "dwelling place" has the sense of refuge (cf. AMP) and/or place of repose.

Isa 4:5-6 *Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy. ⁶There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.*

This is seen by many as referring to the messianic age. Such blessing for Mount Zion and the people there is applicable in a spiritual sense to the church.

God is a rock for his people

References to God as a "rock" depict him as a secure mountain or stronghold of infallible strength, to whom his people can go for protection.

1Sam 2:2 There is none holy like the LORD; there is none besides you; *there is no rock like our God.*

2Sam 23:3 The God of Israel has spoken; *the Rock of Israel* has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ...

Ps 18:2, 31, 46 *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.* ... ³¹For who is God, but the LORD? And *who is a rock, except our God?*— ... ⁴⁶The LORD lives, and *blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—*

Ps 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, *O LORD, my rock* and my redeemer.

Ps 28:1 *To you, O LORD, I call; my rock,* be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.

Ps 31:3 *For you are my rock and my fortress;* and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; ...

Ps 62:2, 7 *He only is my rock* and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken. ... ⁷On God rests my salvation and my glory; *my mighty rock, my refuge is God.*

Ps 78:35 *They remembered that God was their rock,* the Most High God their redeemer.

Ps 89:26 He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and *the Rock of my salvation.'*

Ps 94:22 But the LORD has become my stronghold, and *my God the rock of my refuge.*

Ps 95:1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise *to the rock of our salvation!*

Isa 44:8b *Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock;* I know not any.

Hab 1:12b O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and *you, O Rock,* have established them for reproof.

Gen 49:23-24 The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, ²⁴yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms^m were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd,ⁿ *the Stone of Israel*), ...

^m Hebrew *the arms of his hands*

ⁿ Or *by the name of the Shepherd*

Deut 32:18 You were unmindful of *the Rock that bore^o you,* and you forgot the God who gave you birth.

^o Or *fathered*

God guards and keeps his people . . .

As used in this subsection, the term "keep" means to guard, watch over and protect.



Ex 23:20 Behold, *I send an angel before you to guard you on the way* and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. 

Due to the context, many commentators see this angel as possibly being the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ or as being identified with God himself. Whether or not it is simply an angel, this verse illustrates the fact that God guards his people, whether directly or through his agents (cf. **Ps 91:11-12** ↓).

1Sam 2:9 *He will guard the feet of his faithful ones*, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. 

Ps 12:7 *You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us^p from this generation forever.* 

^p Or *guard him*

Here “them” most likely denotes the poor and needy (cf. v. 5).

Ps 91:11-12 *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. ¹²On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.* 

God commands his angels to guard his people. As such, figuratively speaking they lift them up out of the way of harm.

Isa 52:12 For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, and *the God of Israel will be your rear guard.* 

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that *he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*⁹ 

⁹ Or *what I have entrusted to him; Greek my deposit*

As noted earlier, as per the alternative rendering in the text note, Paul may be speaking of trusting God to guard himself, along with his ministry and its fruits – even through death.

1Pet 1:4-5 ... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵*who by God's power are being guarded through faith* for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 

Gen 28:15 Behold, *I am with you and will keep you wherever you go*, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. 

Ps 121:3-8 *He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your*

shade on your right hand. ⁶The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. ⁸The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. 

Isa 27:2-3 In that day, “A pleasant vineyard,^r sing of it! ³*I, the LORD, am its keeper; every moment I water it. Lest anyone punish it, I keep it night and day; ...* 

^r Many Hebrew manuscripts *A vineyard of wine*

The “vineyard” is symbolic of Israel.

... God watches over his people, keeping his eyes on them

See also:

- [Isa 27:2-3](#) ↑
- [Jer 31:10](#) ↓

Prov 2:7-8 ... he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸*guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints.* 

Ex 12:42 *It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt;* so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations. 

Ps 127:1 Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless *the LORD watches over the city*, the watchman stays awake in vain. 

This points to God watching over his people.

Ps 146:9 *The LORD watches over the sojourners;* he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. 

2Chr 16:9a *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.* 

Ezra 5:5 But *the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews*, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it. 

This speaks of God watching over the Jews and their work of rebuilding the temple, so that they were not stopped while their enemies' accusations were being dealt with.



Jer 24:6 *I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not uproot them.* 

Zec 12:4 On that day, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But *for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open*, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. 

1Pet 3:12 For *the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous*, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. 

‡ Joseph and Laban's oath at Mizpah:

Gen 31:49 ... and Mizpah,^s for he said, "*The LORD watch between you and me*, when we are out of one another's sight." 

^s Mizpah means watchpost

Although sometimes applied as a blessing, in context this appears to be speaking of God watching that each of them did the right thing by the other.

God is a shepherd to his people . . .

The Bible at times portrays God and Jesus Christ as shepherds (and their people as sheep). As such they protect, rescue, lead, provide and generally care for their people. In conjunction with this, they have a close relationship with their people.

Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, *the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day*, ... 

Ps 23:1-4 *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.^t ³He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness^u for his name's sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,^v I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* 

^t Hebrew *beside waters of rest*

^u Or *in right paths*

^v Or *the valley of deep darkness*

Ps 80:1 Give ear, *O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!* You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth. 

Similarly Psalms 77:20a says, "You led your people like a flock..."

Ps 100:3 Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his;^w *we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* 

^w Or *and not we ourselves*

Isa 40:11 *He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.* 

Jer 31:10 Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and *will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.*' 

Ezek 34:11-16 For *thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy.^x I will feed them in justice.* 

^x Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate *I will watch over*

Verses 11-16a speak of God gathering his from Babylon and other places where they had been scattered, and bringing them back to the land of Israel. In v. 16, "the sleek and the strong" are the powerful among the people who oppress the others.

Mic 7:14 *Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, who dwell alone in a forest in the midst of a garden land;^y let them graze in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old.* 

^y Hebrew *of Carmel*

Zec 10:3 My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders;^z for *the LORD of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah*, and will make them like his majestic steed in battle. 

^z Hebrew *the male goats*



Matt 18:12-14 What do you think? *If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?*¹³ And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴*So it is not the will of my^a Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.* 📖

^a Some manuscripts *your*

... Jesus Christ is a shepherd to his people

Ezek 34:23 *And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.* 📖

Jesus Christ is in view with "my servant David" referring to the Messiah, of David's line.

Matt 2:6 "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for *from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.*" 📖

John 10:2-4, 11, 14-16 *But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.* ³To him the gatekeeper opens. *The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.* ⁴*When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.* 📖 ... ¹¹*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* 📖 ... ¹⁴*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,* ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; *and I lay down my life for the sheep.* ¹⁶*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.* 📖

Verse 16 refers to non-Jews, from among whom would come those who Jesus, as "the good shepherd", would unite with Jewish believers to make "one flock".

Heb 13:20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead *our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep,* by the blood of the eternal covenant, ... 📖

1Pet 2:25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to *the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.* 📖

1Pet 5:2-4 ... shepherd *the flock of God* that is among you, exercising oversight,^b not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;^c not for shameful gain, but eagerly;³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being

examples to the flock. ⁴*And when the chief Shepherd appears,* you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 📖

^b Some manuscripts omit *exercising oversight*

^c Some manuscripts omit *as God would have you*

Rev 7:17 *For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.* 📖

Note that this speaks of a particular group of believers in heaven who have come out of "the great tribulation" (v. 14) of the end times.

Luke 12:32 *Fear not, little flock,* for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 📖

The implication is that Jesus, or perhaps God their Father, is like a shepherd to his people.

✦ **Jesus also described himself as "the door for the sheep":**

John 10:7, 9 So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *I am the door of the sheep.* 📖 ... ⁹*I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* 📖

Jesus claims to be the door/gate leading into salvation (v. 9), through which one can find pasture – the provision of one's needs.

Further depictions of God's protection

Ps 18:36 *You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip.* 📖

Ps 32:6 Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; *surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.* 📖

Prov 3:25-26 Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin^d of the wicked, when it comes, ²⁶for the LORD will be your confidence and *will keep your foot from being caught.* 📖

^d Hebrew *storm*

Isa 43:2 *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.* 📖

Jer 50:34 Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name. *He will surely plead their cause,* that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon. 📖

God takes up the cause of his people (cf. GNT).



*Pray for persecuted Christians***e) Epilogue: God's Care of the Needy****See also:**

- *God cares for his people*, p. 927

Bear in mind that while many verses in the Bible assert that God looks after the needy (as most of this section shows), the Bible also speaks of the suffering of the needy (as per the first two subsections). As such the Bible often speaks of God delivering the needy as opposed to keeping them from experiencing any troubles – just as it often speaks of God saving his people out of troubles as opposed to keeping them from experiencing any troubles, though the latter is also spoken of. (See also the introductory comments on *I. God's Saving of His People*, p. 902, and *God saves his people out of all troubles*, p. 907.)

Also note that many of the references in this section may also have primarily in view the poor amongst the Israelites. Under the first covenant the Israelites – including the poor – experienced God's care and blessings in a more material way than his people generally do under the current second covenant, with the second covenant's blessings being largely spiritual and of the afterlife. Additionally, keep in mind that much of the teaching in this section is often interpreted as generality.

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

Subsections

- The needy experience hardship . . .
- . . . The needy are often mistreated by the wicked and made to suffer
- However, God rescues the needy
- God secures justice for the needy
- God protects and is a refuge for the needy
- God provides for the needy
- Other ways God cares for the needy

The needy experience hardship . . .**See also:**

- *Note: Advantages of riches, as opposed to poverty*, p. 1917

Prov 10:15 A rich man's wealth is his strong city; *the poverty of the poor is their ruin.*

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit *orphans and widows in their affliction*, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Job 24:5-9 Behold, like wild donkeys in the desert the poor^e go out to their toil, seeking game; the wasteland yields food for their children. ⁶*They gather their^f fodder in the field, and they glean the vineyard of the wicked man.* ⁷*They lie all night naked, without clothing, and have no covering in the cold.* ⁸*They are wet with the rain of the mountains and cling to the rock for lack of shelter.* ⁹*(There are those who snatch the fatherless child from the breast, and they take a pledge against the poor.)*

^e Hebrew *they*

^f Hebrew *his*

Prov 19:4, 7 Wealth brings many new friends, but *a poor man is deserted by his friend.* . . . ⁷*All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him! He pursues them with words, but does not have them.*

^g The meaning of the Hebrew sentence is uncertain

Ecc 9:15-16 But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. *Yet no one remembered that poor man.* ¹⁶But I say that wisdom is better than might, though *the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.*

This appears to speak of a poor man saving a city through his wisdom, but then subsequently being forgotten and ignored, basically because he was poor and not esteemed in the eyes of worldly people.

Luke 16:20-21 And at his gate was laid *a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,* ²¹*who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.*

2Ki 4:1 Now the wife of one of the sons of the prophets cried to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD, but *the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.*"



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

See also:

- *The wicked seek to oppress the righteous and the poor*, p. 1935

Job 20:19 For *he* [a wicked person] *has crushed and abandoned the poor*; he has seized a house that he did not build. 

Job 24:3-4 *They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the widow's ox for a pledge. ⁴They thrust the poor off the road; the poor of the earth all hide themselves.* 

Ps 10:2 *In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor*; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. 

Ps 94:6 *They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; ...* 

Prov 13:23 *The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.* 

Ecc 4:1 *Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.* 

Ecc 5:8 *If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.* 

This appears to be speaking of oppression of the poor often being aggravated by corrupt officials higher up the chain of command from the one directly in charge of a particular district suffering oppression.

Ezek 22:29 The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. *They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.* 

Amos 2:6-7 Thus says the LORD: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because *they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals— ⁷those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted*; a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; ... 

Amos 8:4-6 Hear this, *you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end*, ⁵saying, “When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel^h great and deal deceitfully with false balances, ⁶that we may *buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals* and sell the chaff of the wheat?” 

^h An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters; a *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

‡ There will always be poor people:

Matt 26:11 For *you always have the poor with you*, but you will not always have me. 

However, God rescues the needy

See also:

- **Ps 76:8-9** ↓

Job 5:15 But *he saves the needy from the sword of their mouth and from the hand of the mighty.* 

Ps 35:10 All my bones shall say, “*O LORD, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?*” 

Ps 107:41 ... but *he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks.* 

Ps 109:31 For *he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death.* 

Jer 20:13 Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For *he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers.* 

Ps 10:14 But *you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless.* 

God secures justice for the needy

Deut 10:18a *He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow ...* 

Ps 10:17-18 *O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear ¹⁸to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed*, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more. 



Ps 140:12 *I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and will execute justice for the needy.*

Ps 103:6 *The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.*

Job 5:16 *So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts her mouth.*

Injustice against the poor is quelled as a result of God saving them from wicked oppressors (cf. v. 15).

Job 36:6 He does not keep the wicked alive, but *gives the afflicted their right.*

Ps 76:8-9 *From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, ⁹when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth.* Selah

Prov 22:22-23 *Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, ²³for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them.*

✦ The Messiah will bring justice for the needy:

Isa 11:4 ... but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

The first clause may well speak of the Messiah righteously judging cases involving the poor and those who would oppress them.

God protects and is a refuge for the needy

See also:

- **Ps 146:7a** ; **Isa 14:30**

Ps 12:5 “Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the LORD; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.”

Ps 68:5 Father of the fatherless and *protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.*

Ps 146:9a *The LORD watches over the sojourners ...*

Jer 49:11 *Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me.*

Protection appears to be primarily in view (cf. NIV), although provision of food may be instead.

Ps 14:6 You would shame the plans of the poor, butⁱ the LORD is his refuge.

ⁱ Or for

Ps 9:9 *The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.*

Isa 25:4 *For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat; for the breath of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, ...*

God provides for the needy

Deut 10:18 He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and *loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.*

Sojourners, or foreigners, were generally considered to be vulnerable and among the needy.

Ps 68:10 ... your flockⁱ found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.

ⁱ Or your congregation

Ps 132:15 I will abundantly bless her provisions; *I will satisfy her poor with bread.*

This possibly refers to the renewed Israel of the messianic age, as may well be the case in other verses in this subsection and elsewhere in this section.

Ps 146:5-7a Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; ⁷who executes justice for the oppressed, *who gives food to the hungry.*

Isa 14:30 *And the firstborn of the poor will graze, and the needy lie down in safety; but I will kill your root with famine, and your remnant it will slay.*

This is speaking of the conditions for the poor amongst God's people following the fulfillment of his prophecy against the Philistines (cf. vv. 28-32).

Isa 41:17 *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the LORD will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.*

Here “the poor and needy” refers to the Jews returning from exile in Babylon.



Other ways God cares for the needy

See also:

- e) *Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering and Cries*, p. 1975

1Sam 2:8 *He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world.* 

In addition to caring for them, God may even exalt the poor.

Ps 10:17 O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; *you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear ...* 

Ps 68:5-6 *Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. ⁶God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.* 

Ps 146:7b-9 *The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.* 

Here those who are "bowed down" (v. 8) are those who are buckling underneath adversity (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Prov 15:25 The LORD tears down the house of the proud *but maintains the widow's boundaries.* 

Hos 14:3 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. *In you the orphan finds mercy.* 

Although this does not state any specific way in which God looks after the needy, it does reinforce the fact that God acts toward the needy with mercy.

✦ **The afflicted and needy will not be forgotten by God:**

Ps 9:12, 18 *For he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.*  ... ¹⁸*For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



God's Plans for His People

I. General

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I. General

God has wonderful plans and purposes for his people. Many of these concern the work he does through his people, with his incomparably great power. God promises to fulfill these plans and purposes, equipping and guiding his people accordingly.

a) God Has Plans and Purposes for His People

Bear in mind that references to God's plans and purposes for his people include: general plans/purposes which apply to all Christians; and specific plans/purposes for each Christian. The various general ones – such as salvation and sanctification – are dealt with in a number of other chapters in this book. This section looks at topics which show that God has specific plans and purposes for each of his people.

Thus the verses have largely been interpreted as such, i.e. as speaking of God having plans or purposes for specific people, or specific groups of his people. However, note that a number of the verses are also applicable to God's general plans and purposes, and arguably may even have these foremost in view.

Subsections

- God has plans and purposes for his people
- God's plans and purposes include work for his people to do
- God's plans and purposes are not dependent upon a person's background
- Further examples of God appointing people to a specific role
- In spite of his people's troubles, God will fulfill his plans and purposes for them
- God may actually use his people's troubles in fulfilling his purposes for them . . .
- . . . God may even initiate seemingly bad things to fulfill his purposes for his people
- Note: The plans of God's people are subject to his will

God has plans and purposes for his people

Ps 40:5 *You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.* 

The phrase "your thoughts toward us" appears to refer to – or at least be inclusive of – God's plans for his people (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Ps 139:16 *Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.* 

This quite possibly refers primarily to the content of the days (cf. CEV) – not just the number of them. As such it would imply that each person's days are planned by God.

Jer 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare^a and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.* 

^a Or peace

Here God speaks of his plans for the people of Israel. The aims of the plans – to bless them and give them a future and hope – are largely applicable to God's individual plans for each of his people. For God blesses each believer spiritually and gives them "a future and a hope".

Acts 13:36 *For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ...* 

God's plans and purposes include work for his people to do

See also:

- Acts 13:36 

Eph 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* 

Col 4:17 *And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord."* 

Acts 20:24 *But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.* 



1Cor 3:5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, *as the Lord assigned to each.* 📖

The final clause may well be referring to the Lord assigning to each believer – here Apollos and Paul in particular – the work he has for them (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT); hence the verse’s inclusion here. Alternatively, it could be speaking of the Lord assigning belief to each of those who had believed (cf. CEV).

2Cor 10:13 But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to *the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you.* 📖

The expression “the area of influence God assigned to us” refers to the work that God had assigned to them (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) – more specifically, the “sphere” (NASB, NKJV) of their work, which for Paul and his colleagues included Corinth.

Gal 2:7 On the contrary, when they saw that *I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised.* 📖

2Tim 1:10b-11 ...Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through *the gospel,* ¹¹*for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ...* 📖

Est 4:13-14 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And *who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*” 📖

In the rhetorical question (v. 14b) Mordecai is implying that the making of Esther as queen of Persia may well have been part of God’s plan to save his people – which indeed proved to be the case (cf. ch. 5-7).

God’s plans and purposes are not dependent upon a person’s background

Amos 7:14-15 Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “*I was^b no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs.* ¹⁵*But the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’*” 📖

^b Or *am*; twice in this verse

Matt 4:18-19 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for *they were fishermen.* ¹⁹*And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* 📖

Luke 5:27 After this he went out and saw *a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, “Follow me.”* 📖

Tax collectors were despised as traitors and thieves, often taxing more than the ruling Romans required, for their own gain. Thus Jesus’ choice of Levi to follow him as a disciple would have seemed strange, as would have been his choice of fishermen (cf. **Matt 4:18-19** ↑) – who generally “were uneducated, common men” (**Acts 4:13** ↓). However the apparent inappropriateness of these choices is dwarfed by the choice of Saul (cf. **Acts 9:13-15** ↓), who had been the chief persecutor of God’s church.

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that *they were uneducated, common men,* they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 📖

Acts 9:13-15 But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, *how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.* ¹⁴*And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”* ¹⁵*But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.*” 📖

Further examples of God appointing people to a specific role

See also:

- *Ultimately it is God who chooses leaders . . .*, p. 1471
- *. . . Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit play a role in the making of leaders*, p. 1472

Ex 31:2-6a “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³*and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship,* ⁴*to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze,* ⁵*in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.* ⁶*And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.* 📖



Num 3:6-8 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him. ⁷They shall keep guard over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. ⁸They shall guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle. 

Num 18:6-8 And behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the people of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to the LORD, to do the service of the tent of meeting. ⁷And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift;^c and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death. ⁸Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, "Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due. 

^c Hebrew service of gift

Jer 1:4-5, 9-10 Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."  ... ⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." 

Verse 10 refers to the content of God's messages that Jeremiah would pronounce, in his appointed role as "a prophet to the nations" (v. 5).

Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 

In spite of his people's troubles, God will fulfill his plans and purposes for them

Ps 57:1-2 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. ²I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. 

Ps 138:7-8 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me. ⁸The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands. 

Jer 15:10-11 Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me. ¹¹The LORD said, "Have I not^d set you free for their good? Have I not pleaded for you before the enemy in the time of trouble and in the time of distress? 

^d The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

In v. 11 God appears to be speaking of intervening in Jeremiah's predicament and setting him free "for purposes of good" (NASB), quite likely purposes that God would fulfill through Jeremiah.

Jer 29:10-11 For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare^e and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. 

^e Or peace

Despite his people's exile in Babylon and the apparent decimation of the nation, God would fulfill his promise and plans for them.

Acts 7:35-36 This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. 

Rev 3:7-8 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. ⁸"I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 

The "open door, which no one is able to shut" (v. 8a) may well be the door to God's kingdom, but it could be speaking of an opportunity for service. If the latter is the case, this passage well reflects the fact that no one or no thing can foil God and Jesus Christ's purposes for their people, despite their people's troubles (v. 8b).



‡ If God's plans for his people take some time to eventuate, there is a reason:

Deut 7:22 *The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little. You may not make an end of them at once,^f lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you.* 

^f Or quickly

This verse gives an example of a reason for God's plans for his people taking time to eventuate.

God may actually use his people's troubles in fulfilling his purposes for them . . .

See also:

- [God works everything for his purposes and plans](#), p. 271
- [God can use evil](#), p. 273
- [God can use evil to fulfill his purposes](#), p. 274

Although a number of the following passages do not actually say that God or Christ used the troubles spoken of in fulfilling their purposes for their people, in each it would appear to be the case.

Matt 10:23 *When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.* 

The phrase "through all the towns of Israel" has advancing God's kingdom in view (cf. vv. 6-8). The inference is that God at times allows persecution, using it to spread the Gospel. That God and Christ do this is clearly shown by Jesus' words below in Luke 21:12-13 and is subsequently illustrated in Acts 8:3-4, Acts 11:19-21 and Philipians 1:12-14.

Luke 21:12-13 *But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³This will be your opportunity to bear witness.* 

Acts 8:3-4 *But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. ⁴Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.* 

Acts 11:19-21 *Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists[‡] also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was*

with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. 

[‡] Or Greeks (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)

Gal 4:13 *You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ...* 

Phil 1:12-14, 17-19 *I want you to know, brothers,^h that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard^d and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word^d without fear.  ... ¹⁷The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but *thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.* ¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ... *

^h Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verse 14

ⁱ Greek *in the whole praetorium*

^j Some manuscripts add *of God*

God used both Paul's imprisonment and animosity towards Paul from insincere preachers, to advance the gospel. In addition to using these things in fulfilling his purposes for Paul, they would be used by God – through prayer and the help of the Holy Spirit – for Paul's "deliverance" (v. 19), referring to either deliverance from prison (cf. v. 25) or the culmination of Paul's salvation on his death (cf. v. 20-21).

Rom 8:28 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^k for those who are called according to his purpose.* 

^k Some manuscripts *God works all things together for good, or God works in all things for the good*

This is an example of "purpose" referring more to God's general purposes for his people, rather than specific tasks for certain people. Here God's purpose for his people – which they "are called according to" – appears to refer foremost to their being "conformed to the image of his Son" (v. 29). The phrase "all things" probably primarily refers to adverse experiences (cf. v. 18). Despite whatever adversity "those who love God" might encounter, God will work all such things for their good, that they might be made like Jesus Christ.



... God may even initiate seemingly bad things to fulfill his purposes for his people

Note that although not stated, possibly some of the troubles mentioned in the previous subsection were also initiated by God or Christ.

Gen 45:4-5, 8 So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt." ⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because *you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.* ... ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Gen 50:19-20 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰As for you, *you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people¹ should be kept alive, as they are today.*

¹ Or a numerous people

Ex 13:17-18a When Pharaoh let the people go, *God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt."* ¹⁸But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.

God took the people by the longer and more arduous desert road, which may well have seemed to be a "bad thing" that God had initiated. But God in fact had the people's welfare and his plans or purposes for them in view (v. 17b).

Job 42:11 Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for *all the evil^m that the LORD had brought upon him.* And each of them gave him a piece of moneyⁿ and a ring of gold.

^mOr *disaster*

ⁿ Hebrew a *qesitah*; a unit of money of unknown value

God is said to have brought Job's trouble upon him, presumably because he allowed Satan to afflict Job. God's purpose in this was, in part at least, to prove Job's righteousness (cf. ch. 1-2).

John 9:1-3, 6-7 As he passed by, he saw *a man blind from birth.* ²And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." ... ⁶Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the

saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means *Sent*). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

This implies that the man's blindness originated from God – for God's purposes.

Philem 1:15-16 *For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,* ¹⁶*no longer as a slave^o but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.*

^o Greek *bondservant*; twice in this verse

Paul suggests that Philemon's prior loss of his slave, Onesimus, was perhaps divinely initiated so that Philemon would have Onesimus back for good – as a brother.

1Pet 3:17 For it is better *to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will,* than for doing evil.

Suffering for doing good can be part of God's will for believers. This points to God using and even initiating suffering, in fulfilling his purposes for believers.

‡ **Samson's apparently improper intent was initiated by God for his own purpose:**

Judg 14:1-4 Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. ²Then he came up and told his father and mother, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife." ³But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, *that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?*" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes." ⁴His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines ruled over Israel.

Note: The plans of God's people are subject to his will

See also:

- *God has control over people's actions* . . . , p. 289
- . . . *Despite people's plans, their steps are directed by God,* p. 290

Acts 18:21 But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus.



Rom 1:9-10 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰always in my prayers, *asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.* 

Paul appears to pray that his request be in accordance with God's will or, similarly, be achieved through God's will. As such he acknowledges that his plans are subject to God's will. The case appears to be the same with the similar use of the phrase "by God's will" in 15:31-32 immediately below.

Rom 15:31-32 ...that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and *that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,* ³²*so that by God's will I may come to you with joy* and be refreshed in your company. 

1Cor 4:19 But *I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills,* and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. 

1Cor 16:7 For I do not want to see you now just in passing. *I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.* 

Heb 6:3 *And this we will do if God permits.* 

Acts 16:6-7 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, *having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.* ⁷*And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.* 

Contrary to Paul's plans, it was not God's will that Paul should preach the word in the province of Asia at this time, but rather Macedonia (cf. vv. 8-9). Later Paul did go to the province of Asia (cf. 19:9-10, 22, 26, 20:18-21). The gospel was likewise also made known in Bithynia (cf. 1Pet 1:1).

1Chr 13:2-3 And David said to all the assembly of Israel, "*If it seems good to you and from the LORD our God, let us send abroad to our brothers who remain in all the lands of Israel, as well as to the priests and Levites in the cities that have pasturelands, that they may be gathered to us.* ³*Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it^P in the days of Saul.*" 

^P Or *him*

Here David seems to be meaning that the appropriateness and/or success of his plan was dependent on it being God's will – "if it is the will of the LORD" (GNT, NIV, NLT).

✦ What God's people do is in his hands:

Ecdl 9:1a But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how *the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.* 



God has control over (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) that which is said to be "in the hand of God". Here this would appear to encompass what the righteous actually do, along with the success and effect of their deeds.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) God Works through His People (I): General

See also:

- *God has plans and purposes for his people*, p. 956
- *God's plans and purposes include work for his people to do*, p. 956

As mentioned earlier, God's plans and purposes for his people include tasks or work for his people to do for him. In fulfilling these plans and purposes, God works through his people.

Subsections

- God works through his people
- God works through his people in the spreading of the gospel
- God purifies his people, making them holy, to do his work . . .
- . . . God effectively makes them priests, to serve him
- God sends his people to do his work . . .
- . . . and God moves his people to do his work
- God works with his people, helping them
- God makes it possible for his people to do the work

God works through his people

See also:

- *God works through his people by the Holy Spirit . . .*, p. 839
- . . . *God speaks through his people by the Holy Spirit*, p. 840

Hos 12:10, 13 I spoke to the prophets; it was I who multiplied visions, and *through the prophets gave parables*. ... ¹³*By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded.*

2Ki 17:13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and *that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.*”

Neh 9:14 ... and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant.

1Sam 12:8 When Jacob went into Egypt, and the Egyptians oppressed them,^a *then your fathers cried out to the LORD and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.*

^a Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *and the Egyptians oppressed them*

Acts 9:33-34 There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. ³⁴*And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.” And immediately he rose.*

This indicates that Jesus Christ healed Aeneas through Peter.

1Cor 12:6 ... and *there are varieties of activities*, but it is the same *God who empowers them all in everyone.*

The context indicates that the “varieties of activities” probably refers to the diversity of work performed as a result of “varieties of gifts” (v. 4). The final phrase appears to be speaking of God doing these works through his people (cf. NLT, NCV).

2Cor 3:3 And you show that *you are a letter from Christ delivered by us*, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.^r

^r Greek *fleshly hearts*

Paul did not need letters of recommendation about himself to take to the Corinthians. For their own lives acted as such, having been written by Christ through Paul’s ministry.

2Cor 13:2-3 I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—³*since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me*. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.

Note that the “proof” (v. 3a) that Christ was speaking in or through Paul would be the authority Paul would exert, if necessary, on his return (v. 2).

1Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, *I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.*

Paul implies that in essence his hard work was not of himself, but God working in and/or through him.

Eph 4:6 ... one *God and Father of all, who is over all and through all* and in all.

The phrase “through all” may well mean “works through all” (GNT, cf. CEV), or at least encompass God working through “all”. Note that “all” could mean all things, rather than only all Christians.

Heb 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹*equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us^s that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

^s Some manuscripts *you*

Particularly in light of the context, the phrase “working in us” is probably referring to God working through his people (cf. CEV), but alternatively it could possibly be speaking of him working in them themselves, molding them.

2Pet 3:2 ... that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and *the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ...*

The “commandment of the Lord and Savior” probably refers to Jesus’ teachings as a whole, although some commentators think that the command to love one another may be primarily in view. It was given or made known through the apostles.

Eph 3:8-10 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^t God who created all things, ¹⁰*so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

^t Or *by*

Verse 10 speaks of God working through his people in primarily a passive sense, rather than in them actively doing his work. Paul is referring to God making known his wisdom



to the heavenly powers through the church, by the union of the Gentiles with Israel in the one church body (cf. v. 6).

God works through his people in the spreading of the gospel

See also:

- Eph 3:8-10 ↑

Acts 14:27 And when they arrived and gathered the church together, *they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.* 📖

Acts 15:12 And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as *they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.* 📖

The miracles were done in the context of spreading the gospel (cf. **Rom 15:18-19** ↓), validating Barnabas and Paul's message.

Rom 15:18-19 For I will not venture to speak of anything *except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ...* 📖

Rom 16:25 Now to *him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ...* 📖

In the first clause Paul may be meaning that God establishes people in the faith in part through believers proclaiming the gospel – “by means of my good news” (CEV; cf. NCV, NIV). Hence the inclusion of this verse here. However, alternatively he could be meaning that God establishes them in the faith “just as the Good News says” (NLT).

1Cor 1:21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, *it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.* 📖

2Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and *through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.* 📖

2Cor 5:18-20 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and *gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling^u the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them,*

and *entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* 📖

^u Or *God was in Christ, reconciling*

Gal 2:8 ... (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ... 📖

2Thes 2:14 *To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 📖

Titus 1:1-3 Paul, a servant^v of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began^w ³and *at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ...* 📖

^v Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

^w Greek *before times eternal*

God purifies his people, making them holy, to do his work . . .

See also:

- Ex 19:5-6 ↓; Ex 29:1a ↓; 1Pet 2:4-5, 9 ↓
- *Consecrate yourself to serve God . . .*, p. 1387
- *. . . Be holy and set apart*, p. 1388

Heb 9:13-14 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify^x for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴*how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^y conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* 📖

^x Or *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies*

^y Some manuscripts *your*

In v. 14, the phrase “purify our conscience” may have at least partly in view purification from sin, through Christ's death. With one's conscience no longer having past sin to deal with, it has been purified from sin and the need to perform “dead works” – quite possibly the ultimately useless rituals of the law – to attempt to address the defilement of sin. As such Christians are made ready to serve God.



Titus 2:14 ... who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and *to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* 

Jesus Christ purified us so that we would be his own – and as such be eager to do what is good, serving him.

Zeph 3:9 For at that time *I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.* 

The reference is to all nations in the messianic era, but this is still illustrative of the fact that in all eras God purifies and makes his people holy for them to serve him.

John 15:1-2 I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and *every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.* 

The term “prunes” alludes to cleansing (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV). With the reference to pruning suggesting discipline or trials, v. 2 points to God continuing to cleanse his people and make them holy throughout their life of service.

Luke 1:68-69, 74-75 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹and *has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,*  ... ⁷⁴*that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,* ⁷⁵*in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.* 

This appears to speak of how through Jesus Christ – the “horn of salvation” (v. 69) – God would make his people holy and righteous (v. 75), enabling them to serve him (v. 74). Jesus Christ’s sacrifice is the prime reason for God’s people being made holy and ready to serve God (cf. [Heb 9:13-14](#) ↑; [Titus 2:14](#) ↑; [John 17:17-19](#) ↓; [Rev 1:5b-6](#) ↓; [Rev 5:9-10](#) ↓).

John 17:17-19 *Sanctify them^z in the truth; your word is truth.* ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I consecrate myself,^a *that they also may be sanctified^b in truth.* 

^z Greek *Set them apart* (for holy service to God)

^a Or *I sanctify myself*; or *I set myself apart* (for holy service to God)

^b Greek *may be set apart* (for holy service to God)

As reflected in the text note, “sanctify” involves setting apart something or someone (from that which is not holy) for God’s holy service. By sanctifying his people, God in effect dedicates them to himself (cf. GNT) for his use. Note that in v. 19 Jesus appears to be speaking of totally dedicating or giving himself to God’s service (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT), alluding to his approaching sacrifice of his life, by which in turn his followers would be sanctified.

... God effectively makes them priests, to serve him

Ex 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶and *you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. 

The description of the Israelites as a kingdom of “priests” points to their dedication to God’s service – involving them being a “holy nation”. In addition it may well allude to God mediating salvation and other blessings through Israel to the other nations. Verse 6a appears to be in view in the NT passages below, which point to the church taking on Israel’s priestly role.

Ex 29:1a “Now *this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.* 

Consecrate means to set apart for God or dedicate as sacred to him. In the OT God consecrated those of the family of Aaron in particular – through the directions he gave to Moses (cf. vv. 1-37) – to serve him as priests. This has a wider application to God’s consecration of believers generally, with the NT speaking of believers as priests.

1Pet 2:4-5, 9 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵*you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*  ... ⁹But you are a chosen race, *a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* 

Christians form a priesthood, with each of them in a sense being a priest, serving God. As such they are to be holy and are to offer spiritual sacrifices (v. 5). Note that a further aspect of their priesthood is their ministry to and on behalf of others, with believers as priests having direct access to God.

Rev 1:5b-6 To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶and *made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father,* to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 

The phrase “priests to his God and Father” has the sense: “priests to serve his God and Father” (GNT, NIV; cf. CEV, NCV, NLT) – as does the similar phrase “priests to our God” below in 5:10.

Rev 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every



tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Isa 61:6 ... but you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast.



The renewed future Israel is in view here.

✦ **Believers as priests reigning with Jesus Christ in the “thousand years”:**

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

God sends his people to do his work . . .

See also:

- [Jonah 1:1-2](#)
- [God commands and directs his people in doing his work](#), p. 978

God and Jesus Christ send their people to do God’s work. God’s work of course includes work within our church, but often entails going out into the world (as reflected in most of the verses in this subsection). This involves furthering God’s purposes – such as spreading the gospel – in situations where we have contact with non-believers, like our workplace. It may even involve actually changing our circumstances, such as leaving our locality or even our country, so as to further God’s purposes amongst non-believers.

Ex 3:10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

Ezek 2:3-4 And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. ⁴The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’”

Matt 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^c the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

^c Or into

Luke 10:1-3, 9 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two^d others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. ²And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ... ⁹Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

^d Some manuscripts *seventy*; also verse 17

Note that in addition to sending them out, Jesus Christ also tells his followers to ask God to send out more workers (v. 3b).

John 4:38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.



This speaks of “reaping” people who are “ripe” or ready for belief and entry into God’s kingdom. For further comment on this verse, see [Insights regarding spreading the gospel](#), p. 1775.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

John 17:18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

John 20:21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

Acts 26:17-18 ... delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Rom 10:15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

Paul appears to have in mind God sending believers to preach the gospel. Parallels with this verse can be made with churches, on behalf of God, sending out missionaries. Note that Paul appears to assert that it is only because God has sent his people to spread the gospel – a commission given to all of them – that they can do so.



Acts 13:4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. 

... and God moves his people to do his work

Phil 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. 

Judg 13:24-25 And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him. ²⁵And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. 

This suggests that the Holy Spirit was stirring or moving Samson towards doing God's work.

1Sam 11:6-7 And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. ⁷He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man. 

Here Saul musters an army to defeat the Ammonites (cf. vv. 8-11).

Ezra 1:5 Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem. 

Neh 2:12a Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. 

Hag 1:14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, ... 

2Cor 8:16-17 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. ¹⁷For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going^e to you of his own accord. 

^e Or he went

Paul indicates that Titus's pro-active concern for the Corinthians was instigated by God.

‡ God may compel unwilling ones to do his work:

Jonah 1:1-4, 12; 3:1-3a Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil^f has come up before me." ³But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. ⁴But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.  ... ¹²He [Jonah] said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you."  ... ^{3:1}Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. 

^f The same Hebrew word can mean evil or disaster, depending on the context; so throughout Jonah

The LORD thwarted Jonah's efforts to flee (vv. 4, 12), as he tried to avoid carrying out the purpose to which God had called him (vv. 1-3). As a result of this and his experience in the great fish (cf. 1:17-2:10), when God called Jonah a second time to go to Nineveh, he obeyed (cf. 3:1-3a).

God works with his people, helping them

See also:

- *Your work for God will be productive*, p. 1398

1Sam 3:19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 

God was with Samuel not only as he grew up but also in his ministry. Moreover, God let none of Samuel's words fail, ensuring that everything Samuel prophesied would be fulfilled.

1Chr 15:26 And because God helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams. 

Neh 6:16 And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that *this work had been accomplished with the help of our God*. 



Mark 16:20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs. 

Acts 11:20-21 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^g also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. 

^g Or *Greeks* (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)

This and 16:13-14 below are examples of Jesus Christ working with his people, making their work fruitful.

Acts 16:13-14 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. 

Acts 26:22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ... 

2Cor 6:1 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 

Believers work together with God (cf. [1Thes 3:2 ↓](#)), reflecting the fact that God works with them.

1Thes 3:2 ... and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker^h in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ... 

^h Some manuscripts *servant*

God makes it possible for his people to do the work

See also:

- [c\) God Works through His People \(II\): Empowerment](#), p. 968

Ezra 5:3-5 At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?" ⁴Theyⁱ also asked them this: "What are the names of the men who are building this building?" ⁵But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the

report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it. 

ⁱ Septuagint, Syriac; Aramaic *We*

Note that Darius's reply not only sanctioned the continuation of the rebuilding of the temple (cf. 6:6-7), but even stipulated that the Jews' enemies were to aid them (cf. 6:8-10).

Ezra 7:6, 9 ... this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.  ... ⁹For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. 

That for which Ezra asked the king (v. 6) would have been for his journey to Jerusalem and his work there for the LORD. Quite probably the things requested would have been seen as necessary by Ezra for God's work. God made it possible for this work to be done partly through his "hand" in the king's granting of the request (v. 6), and seeing Ezra and those with him safely through their journey to Jerusalem (v. 9).

Isa 45:1-2 Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: ²"I will go before you and level the exalted places;^j I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ... 

^j Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint *level the mountains*

This speaks of God going before the Persian king Cyrus, breaking down any obstacles as he used Cyrus to do his work. This can be applied to God removing obstacles to make it possible for his people to do his work.

1Cor 16:8-9 But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. 

Quite likely Paul saw God or Jesus Christ behind the opening of this "door" of opportunity (cf. [2Cor 2:12 ↓](#); [Col 4:3 ↓](#)) for his ministry.

2Cor 2:12-13 When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, ¹³my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia. 

Col 4:3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— 



2Cor 9:8-11 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^k in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 📖

^k Or all contentment

Further to making it possible for his people to do good works, note that the last clause of v. 10 speaks of God making their good works productive, with their good works being the manifestation of their "righteousness" (cf. AMP).

✦ God was with Solomon to enable him to complete the work of building God's temple:

1Chr 28:20 Then David said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished. 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) God Works through His People (II): Empowerment

See also:

- *l. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ*, p. 538
- *b) Do the Work through God*, p. 1414

Subsections

- God empowers his people to do his work
- God equips his people for the work . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ gave authority to his disciples and other followers for God's work
- God strengthens his people for the work
- God helps and empowers them to do his work even if they feel inadequate . . .

- . . . God's power works through his people in their weaknesses
- God's power for his people is great
- Note: The empowerment to perform miracles

God empowers his people to do his work

See also:

- . . . *By grace God's people are enabled to do his work*, p. 828
- *The Holy Spirit empowers God's people to do God's work*, p. 849
- *Apart from God and Jesus Christ we can accomplish nothing*, p. 1414

Luke 24:46-49 ... and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." 📖

The power to be given (v. 49) – in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (cf. [Acts 1:8 ↓](#); [John 20:21-22 ↓](#)) – would be for witnessing (v. 48) to what Christ had accomplished (vv. 46-47).

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. 📖

2Cor 6:4, 7 ... but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 📖 ... ⁷by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ... 📖

The term "weapons of righteousness" (v. 7) is usually understood as a reference to the spiritual power and protection given by a life of righteousness and integrity – "right living" (NCV™, cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). However some see it as possibly referring to spiritual "weapons" – of no small power – associated with the righteousness believers have in God's sight. These include God's word, prayer and faith.

1Cor 12:6 ... and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 📖

Eph 3:7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 📖



It is more apparent in the Greek that the role of God's power in Paul's ministry was an ongoing one (cf. BKC).

Rev 11:3-6 *And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.*⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵*And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes.* If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. ⁶*They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.* ☞

The "two witnesses" of the last days are possibly representative of the faithful community of believers as a whole or perhaps two actual individuals. The "two olive trees and the two lampstands" allude to Joshua (the high priest) and Zerubbabel (the governor or prince) in the vision of Zechariah 4. As such a number of commentators understand this verse to be pointing to the priestly and royal functions of the church – along with its empowerment by God for such functions/work.

Luke 9:1-2 *And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.* ☞

God equips his people for the work . . .

See also:

- *b) God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit*, p. 837
- *e) Spiritual Gifts*, p. 1430

Ex 28:3 *You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood.* ☞

Ex 36:1 *"Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the LORD has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded."* ☞

Matt 4:19 *And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."* ☞

Jesus said he would teach them (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT) how to "catch" people, for God's kingdom.

Luke 19:12-13 *He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. ¹³Calling ten of his servants,¹ he gave them ten minas,^m and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.'* ☞

¹ Greek *bondservants*; also verse 15

^m A *mina* was about three months' wages for a laborer

This is from a parable that is often applied to the need to put to work the abilities and resources Christ has given us, making good use of them – primarily for God's kingdom. The parallel account in Matthew's gospel (cf. Matt 25:14-30) uses the term "talents" instead of "minas". It is due to this parable that "talent" is now used to denote an ability or gift.

John 20:21-22 *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.* ☞

Verse 22 possibly anticipates the coming of the Holy Spirit later at Pentecost; some commentators see it as a partial or limited bestowal of the Spirit. As spoken of in the previous subsection, the giving of the Spirit is to empower believers for doing God's work. It likewise reflects that God and Jesus Christ equip their people for the work. Note that v. 21b indicates that the giving of the Spirit (v. 22) is in the context of doing God's work.

2Cor 3:5-6 *Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us competentⁿ to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.* ☞

ⁿ Or *sufficient*

Eph 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* ☞

Eph 4:11-12 *And he [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^o and teachers,^p ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ...* ☞

^o Or *pastors*

^p Or *the shepherd-teachers*

God's people are given spiritual gifts for various ministries, preparing them for the work of building up the body of Christ.

1Cor 1:4-7 *I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶even as the testimony about Christ was*



confirmed among you— ⁷*so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...* 

As with Ephesians 4:11-12 above, this speaks of God equipping church members with spiritual gifts, to build up God's church.

Phil 2:13 ... for it is *God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* 

This verse indicates that as well as moving them to want to do his will, God also works in his people so that they are "able" (CEV, GNT, NCV, cf. NLT, NRSV) to act according to his will.

Philem 1:6 ... and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of *every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.*[¶] 

¶ Or for Christ's service

With the expression "every good thing that is in us" Paul may speaking at least partially of things we have been equipped with for serving Christ (cf. text note).

Heb 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹*equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us^r that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.* 

^r Some manuscripts *you*

As noted earlier, the clause "working in us that which is pleasing in his sight" (v. 21) could be speaking of God working in believers, possibly in molding them for his work, continuing the theme of the preceding clause.

2Pet 1:3 *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to^s his own glory and excellence,^t ...* 

^s Or *by*

^t Or *virtue*

The phrase "life and godliness" is not referring specifically to doing God's work, but presumably is inclusive of it.

... Jesus Christ gave authority to his disciples and other followers for God's work

Jesus is recorded as giving some of his followers spiritual authority. This authority included: authority over evil spiritual forces; and authority over others in the kingdom, so as to lead them. To what extent the authority spoken of in some of the following passages is given to believers today is open

to debate. It is likely that the authority spoken of in some cases is more applicable to believers with certain gifts or to leaders – rather than to believers generally.

Matt 10:1 *And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.* 

Matt 16:18-19 *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^u I will build my church, and the gates of hell^v shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^w in heaven.* 

^u The Greek words for *Peter* and *rock* sound similar

^v Greek *the gates of Hades*

^w Or *shall have been bound . . . shall have been loosed*

The "keys of the kingdom of heaven" may primarily refer to Peter's authority amongst God's people – as the "rock" on which the church would be built (v. 18). As such it indicates that Peter would have the authority to decide what would be "bound" or "loosed" – prohibited or permitted (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) – in the kingdom. However, the alternative rendering in the text note indicates that the phrase may be speaking of acting according to what has already been determined in heaven (cf. comment on [John 20:23](#) ↓). Note that "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" may more specifically refer to authority in regard to people entering into the kingdom. This could have partly in view authoritatively proclaiming the gospel, pronouncing God's acceptance or his condemnation.

Matt 18:18-20 *Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^x in heaven. ¹⁹Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.* 

^x Or *shall have been bound . . . shall have been loosed*

In v. 18, authority similar to that given to Peter (cf. [Matt 16:19](#) ↑) is extended to the other disciples (cf. [John 20:23](#) ↓) with the context suggesting that it is applicable to all leaders or groups of believers. Note that church discipline may primarily be in view (cf. vv. 15-17), which may also be the case in 16:18-19 above. In v. 19, Jesus speaks of authority for even small groups of believers in prayer, based on them being his followers and acting on his authority, as alluded to in v. 20.

Luke 10:10-12, 19 *But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.  ... ¹⁹Behold, I have given you*



authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 

Here Jesus is addressing seventy-two of his followers he was sending out to places where he was about to go (cf. v. 1). Verses 10-12 indicate that Jesus gave them the authority to pronounce God's condemnation. In v. 19, "serpents and scorpions" probably is figurative for demons or evil spirits (cf. vv. 17, 20; [Matt 10:1](#) ↑). The "enemy" (v. 19) is Satan.

John 20:23 *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.* 

Jesus said this in the context of sending his disciples into the world to spread the gospel and empowering them with the Holy Spirit (cf. [vv. 21-22](#) ↑). It most likely means that in doing so they would pronounce the forgiveness of sins of: those who would respond and thus be forgiven by God (cf. NASB and text note).

2Cor 13:10 For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come *I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.* 

This – and quite possibly 1 Thessalonians 4:2 below – speaks of Jesus Christ granting authority after his mission. As such it suggests that Jesus Christ continues to grant authority to church leaders.

1Thes 4:2 For you know what *instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.* 

Paul appears to refer to giving instructions "by the authority of the Lord Jesus" (GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV; cf. AMP, NLT).

‡ **The authority to rule that Jesus Christ will give his people at the end of the age:**

Rev 2:26-27 *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.* 

The quote in v. 27 is from Psalm 2 and is messianic. Its use here implies that Jesus Christ's followers will play a part in his crushing of evil forces and enforcement of his authority and rule (cf. Rev 19:11-21).

God strengthens his people for the work

Jer 1:17-18 But you, dress yourself for work;^y *arise, and say to them everything that I command you.* Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. ¹⁸*And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze*

walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. 

^y Hebrew *gird up your loins*

Here and below in Ezekiel 3:4, 7-9 God speaks of toughening or strengthening his prophets for their arduous work.

Ezek 3:4, 7-9 And he said to me, "Son of man, *go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them.*  ... ⁷But the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. ⁸*Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and your forehead as hard as their foreheads.* ⁹*Like emery harder than flint have I made your forehead.* Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house." 

Phil 4:13 *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* 

Jesus Christ strengthens believers to do everything in God's will for them.

2Thes 2:16-17 Now *may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.* 

Paul prays that Jesus Christ and God would encourage and "strengthen" (AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NRSV) the Thessalonians in every good thing that they do and say, inclusive of all that they do in their work for God.

1Tim 1:12 *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ...* 

Presumably Paul has in mind Jesus Christ giving him strength primarily for "his service".

2Tim 4:17 *But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.* So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 

God helps and empowers them to do his work even if they feel inadequate . . .

Ex 4:10-16 But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." ¹¹Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"



¹²Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”¹³But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.”¹⁴Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. ¹⁶He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. 

God provided help for apprehensive Moses in his forthcoming work, in the form of his brother Aaron. God would in fact help both of them speak (vv. 12, 15-16) and would teach Moses what to say and do (vv. 12, 15). Note that the fact that Aaron was already on the way to meet Moses (v. 14b) suggests that God already had planned to use Aaron to help Moses.

Judg 6:14-16 And the LORD^z turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?”¹⁵And he said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”¹⁶And the LORD said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.” 

^z Septuagint the angel of the LORD; also verse 16

The expression “this might of yours” (v. 14) appears to refer to the strength Gideon had, or would have, due to God being with him – as reflected by v. 16 (cf. v. 12) – in spite his own perceived inadequacy (v. 15).

Isa 41:14-16 Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁵Behold, I make of you a threshing sledge, new, sharp, and having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff; ¹⁶you shall winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them. And you shall rejoice in the LORD; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory. 

This is probably referring to God using Israel as his instrument for bringing judgment on the nations – despite Israel seeing itself as weak and insignificant, as v. 14 appears to suggest.

Jer 1:4-10 Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” ⁶Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” ⁷But the LORD said

to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.” ⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” 

To signify that he had given (or would give) Jeremiah his words to speak – and as part of his appointing and empowering of Jeremiah – God touched Jeremiah’s mouth (v. 9). This may have occurred in a vision; some think it actually took place.

Jer 15:18-20 Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail? ¹⁹Therefore thus says the LORD: “If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them. ²⁰And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD. 

Here Jeremiah is feeling more discouraged rather than simply inadequate. Jeremiah’s discouragement (v. 18) stemmed not so much from a lack of self-confidence but pain and disillusionment with both his work and God. Even so God promised Jeremiah that if he repented of his attitude towards him (v. 18b), he would strengthen Jeremiah to serve him. Note that “you shall stand before me” (v. 19a) appears to be a reference to serving God (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

2Tim 1:6-8 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ... 

Timothy apparently was timid. Paul assured him that in contrast God gives his people “a spirit of power” (v. 7), empowering them to testify to the gospel of Jesus Christ “by the power of God” (v. 8).



... God's power works through his people in their weaknesses

See also:

- *The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power*, p. 1770

God's and Jesus Christ's power works through their people in their weaknesses, often even because of the weaknesses, showing that what is accomplished has been by divine power.

2Cor 4:7-11 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ☞

In v. 7, Paul likens the message of the gospel being entrusted to him in his human frailty or weakness, to treasure being placed in jars of clay. In the first part of both v. 10 and v. 11, Paul alludes to the sufferings he undergoes for Jesus' sake (vv. 8-9) – in which he is vulnerable and presumably weakened. But in the second part of both verses he then speaks of how such suffering for Jesus' sake means that Jesus' resurrection life, which entails God's power, is revealed in Paul's weak mortal body – one of the "jars of clay" (v. 7) – as he does God's work.

2Cor 12:7-10 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,^a a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. ☞

^a Or *hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited*

Having weaknesses and acknowledging them, makes us more open to Jesus Christ's power resting on us, so as to work through us (cf. NLT).

2Cor 13:3-4 ... since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. ⁴For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. ☞

The phrase "crucified in weakness" (v. 4a) is probably a reference either to: Jesus' humanity; or his submissiveness and/or meekness. In Christ, Paul may similarly be "weak", but by God's power he lives with Christ – the implication being that he shares in God's power that Christ lives by, with God's power working through him to serve others.

Heb 11:32-34 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ☞

In their relative weakness, God strengthened these people to enact his will, routing enemy forces (cf. **Judg 7:7, 22 ↓; 1Ki 20:27-29 ↓**).

Judg 7:2, 7, 22 The LORD said to Gideon, "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' ☞ ... ⁷And the LORD said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home." ☞ ... ²²When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man's [Midianite's] sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah,^b as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. ☞

^b Some Hebrew manuscripts *Zeredah*

God used an army of a mere three hundred men to defeat the mighty Midianite army of many thousands (vv. 7, 22). God did this rather than use the much larger original Israelite army, so as to show that it was not the Israelites themselves but God who had saved them (v. 1).

1Ki 20:27-29 And the people of Israel were mustered and were provisioned and went against them. The people of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Syrians filled the country. ²⁸And a man of God came near and said to the king of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because the Syrians have said, "The LORD is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys," therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" ²⁹And they encamped opposite one another seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle was joined. And the



people of Israel struck down of the Syrians 100,000 foot soldiers in one day. 

Ps 8:2 *Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.* 

This may be speaking of praise from even the young amongst God's people telling of or evidencing his strength, silencing his enemies. Alternatively it may mean that through the adoration of children God "founded a bulwark" (NRSV) against his enemies, silencing them. Although the precise train of thought may not be clear, this nevertheless clearly is illustrating that God uses the weak to do powerful things.

‡ **God has chosen those who appear as foolish and lowly in manifesting his salvation:**

1Cor 1:26-29 For consider your calling, brothers: *not many of you were wise according to worldly standards,^c not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.* ²⁷*But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;* ²⁸*God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,* ²⁹*so that no human being^d might boast in the presence of God.* 

^c Greek *according to the flesh*

^d Greek *no flesh*

God has chosen those who appear as foolish, weak and lowly to receive his salvation (v. 26), demonstrating through them that his salvation does not depend on human wisdom, strength or importance. In so doing God negates the significance of those who are wise, strong and important in the eyes of the world (vv. 27-29).

God's power for his people is great

See also:

- **b) God's Power (I): Ultimate Power**, p. 32

In speaking of God's power for believers, not all the references in this subsection are referring exclusively to doing God's work (i.e. Eph 1:18-20; 3:20; Phil 3:10a; 4:13). However, they are applicable to it.

Luke 10:19 *Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.* 

As commented earlier, the "serpents and scorpions" are probably allusions to evil forces, such as evil spirits.

John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do*, because I am going to the Father. 

For comment, see the comment on **John 14:12-14** – under *If we have faith nothing will be impossible*, p. 1098.

Acts 4:33 *And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*, and great grace was upon them all. 

2Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that *the surpassing power belongs to God* and not to us. 

2Cor 10:4-5 *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.* ⁵*We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ...* 

Paul used such weapons as prayer, faith and the proclamation of the gospel – weapons which have God's divine power. This divine power available to believers enables them to demolish whatever resists or opposes the knowledge of God (v. 5a), including: "strongholds" (v. 4) – such as opposing arguments; and "every proud obstacle" (GNT, NRSV, cf. CEV, NCV) – such as ungodly attitudes. In doing so they bring people's thoughts into conformity with Christ's will (v. 5b).

Eph 1:18-23 ... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,¹⁹and what is *the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might* ²⁰*that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,* ²¹*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* ²²*And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,* ²³*which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.* 

Verse 2 indicates that Jesus Christ has authority over all things "for the benefit of the church" (NLT, cf. CEV). This implies that his supreme power and authority (vv. 20b-21) – like God's immeasurably great power for us who believe (v. 19a) – is a very significant force aiding members of the church, his body (v. 23), as they seek to carry out God's will.

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ...* 



One can infer from this that God's immeasurable power is with believers in their service of him.

Phil 3:10 ... that I may know him and *the power of his resurrection*, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ... 

The power of Christ's resurrection is available to God's people. This most likely refers to God's power that raised Christ from the dead (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT; [Eph 1:19-21 ↑](#)), although some think that it refers to the power of the resurrected Christ.

Phil 4:13 *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* 

Col 1:28-29 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹*For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* 

2Sam 23:9-12 And next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar the son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel withdrew. ¹⁰*He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clung to the sword. And the LORD brought about a great victory that day*, and the men returned after him only to strip the slain. ¹¹And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines. ¹²*But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD worked a great victory.* 

One could draw a parallel between the great physical power that these men displayed from God and the great spiritual power that believers have from God to use.

✦ God's people experience the powers of the coming age:

Heb 6:5 ... and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ... 

In light of the Greek from which it is translated, "powers" may largely have miracles in view; certainly the power is supernatural. (Note that this is actually referring to people who have fallen away from God – who like other believers have "tasted" such things.)

Note: The empowerment to perform miracles

See also:

- [Heb 6:5 ↑](#)
- [God and Jesus Christ at times confirm the gospel message by miracles . . . , p. 1772](#)

Opinions differ as to what extent miracles are performed by believers today. One school of thought is that they did not continue after the apostolic period, being "signs of a true apostle" ([2Cor 12:12 ↓](#)). Supporters of this view point out that miracles do not occur consistently throughout the Bible, being prominent only at certain times and with only a few men recorded as having performed multiple miracles – notably Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus. Opponents of this view point out that Paul lists healing and working of miracles as spiritual gifts (cf. [1Cor 12:9-10, 28-30](#)) and claim that miracles are performed by some Christians today, citing examples.

Deut 34:10-12 And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like *Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face*, ¹¹*none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land*, ¹²*and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.* 

Similarly Psalms 105:27 says of Moses and Aaron: "They performed his signs among them and miracles in the land of Ham."

2Ki 5:10, 14 And *Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean."*  ... ¹⁴*So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.* 

There were a number of other miraculous signs that God performed through Elisha and his predecessor Elijah, not least of which were the restoration to life of two boys (cf. [1Ki 17:21-22](#); [2Ki 4:32-35](#); [God has power over death, to raise the dead](#), p. 256; and [God can perform miracles of nature . . . , p. 279](#)). Likewise there are a number of other verses in addition to the following ones that tell of miracles performed by the apostles.

Matt 10:1, 8 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.  ... ⁸*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,^e cast out demons.* You received without paying; give without pay. 



^e *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Acts 5:12a, 15-16 *Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles.*

☞ ... ¹⁵so that they [people] even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. ☞

Acts 6:8 *And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.* ☞

Acts 9:40 But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ☞

Acts 19:11-12 *And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.* ☞

Acts 20:9-10, 12 *And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ☞ ... ¹²And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.* ☞

1Cor 12:28-29 *And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?* ☞

2Cor 12:12 *The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.* ☞

✦ **John the Baptist did not perform any miraculous signs:**

John 10:41 *And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." ☞*

Not all great people of faith – not even all great prophets – perform miracles.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God Guides His People

See also:

- *d) Being Guided by God*, p. 1404

The Bible speaks of God guiding his people in fulfilling his plans and purposes for them. More specifically, it tells of God guiding them in: living righteous lives; doing his work; and making choices in other matters. Many of the following verses do not clearly indicate which of these cases is in view; such general verses are often applicable to all these cases. (See also the introductory comments on *God commands and directs his people in doing his work*, p. 978, and *d) Being Guided by God*, p. 1404.)

Subsections

- [God guides his people . . .](#)
- [. . . God leads his people](#)
- [God guides his people always](#)
- [God guides his people in difficult circumstances](#)
- [God commands and directs his people in doing his work](#)
- [Examples of divine guidance through dreams and visions](#)

God guides his people . . .

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit leads God's people*, p. 848
- *. . . and God moves his people to do his work*, p. 966

Ps 31:3 *For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; ... ☞*

Ps 73:24 *You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.* ☞

Ex 15:13 *You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.* ☞

Note that the term "your holy abode" could refer to the promised land (cf. GNT). But more likely the place where



God's "abode" would be – ultimately the temple on Mount Zion (cf. v. 17) – is in view in particular.

Isa 49:10 ... they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for *he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.* 

Deut 1:32-33 Yet in spite of this word you did not believe *the LORD your God, ³³who went before you in the way to seek you out a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night and in the cloud by day, to show you by what way you should go.* 

God's guidance of Israel in the desert by a fire at night and a cloud during the day, is referred to in a number of verses in the following subsections (cf. [Neh 9:12](#) ↴).

Ps 25:12 Who is the man who fears the LORD? *Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.* 

Ps 32:8 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.* 

Ps 37:23 *The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way; ...* 

This is quite possibly a reference to God's guidance in making one's way secure. Note, however, that it could instead less specifically be referring to God's care (which itself involves guidance).

Ps 107:30 Then they were glad that the waters^f were quiet, and *he brought them to their desired haven.* 

^f Hebrew *they*

Prov 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and *he will make straight your paths.* 

The phrase "make straight your paths" seems to be speaking either of: directing our ways so that we will walk on a straight path (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT, NKJV); or straightening the path before us to allow or enable us to take the right way (cf. CEV). Possibly aspects of both interpretations are involved.

... God leads his people

Gen 24:48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD and blessed *the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way^g to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.* 

^g Or *faithfully*

Neh 9:12 *By a pillar of cloud you led them in the day, and by a pillar of fire in the night to light for them the way in which they should go.* 

Ps 23:2-3 He makes me lie down in green pastures. *He leads me beside still waters.*^h ³He restores my soul. *He leads me in paths of righteousnessⁱ for his name's sake.* 

^h Hebrew *beside waters of rest*

ⁱ Or *in right paths*

The term "still waters" (v. 2b) alludes to places of rest (cf. AMP, NRSV text note).

Ps 77:20 *You led your people like a flock* by the hand of Moses and Aaron. 

Ps 107:7 *He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.* 

Isa 40:11 He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and *gently lead those that are with young.* 

Isa 48:17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, *who leads you in the way you should go.*" 

The messianic servant is the one who is spoken of here as leading and guiding the people, satisfying their needs.

Hos 11:4 *I led them with cords of kindness,^j with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.* 

^j Or *humaneness; Hebrew man*

John 10:3-5 To him the gatekeeper opens. *The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.* ⁴When he has brought out all his own, *he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.* ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. 

Jesus was applying this analogy to himself – the good shepherd of his people, the "sheep". For further comment see [e\) Epilogue: Follow Jesus Christ](#), p. 1187.

2Chr 13:12a Behold, *God is with us at our head*, and his priests with their battle trumpets to sound the call to battle against you. 

This points to God being the people's leader – "our leader" (GNT, NIV, NLT).

✚ **The Lord directs believers to God's love and Christ's steadfastness:**

2Thes 3:5 *May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.* 



This appears to be speaking of Jesus Christ directing believers into: an "ever deeper understanding" (NLT; cf. GNT) of God's love, so as to love with his love (cf. CEV); and either the same perseverance as Christ showed (cf. CEV) or the perseverance that comes from him (cf. GNT, NLT).

God guides his people always

Isa 58:11 And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. 

Ps 48:14 ... that this is God, our God forever and ever. *He will guide us forever.*^k 

^k Septuagint; another reading is (compare Jerome, Syriac) *He will guide us beyond death*

Ex 13:21-22 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²²The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. 

This and Nehemiah 9:19 below show that God continually guided the Israelites in their desert journey. For they say that: God guided them day and night; and the source/s of guidance "did not depart from before the people" (v. 20).

Neh 9:19 ... you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. *The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go.* 

✦ God guides his people no matter where they are:

Ps 139:9-10 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰*even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.* 

In conjunction with guiding his people at all times, God guides them in all places.

God guides his people in difficult circumstances

See also:

- [Neh 9:19](#) 

Deut 8:15 ... [God] *who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, ...* 

Ps 78:52-54 *Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.* ⁵³*He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.* ⁵⁴*And he brought them to his holy land, to the mountain which his right hand had won.* 

Ps 142:3 *When my spirit faints within me, you know my way!* In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. 

The phrase "know my way" appears to most likely be referring to God knowing and guiding David in the way he should go (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), although it could instead be speaking of God knowing what David was going through (cf. NIV).

Isa 42:16 *And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground.* These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. 

✦ God promised to guide his wayward people after punishing them:

Isa 30:20-21 *And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher.* ²¹*And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.* 

God commands and directs his people in doing his work

See also:

- [The Holy Spirit directs God's people in doing God's work](#), p. 848

God's command and direction of Moses and other OT people in doing his work, appears to have been more readily discernible than is usually the case for believers today. Nevertheless such examples of God's guidance in the OT serve to demonstrate that God does guide his people in doing his work. The NT indicates that God generally guides believers in the present age through the Holy Spirit.

Ex 7:2, 6 *You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land.*  ... ⁶*Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them.* 



Ex 18:21-23 Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²²And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. ²³*If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.* 

Ex 31:6, 11b And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, *that they may make all that I have commanded you:*  ... ¹¹ ... *According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do.* 

Ex 36:1 “Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the LORD has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work *in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded.*” 

Deut 4:14 *And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess.* 

1Sam 16:3 And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and *I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.* 

1Chr 14:16 *And David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer.* 

1Chr 28:19 *“All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan.”* 

David wrote down and passed on to Solomon the plans for the temple that God had given him.

Jer 26:8 And when *Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people*, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die!” 

Acts 7:44 Our fathers had *the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen.* 

Acts 10:33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God *to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.* 

Acts 10:42 *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.* 

Acts 13:47 For *so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”* 

1Thes 3:11 *Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ...* 

† An angel of the Lord directed Philip in doing God’s work:

Acts 8:26-28 *Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south¹ to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”* This is a desert place. ²⁷And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 

¹ Or go at about noon

Philip subsequently explained to the Ethiopian what he was reading and told him the gospel, leading to his conversion (vv. 29-39).

Examples of divine guidance through dreams and visions

Gen 46:2-3 *And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.”* And he said, “Here am I.” ³Then he said, “I am God, the God of your father. *Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.*” 

Matt 2:12-13, 19-20 *And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they [wise men] departed to their own country by another way.* ¹³Now when they had departed, behold, *an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”*  ... ¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, *an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.”* 



Acts 9:10-11 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. *The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."* ¹¹And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ...



Acts 16:9-10 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."¹⁰And when Paul^m had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. 

^mGreek he

Acts 18:9-11 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."¹¹And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.



Acts 22:17-18 When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, *I fell into a trance* ¹⁸and saw him [Christ] saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' 

Acts 26:15-19 And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' ¹⁹"Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ... 

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. God's Plans for Israel

See also:

- f) *Jesus Christ's Universal Rule*, p. 717

Large portions of the writings of the OT prophets speak of a wonderful, future renewal of Israel by God. There are differences of opinion as to what degree these are literal and physical, as opposed to figurative or spiritual.

If they are largely meant to be understood literally, then they speak of the actual Israel and Jerusalem (or Zion), most likely immediately preceding and during the thousand years or Millennium spoken of in Revelation 20:1-7 (cf. *Prelude: The thousand years*, p. 718). As such the time of a renewed Israel would largely correspond with that of a physical universal rule of Jesus Christ and would precede the final judgment.

If instead the prophecies are basically figurative and spiritual, then they are more likely to be referring to all believers – the “new” Israel (cf. *Gentiles have been included in the true “Israel” . . .*, p. 624; . . . *God's people are now of the heavenly Jerusalem*, p. 624). As such they would be portraying God's people and kingdom following Jesus Christ's mission and/or quite possibly anticipating heaven or the new Jerusalem (cf. *Note: The new Jerusalem is linked with the renewed Jerusalem prophesied in the OT . . .*, p. 731; . . . *This association is seen in the descriptions of the two cities*, p. 732).

In reading the following sections, bear in mind that some prophecies are understood to be progressively fulfilled throughout history, culminating in a final fulfillment at the end of the age. For example a number of the passages refer initially to the Jew's return after the Babylonian exile, but also appear to have a future era in view. Many probably also have an application to the experience of God's people in all periods. As such – and with the hope that they provide for the future – they are a great source of encouragement to all believers.

Note that while the subheadings speak of Israel, many of the verses refer to Jerusalem in particular.

a) Return to the Land

Some commentators see a fulfillment of some of the prophecies in this and the following subsection in the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948.

Subsections

- God will gather the remnant of exiled Israel from the nations and bring them home
- God will aid them on the journey home and the nations also will assist
- Judah and Israel will be reunited in the land – and share in God's blessings
- The people of Israel will possess the land – forever

God will gather the remnant of exiled Israel from the nations and bring them home

See also:

- Mic 2:12 ↴; Isa 11:11, 16 ↴

Isa 27:12-13 *In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the LORD will thresh out the grain, and you will be gleaned one by one, O people of Israel. ¹³And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.* ☞

Isa 43:5-7 *Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. ⁶I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, ⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.* ☞

Jer 23:3, 7-8 *Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ☞ ... ⁷“Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when they shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ ⁸but ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he^a had driven them.’ Then they shall dwell in their own land.” ☞*

^a Septuagint; Hebrew I

Jer 29:14 *I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.* ☞



Jer 31:8-11, 16-17 Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. ⁹With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. ¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.' ¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ... ¹⁶Thus says the LORD: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country. ...

The "pleas for mercy" (v. 9) appears to refer to the people "pouring out prayers [for the future]" (AMP) as God leads them back home.

Ezek 34:11-13, 16 For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ... ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. ^bI will feed them in justice. ...

^b Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate *I will watch over*

Ezek 36:24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ...

Ezek 37:1, 5, 10-12, 14 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley;^c it was full of bones. ... ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath^d to enter you, and you shall live. ... ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. ¹¹Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' ¹²Therefore

prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ... ¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD. ...

^c Or plain; also verse 2

^d Or spirit; also verses 6, 9, 10

With the Israelites scattered throughout distant lands, as a nation Israel was like the dry bones, completely devoid of life and without any apparent future hope (v. 11). But just as the bones in this vision came back to life (v. 10), God would give Israel life, bringing the people back to the land of Israel (v. 12) – and putting his Spirit in them (v. 14). As well as referring to Israel's restoration after the Babylonian exile, this also appears to have in view Israel's restoration in the last days, particularly with the eschatological promises in the remainder of Ezekiel 37.

Ezek 39:28 Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. ...

Mic 4:6-7 In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; ⁷and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore. ...

God will aid them on the journey home and the nations also will assist

See also:

▪ Jer 31:9b ↑

Mic 2:12-13 I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men. ¹³He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king passes on before them, the LORD at their head. ...

The one "who opens the breach" – "who breaks open the way" (NIV®) – enabling the people to return, may well be the Messiah (cf. AMP).

Zec 10:8-12 "I will whistle for them and gather them in, for I have redeemed them, and they shall be as many as they were before. ⁹Though I scattered them among the nations, yet in



far countries they shall remember me, and with their children they shall live and return. ¹⁰I will bring them home from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria, and I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon, till there is no room for them. ¹¹He shall pass through the sea of troubles and strike down the waves of the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up. The pride of Assyria shall be laid low, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart. ¹²I will make them strong in the LORD, and they shall walk in his name," declares the LORD. 

Verses 11-12 appear to speak of God enabling them to return, by removing obstacles and opposition (v. 11) and strengthening them (v. 12).

Isa 11:11-12, 15-16 In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush,^e from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. ¹²He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.  ... ¹⁵And the LORD will utterly destroy^f the tongue of the Sea of Egypt, and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching breath,^g and strike it into seven channels, and he will lead people across in sandals. ¹⁶And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that remains of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt. 

^e Probably Nubia

^f Hebrew devote to destruction

^g Or wind

The phrase "a second time" (v. 11) most likely has the Exodus from Egypt in view as the first time. The raising of "a signal for the nations" (v. 12) suggests a giving of a signal to inform the nations of what he is doing, possibly to ensure that they do not hinder the exiles' return and perhaps even to indicate that they are to assist (cf. [Isa 49:22](#) ↓). In v.15, "the tongue of the Sea of Egypt" is the gulf of the Red Sea.

Isa 14:1-2a For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and sojourners will join them and will attach themselves to the house of Jacob. ²And the peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the LORD's land as male and female slaves. 

Verse 2a appears to speak of the nations escorting the Israelites back to the land of Israel (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Isa 49:8-12, 18, 21-22 Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to

establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, ⁹saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; ¹⁰they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. ¹¹And I will make all my mountains a road, and my highways shall be raised up. ¹²Behold, these shall come from afar, and behold, these from the north and from the west,^h and these from the land of Syene."ⁱ  ... [God, to Zion:] ¹⁸Lift up your eyes around and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, declares the LORD, you shall put them all on as an ornament; you shall bind them on as a bride does.  ... ²¹Then you will say in your heart: 'Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?'" ²²Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. 

^h Hebrew from the sea

ⁱ Dead Sea Scroll; Masoretic Text *Sinim*

The reference to the messianic servant (v. 8) makes this passage more likely to be primarily looking forward to a still future return to Israel.

Isa 66:20 And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. 

This appears to be speaking of people of other nations bringing the exiled Israelites home.

Judah and Israel will be reunited in the land – and share in God's blessings

The following passages are applicable to the unity of all God's people – which may be partially in view in at least some.

Isa 11:12-14 He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. ¹³The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. ¹⁴But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder



the people of the east. They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them. 

Verse 14 depicts reunited Judah and Israel acting in unity, and illustrates their rising prominence.

Jer 3:18 *In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage.* 

Jer 23:5-6 Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶*In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely.* And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness." 

The implication is that this King – the Messiah – will be king over both Judah and Israel (v. 6a), pointing to them being united as a single kingdom.

Ezek 37:16-22 Son of man, take a stickⁱ and write on it, 'For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.' ¹⁷*And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand.* ¹⁸*And when your people say to you, 'Will you not tell us what you mean by these?'* ¹⁹*say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah,^k and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand.* ²⁰*When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes,* ²¹*then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land.* ²²*And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.* 

ⁱ Or *one piece of wood*; also verses 17, 19, 20

^k Hebrew *And I will place them on it, the stick of Judah*

Hos 1:11 *And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.* 

Isa 65:9 *I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and from Judah possessors of my mountains; my chosen shall possess it, and my servants shall dwell there.* 

Here "Jacob" is used to denote the northern kingdom of Israel. Note that this and the following references do not specifically speak of Judah and Israel being reunited. However, they do point to it by speaking of the two of them sharing together in God's blessings.

Jer 31:27-28 *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.* ²⁸*And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD.* 

Jer 33:7-8 *I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first.* ⁸*I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.* 

Zec 8:13 *And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing.* Fear not, but let your hands be strong. 

Note that in the following chapter of Zechariah, Judah and Ephraim are portrayed as being used together by God against enemies – "For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword." (9:13)

Zec 10:6 *I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back because I have compassion on them, and they shall be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.* 

✦ The new covenant with both Israel and Judah:

Jer 31:31-34 *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,* ³²*not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.* ³³*But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* ³⁴*And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."* 



Initially both "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (v. 31) are referred to and then shortly afterwards only "the house of Israel" (v. 33) is used, quite possibly pointing to the unity or oneness that will be. Note that the NT teaches that this new covenant (cf. Heb 8:8-12) has come into being through Jesus Christ's mission, with his death. It would appear that it will have a more complete fulfillment in the renewed Israel of the end times.

The people of Israel will possess the land – forever

See also:

- *Israel will have peace – and no fear – forever . . .*, p. 998
- *. . . Never again will Israel be invaded or destroyed*, p. 999
- *God will dwell in Jerusalem, living among his people forever*, p. 1008

Ps 69:35-36 For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and *people shall dwell there and possess it; ³⁶the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it.*

Jer 30:3 For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and *I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.*

Ezek 11:17 Therefore say, "Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and *I will give you the land of Israel.*"

Obad 1:17, 19-21 But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy, and *the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.* *... ¹⁹Those of the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau, and those of the Shephelah shall possess the land of the Philistines; they shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria, and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. ²⁰The exiles of this host of the people of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the Negeb. ²¹Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.*

The people of Israel – including those who were exiles (v. 20) – will reclaim all of the land, to its full extent.

Isa 60:21 Your people shall all be righteous; *they shall possess the land forever*, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.¹

¹ Or *that I might display my beauty*

Ezek 36:8, 12 But *you, O mountains of Israel*, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home. *... ¹²I will let people walk on you, even my people Israel. And they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and you shall no longer bereave them of children.*

Ezek 37:25 They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. *They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever*, and David my servant shall be their prince forever.

Joel 3:20 But *Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations.*

This speaks of the people of Israel – or God's people – as the ones who will inhabit Judah and Jerusalem forever.

Amos 9:15 *I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God.*

Jer 32:41 I will rejoice in doing them good, and *I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.*

This has an air of finality (cf. GNT; v. 40), indicative of the assertion that the people of Israel will possess the land forever.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Physical Renewal

See also:

- *Israel's renewal will bring God glory*, p. 1017

Subsections

- Israel will be physically restored
- The land will be blessed and fruitful
- Israel's population will be markedly increased, taking up more area



- Joy will accompany God's renewal of Israel . . .
- . . . Israel's sorrow will be no more

Israel will be physically restored

See also:

- Amos 9:14 ↓

In speaking of Israel being physically restored, the prophecies in this subsection speak of such things as Israel being repopulated (also reflected in the preceding subsections) and its cities being rebuilt.

Isa 61:4 *They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.* 📖

Jer 24:6 I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. *I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not uproot them.* 📖

The reference to planting them (cf. **Jer 31:27-28 ↓**; **Ezek 36:36 ↓**; **Amos 9:15 ↑**; **Jer 32:41 ↑**) appears to allude to the people's regrowth in the land.

Jer 30:17-18, 20 For *I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, declares the LORD*, because they have called you an outcast: 'It is Zion, for whom no one cares!' ¹⁸Thus says the LORD: *Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt on its mound, and the palace shall stand where it used to be.* 📖 ... ²⁰*Their children shall be as they were of old, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all who oppress them.* 📖

Jer 31:27-28, 38 *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.* ²⁸And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so *I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD.* 📖 ... ³⁸*Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.* 📖

Jer 33:6-7 *Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them* and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. ⁷*I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first.* 📖

Ezek 36:10, 35-36 *And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt.* 📖 ... ³⁵And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.' ³⁶Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the LORD; *I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.* 📖

Joel 3:1 ^m "For behold, in those days and at that time, *when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ...* 📖

^mCh 4:1 in Hebrew

Here God promises to "restore the prosperity" (GNT, NLT; cf. CEV) of Judah and Jerusalem.

Amos 9:11 *In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, ...* 📖

The "booth of David" refers either to the kingdom of Israel as a whole – as during David's rule – or to David's royal line.

Mic 4:7 ... and *the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore.* 📖

Zeph 3:20 At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, *when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.* 📖

Zec 8:4-5 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age.* ⁵*And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.* 📖

Isa 30:26 Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, *in the day when the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.* 📖

This and 35:5-6a below speak, perhaps figuratively, of the physical restoration of the people themselves (cf. **Jer 33:6 ↑**).

Isa 35:5-6 *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ...* 📖



These references to healing may have a spiritual connotation as well as a physical one.

The land will be blessed and fruitful

See also:

- Ezek 36:35 [↑](#)
- Isa 9:3 [↓](#)

Isa 30:23-25 And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. In that day your livestock will graze in large pastures, ²⁴and the oxen and the donkeys that work the ground will eat seasoned fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. ²⁵And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. [📖](#)

Note that "the day of the great slaughter" (v. 25) presumably speaks of that of proud enemies of Israel, with the Assyrians probably initially in view.

Isa 32:14-15, 20 For the palace is forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks; ¹⁵until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. [📖](#) ... ²⁰Happy are you who sow beside all waters, who let the feet of the ox and the donkey range free. [📖](#)

Verse 20 speaks of "plenty of water for the crops and safe pasture everywhere for the donkeys and cattle" (GNT).

Isa 35:6-7 ... then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. [📖](#)

A spiritual application is often made of verses such as these and others in this subsection.

Isa 41:18-20 I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. ¹⁹I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, ²⁰that they may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the LORD has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it. [📖](#)

This is often understood to initially at least refer to God's provision for the Israelites returning from exile in Babylon (cf. 43:19-20). Some commentators, however, think it refers to conditions in the renewed Israel in the Millennium.

Isa 55:13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. [📖](#)

Jer 31:5, 12, 14 Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit. [📖](#) ... ¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more. [📖](#) ... ¹⁴I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the LORD. [📖](#)

The clause "their life shall be like a watered garden" (v. 12) refers figuratively to the people themselves, in a manner reflective of the lush conditions of their land.

Ezek 34:14, 26-27, 29 I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. [📖](#) ... ²⁶And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. ²⁷And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. [📖](#) ... ²⁹And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. [📖](#)

In v. 26, "they shall be showers of blessing" suggests that the aforementioned showers of rain will produce much blessing.

Ezek 36:8-9, 34-35 But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home. ⁹For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. [📖](#) ... ³⁴And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. ³⁵And they will say, "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited." [📖](#)



Hos 2:21-22 And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, *I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel,ⁿ ...* 

ⁿ *Jezreel means God will sow*

God will provide the heavens with clouds/moisture, to provide rain on the earth, to provide growth for the plants, to provide food for the people. The final clause depicts Israel's prosperity as that which "God will sow" (text note), with "the grain, the wine and the oil" responding to her, coming in answer to her people's prayers (cf. AMP).

Joel 3:18 *And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Shittim.* 

Amos 9:13-14 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. ¹⁴I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; *they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.*" 

The images in v. 13a indicate an amazing abundance of produce, so much so that there will not be enough time for various tasks to be completed before the next round of them needs to commence.

Zec 8:12 *For there shall be a sowing of peace. The vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its produce, and the heavens shall give their dew. And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.* 

Israel's population will be markedly increased, taking up more area

Isa 9:3 *You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.* 

Isa 26:15 *But you have increased the nation, O LORD, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land.* 

Isa 49:19-20 Surely your waste and your desolate places and your devastated land— *surely now you will be too narrow for your inhabitants, and those who swallowed you up will be far away.* ²⁰*The children of your bereavement will yet say in*

your ears: 'The place is too narrow for me; make room for me to dwell in.' 

Here God speaks to Zion, or Jerusalem.

Isa 54:1-3 "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! *For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,*" says the LORD. ²*"Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. ³For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.*" 

Jerusalem is depicted as a once barren or "desolate" woman (v. 1), now with more children than ever before.

Isa 60:22 *The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it.* 

Jer 23:3 Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and *they shall be fruitful and multiply.* 

Jer 30:19 Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who celebrate. *I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.* 

Ezek 36:9-11a For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. ¹⁰*And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it.* The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt. ¹¹*And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful.* 

Ezek 36:37-38 "Thus says the Lord God: This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them: *to increase their people like a flock. ³⁸Like the flock for sacrifices,^o like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of people.* Then they will know that I am the LORD." 

^o Hebrew *flock of holy things*

Hos 1:10a ^p *Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.* 

^p Ch 2:1 in Hebrew



Zec 2:4 ... and said to him, "Run, say to that young man, 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it.  

Zec 10:10 I will bring them home from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria, and *I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon, till there is no room for them.*  

Mic 7:11-12 *A day for the building of your walls! In that day the boundary shall be far extended.* ¹²*In that day they^a will come to you, from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt to the River, from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.*  

^a Hebrew *he*

The people referred to in v. 12 are either returning exiles – "your people" (NCVTM, NIRV; cf. GNT) – or people from other nations.

✦ Israel's land will extend afar:

Isa 33:17 Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty; *they will see a land that stretches afar.*  

Joy will accompany God's renewal of Israel . . .

See also:

- [Jer 31:13](#)  ; [Isa 61:1-3](#)  
- [Israel will greatly rejoice in God's salvation](#), p. 995

Ps 14:7 Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! *When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.*  

As per the theme of this section, the psalmist may have a latter-day consummate salvation and restoration of Israel in view.

Isa 29:19 *The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.*  

Isa 35:10 *And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*  

Isa 51:3 For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; *joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.*  

Isa 55:12 *For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*  

The mountains, hills and trees are figuratively portrayed as rejoicing, alluding to the joy of the people of Israel (cf. Isa 35:1-2).

Isa 60:4-5, 15 Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you [Zion]; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. ⁵*Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult,^r because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.*   ... ¹⁵*Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age.*  

^r Hebrew *your heart shall tremble and grow wide*

Verse 15b may be speaking of Israel being the everlasting joy of all nations, although her own joy may primarily be in view.

Isa 61:7 Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor *they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy.*  

Isa 65:14, 18 ... behold, *my servants shall sing for gladness of heart*, but you [the unfaithful] shall cry out for pain of heart and shall wail for breaking of spirit.   ... ¹⁸*But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.*  

Isa 66:10-11, 14 "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; ¹¹*that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance.*"^s   ... ¹⁴*You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.*  

^s Or *breast*

Jer 30:18-19 Thus says the LORD: Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt on its mound, and the palace shall stand where it used to be. ¹⁹*Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who celebrate.* I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.  



Jer 31:4, 11-12 Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! *Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the dance of the merry-makers.*  ... ¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ¹²*They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more.* 

Jer 33:10-11 Thus says the LORD: In this place of which you say, 'It is a waste without man or beast,' in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man or inhabitant or beast, *there shall be heard again* ¹¹*the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD: "Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!"* For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD. 

Isa 35:1-2 *The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; ²it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.* The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. 

This is either speaking of the desert and wilderness in Israel itself or other such areas that the returning Israelites pass through.

... Israel's sorrow will be no more

See also:

- ... *There will be no more sorrow*, p. 743

Isa 51:11 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and *sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* 

Note that this repeats 35:10 (in the previous subsection) verbatim.

Isa 60:20 Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and *your days of mourning shall be ended.* 

The LORD being their "everlasting light" points to God being present with them in a deeper and more tangible way than

previously, assuring their well-being and the absence of sorrow.

Jer 31:13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. *I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.* 

Isa 30:19 For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; *you shall weep no more.* He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. 

Isa 65:19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; *no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.* 

Isa 25:8 He will swallow up death forever; and *the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces*, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. 

Isa 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;^t *he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted*, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;^u ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; *to comfort all who mourn;* ³*to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;* that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.^v 

^t Or *afflicted*

^u Or *the opening [of the eyes] to those who are blind; Septuagint and recovery of sight to the blind*

^v Or *that he may display his beauty*

Here the work of the Messiah is primarily in view. Jesus applied vv. 1-2a to himself in Luke 4:19-20. A good proportion of commentators interpret Jesus concluding his quotation immediately prior to "the day of vengeance of our God" to indicate that he will fulfill the remainder of the prophecy on his second coming.

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) Deliverance and Everlasting Peace

Subsections

- God will save Israel
- God will take vengeance on those who persecute Israel
- Siege, suffering and deliverance of Jerusalem – followed by judgment on its attackers
- Israel will defeat its enemies
- Israel will greatly rejoice in God's salvation
- God will protect and care for Israel
- The Davidic Messiah will reign over Israel
- The Messiah will rule forever over Israel, in righteousness and peace
- Israel will have peace – and no fear – forever . . .
- . . . Never again will Israel be invaded or destroyed

God will save Israel

See also:

- [Isa 34:8](#) ↓; [Isa 35:4](#) ↓; [Isa 59:17](#) ↓; [Isa 63:1, 4](#) ↓; [Zeph 3:19](#) ↓

Isa 9:4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Isa 12:1-2 You^w will say in that day: "I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. ²"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD^x is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation."

^w The Hebrew for you is singular in verse 1

^x Hebrew for Yah, the LORD

References to a future "day" – as in "that day" (v. 1; [Isa 25:9](#) ↓; [Zec 9:16](#) ↓) – are often understood to have an application to the end time.

Isa 25:9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Isa 41:11-13 Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. ¹²You shall seek those who

contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all. ¹³For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."

Isa 45:17 But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.

Isa 51:6, 8 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;^y but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed. ... ⁸For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.

^y Or will die like gnats

Note that, as is the case here, God's righteousness is often associated with his salvation (cf. [Isa 59:16](#) ↓). For in bringing salvation God is doing what is right; his salvation is a product of his righteousness.

Isa 52:2-3, 7-10 Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. ³For thus says the LORD: "You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money." ... ⁷How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." ⁸The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. ⁹Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Salvation from exile in Babylon is initially in view here, as may well be the case in other passages in this subsection.

Isa 59:15b-16, 20 The LORD saw it, and it displeased him^z that there was no justice. ¹⁶He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. ... ²⁰"And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD.

^z Hebrew and it was evil in his eyes

Verse 20 is in effect a promise to save all of those in Jacob who repent.



Isa 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for *he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Isa 62:1, 11-12 *For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.* ... ¹¹*Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him."* ¹²*And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.*

Zec 9:16 *On that day the LORD their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.*

God will take vengeance on those who persecute Israel

See also:

- [Isa 41:11-13](#) ; [Isa 51:6, 8](#)
- *Note: "The day of the LORD" will bring God's judgment, with its destruction of the wicked,* p. 458
- *Note: God will take vengeance on those who persecute his people,* p. 2004

Isa 34:5, 8 *For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.* ... ⁸*For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.*

Here "Edom" (v. 5; cf. [Isa 63:1-6](#)) may well be symbolic of all the enemies of God's people.

Isa 35:4 Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! *Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.*"

Isa 59:17-19 He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; *he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.* ¹⁸*According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment.* ¹⁹*So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun;*

for he will come like a rushing stream,^a which the wind of the LORD drives.

^a Hebrew *a narrow river*

Note that "coastlands" (v. 18) denotes God's enemies of other lands (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) – quite possibly ones along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea are in view in particular.

Isa 61:1-2 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;^b he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;^c ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and *the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ...*

^b Or *afflicted*

^c Or *the opening [of the eyes] to those who are blind; Septuagint and recovery of sight to the blind*

For comment, see the comment on [Isa 61:1-3](#) – under ... *Israel's sorrow will be no more,* p. 990.

Isa 63:1-6 *Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." ²Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? ³"I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood^d spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. ⁴For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption^e had come. ⁵I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. ⁶I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."*

^d Or *their juice; also verse 6*

^e Or *the year of my redeemed*

Jer 30:16 *Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured, and all your foes, every one of them, shall go into captivity; those who plunder you shall be plundered, and all who prey on you I will make a prey.*

Ezek 38:18, 21-23 *But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger.* ... ²¹*I will summon a sword against Gog^f on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. ²²With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain*



upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. 

^f Hebrew *against him*

Commentators are often hesitant to identify this Gog with the Gog of Revelation 20:8 and this event with the final battle (cf. [Rev 20:7-10](#) ), but many do see the passage as referring to an event of the end times.

Joel 3:21 *I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged,*^g for the LORD dwells in Zion. 

^g Or *I will acquit their bloodguilt that I have not acquitted*

Zeph 3:19 *Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.* 

Zec 2:8-9 For thus said the LORD of hosts, after *his glory sent me^h to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye:* ⁹*Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me.* 

^h Or *he sent me after glory*

The agent of God's vengeance is most likely either the Messiah or (figuratively) the prophet with his message.

Siege, suffering and deliverance of Jerusalem – followed by judgment on its attackers

See also:

- *Persecution of God's people will increase in the end times – especially due to the antichrist . . .*, p. 1996

Rev 20:7-10 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹And *they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heavenⁱ and consumed them,* ¹⁰*and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* 

ⁱ Some manuscripts *from God, out of heaven, or out of heaven from God*

Two of the most prominent interpretations of "the camp of the saints and the beloved city" (v. 9) are: a spiritually renewed Jerusalem; and God's people in general.

Isa 29:1-8 Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts run their round. ²*Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation, and she shall be to me like an Ariel.*³*And I will encamp against you all around, and will besiege you with towers and I will raise siegeworks against you.* ⁴*And you will be brought low; from the earth you shall speak, and from the dust your speech will be bowed down; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and from the dust your speech shall whisper.* ⁵*But the multitude of your foreign foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff. And in an instant, suddenly,* ⁶*you will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.* ⁷*And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.* ⁸*As when a hungry man dreams he is eating and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.* 

^j Ariel could mean *lion of God*, or *hero* (2 Samuel 23:20), or *altar hearth* (Ezekiel 43:15-16)

"Ariel" refers to Jerusalem. Verse 2 speaks of it suffering intently. The siege of Jerusalem and the sudden destruction of Assyria's army in 701 B.C. may be primarily in view, but a number of commentators see an eschatological application in the passage.

Zec 12:2-9 *Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah.* ³*On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.* ⁴*On that day, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.* ⁵*Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.'* ⁶*On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem.* ⁷*And the LORD will give salvation to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and*



the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah. ⁸On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. ⁹And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 

Chapters 12-14 of Zechariah (cf. [Zec 14:1-14](#) ↓) form an oracle which revolves largely around a final siege of Jerusalem and the Messiah's return to deliver it.

Zec 14:1-14 Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. ²For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. ⁴On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. ⁵And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. ⁶On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost.^k ⁷And there shall be a unique^l day, which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light. ⁸On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea^m and half of them to the western sea.ⁿ It shall continue in summer as in winter. ⁹And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one. ¹⁰The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. ¹¹And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction.^o Jerusalem shall dwell in security. ¹²And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. ¹³And on that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other. ¹⁴Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. 

^k Compare Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, Targum; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

^l Hebrew *one*

^m That is, the Dead Sea

ⁿ That is, the Mediterranean Sea

^o The Hebrew term rendered *decree of utter destruction* refers to things devoted (or set apart) to the Lord (or by the Lord) for destruction

In vv. 4-5 the LORD is portrayed as providing a way of escape for the besieged people in Jerusalem. The living waters in v. 8 replenish the land. Verse 10 speaks of the land around Jerusalem being leveled to become a plain, in contrast to Jerusalem, which is raised up – asserting Jerusalem's prominence. Verse 14 appears to speak of other people of Judah defending Jerusalem (cf. GNT).

Jer 30:7-8 Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it. ⁸And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him.^p 

^p Or *serve him*

This is not speaking of a siege of Jerusalem, nor Jerusalem in particular; it concerns both Israel and Judah (cf. v. 4). However it further illustrates the intense suffering of Israel and God's subsequent deliverance in the end times, with an eschatological setting appearing to be ultimately in view.

‡ **Jesus' prophecy of siege, suffering and destruction of Jerusalem:**

Luke 21:20-24 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, ²²for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. ²³Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. ²⁴They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. 

While this appears to prophecy of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Romans, many understand it to also refer to the events of the end times. Bear in mind that the parallel passages in the other synoptic gospels associate the desecration of the temple with this event (cf. Matt 24:15-16). The parallel passages also dwell more on the "great distress" mentioned in v. 23 (cf. Matt 24:21-22). Note that here in v. 24, "the times of the Gentiles" may be referring to



the period of Gentile domination of Jerusalem or to the time of their prominence in God's plan of salvation (cf. Rom 1:11-27).

Israel will defeat its enemies

See also:

- [Zec 12:6](#) ↑; [Zec 14:14](#) ↑

Isa 11:14 But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them. 

Isa 41:15-16 Behold, I make of you a threshing sledge, new, sharp, and having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff; ¹⁶you shall winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them. And you shall rejoice in the LORD; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory. 

The "mountains" and the "hills" (v. 15b) represent enemy nations.

Obad 1:18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken. 

The earlier reference to "the day of the LORD" (cf. v. 15) suggests that the subsequent verses, including this one, have an eschatological meaning or application.

Mic 4:13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; and shall devote^a their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth. 

^a Hebrew *devote to destruction*

Mic 5:5-9 And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; ⁶they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border. ⁷Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. ⁸And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces,

and there is none to deliver. ⁹Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off. 

The "Assyrian" (vv. 5-6) may symbolize Israel's enemies in general. The "seven shepherds and eight princes of men" (vv. 5-6) indicate an ample number of leaders. The phrase "he shall deliver us" (v. 6b) probably refers to the Messiah (cf. vv. 4-5a). Verses 7-9 appear to depict the remnant's dominance amongst the nations, bringing blessings to the nations (v. 7) and crushing its enemies (vv. 8-9).

Zec 9:13-15 For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword. ¹⁴Then the LORD will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning; the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. ¹⁵The LORD of hosts will protect them, and they shall devour, and tread down the sling stones, and they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine, and be full like a bowl, drenched like the corners of the altar. 

As suggested by v. 13, this appears to have the Jewish Maccabees' defeat of the Seleucids in view. But a number of commentators consider it to also have a final fulfillment in the end times.

Mal 4:3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts. 

Israel will greatly rejoice in God's salvation

See also:

- [Isa 41:16b](#) ↑
- *Joy will accompany God's renewal of Israel . . .*, p. 989

Isa 9:3-4 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. ⁴For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 

Isa 12:3 With joy you^r will draw water from the wells of salvation. 

^r The Hebrew for you is plural in verses 3, 4

Isa 25:9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." 



Isa 30:28-29 ... his breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck; to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction, and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray. ²⁹You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.

God's punishment of the nations (v. 28b) involves Israel's enemies – and so is a key part of Israel's salvation, bringing her joy (v. 29).

Isa 52:8-9 The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. ⁹Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.

Isa 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Jer 31:11-12 For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more.

Zeph 3:14-15 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

Zec 10:6-7 I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back because I have compassion on them, and they shall be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them. ⁷Then Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior, and their hearts shall be glad as with wine. Their children shall see it and be glad; their hearts shall rejoice in the LORD.

✦ The prospect of God's renewed presence in Jerusalem should make her glad:

Zec 2:10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.

God will protect and care for Israel

Isa 4:5-6 Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy. ⁶There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

The "cloud", "smoke" and "flaming fire" (v. 5) signify God's presence and protection – the latter further signified by the "canopy" (v. 5).

Isa 26:1 In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks."

God's protection is implicit here (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Isa 27:2-3 In that day, "A pleasant vineyard,^s sing of it! ³I, the LORD, am its keeper; every moment I water it. Lest anyone punish it, I keep it night and day; ...

^s Many Hebrew manuscripts *A vineyard of wine*

The "vineyard" (v. 2) is "the redeemed nation of Israel" (AMP).

Zec 2:5 And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.

Zec 9:8 Then I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that none shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again march over them, for now I see with my own eyes.

The last clause suggests that not only did God see the affliction of his people, he would now acknowledge it and act accordingly.

Zeph 2:7b For the LORD their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.

Isa 30:19 For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you.

Isa 65:24 Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.

Isa 28:5-6 In that day the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory,^t and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people, ⁶and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

^t The Hebrew words for *glory* and *hosts* sound alike

Verse 6a speaks of God leading judges to make decisions justly (cf. GNT, NCV, NirV, NLT).



Isa 33:21-22 But there the LORD in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, where no galley with oars can go, nor majestic ship can pass. ²²For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us.



The "broad rivers and streams" (v. 21) are quite possibly being spoken of here primarily as forms of protection for Jerusalem, upon which no threatening ships will sail.

Isa 54:15-17 If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you. ¹⁶Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy; ¹⁷no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication^u from me, declares the LORD.

^u Or *righteousness*

Verse 16 points to how all the enemies of God's people are under his control.

The Davidic Messiah will reign over Israel

See also:

- *The OT promises that such a one would arise as a great ruler of Israel*, p. 484
- *The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David*, p. 487

The references in this and the following subsection to "David" as a king or ruler are speaking of the promised Christ or Messiah from the line of David. The context of the other verses speaking of a future king, point to them as also being messianic.

Jer 30:9, 21 But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. ... ²¹Their prince shall be one of themselves; their ruler shall come out from their midst; I will make him draw near, and he shall approach me, for who would dare of himself to approach me? declares the LORD.

The Davidic Messiah-king was possibly not initially in view in v. 21, but some commentators see him as the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy, as is clearly the case in v. 9.

Ezek 34:23-24 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.

Ezek 37:24 My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.

Hos 3:5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

Isa 33:17 Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty; they will see a land that stretches afar.

The first clause appears to speak of the people seeing the Messiah "in all his splendor" (NLT; cf. GNT). The verse suggests that he will rule over all the land.

The Messiah will rule forever over Israel, in righteousness and peace

See also:

- *God will establish the Messiah as ruler over all, forever*, p. 718
- *The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace*, p. 720

Luke 1:32-33 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Ps 72:1-7 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! ²May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice! ³Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness! ⁴May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor! ⁵May they fear you^v while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations! ⁶May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth! ⁷In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more!

^v Septuagint *He shall endure*

Psalm 72 is understood to be messianic, to be fulfilled ultimately in the Messiah's rule. Note that vv. 3, 6, 7 speak of the abundant prosperity that will also accompany the



messianic king's reign. The final clause of v. 7 alludes to his reign being everlasting.

Isa 9:5-7 *For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon^w his shoulder, and his name shall be called^x Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.* 

^w Or *is upon*

^x Or *is called*

Isa 32:1 *Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.* 

The "king" (v. 1) is understood to be the Messiah. Here other just rulers, subservient to the Messiah, are associated with his righteous reign.

Jer 23:5-6 *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'* 

Ezek 37:25 They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and *David my servant shall be their prince forever.* 

Mic 5:2-6 ^y But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, *from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.* ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. ⁴*And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.* ⁵*And he shall be their peace.* When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; ⁶they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and *he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border.* 

^y Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

Aspects of this prophecy were fulfilled in Christ's first advent, but much of it is usually understood to be ultimately fulfilled in his second coming and reign. With his second coming in view, "she who is in labor" (v. 3) would likely refer to Zion. As noted earlier, the reference to the Assyrians (vv. 5-6) appears to symbolize Israel's enemies in general.

Israel will have peace – and no fear – forever . . .

See also:

▪ [Isa 54:14](#) 

Isa 32:17-18 *And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust^z forever. ¹⁸My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.* 

^z Or *security*

Isa 54:10, 13 *For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*  ... ¹³All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and *great shall be the peace of your children.* 

Isa 55:12 *For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.* 

Isa 57:18-19 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, ¹⁹creating the fruit of the lips. *Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the LORD, "and I will heal him.* 

Those who are "far" away may be exiled Jews who will return to the land – or possibly Gentiles (cf. Eph 2:17).

Isa 60:17b *I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness.* 

Isa 65:25 *The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD.* 

Isa 66:12 For thus says the LORD: *"Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees.* 



Jer 30:10b *Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid.* 📖

Jer 33:6 Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and *reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.* 📖

Ezek 34:25, 27-28 *I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.* 📖 ... ²⁷And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and *they shall be secure in their land.* And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. ²⁸*They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid.* 📖

Ezek 37:26 *I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them.* And I will set them in their land^a and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. 📖

^a Hebrew lacks *in their land*

Hos 2:18 *And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish^b the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.* 📖

^b Hebrew *break*

The first statement speaks of God ensuring that the animals will no longer be a threat to his people.

Zeph 3:12b-15, 17 They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, ¹³those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For *they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.* ¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; *he has cleared away your enemies.* The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; *you shall never again fear evil.* 📖 ... ¹⁷The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; *he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.* 📖

The absence of fear amongst the people is reflected in the fact that God will quiet or calm them (cf. NLT, NIV) with his love (v. 17).

Hag 2:9 The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And *in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.* 📖

Zec 3:10 *In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree.* 📖

This portrays the peace and fulfillment that will characterize Israel.

... Never again will Israel be invaded or destroyed

See also:

- [Ezek 34:28](#) ↑; [Hos 2:18](#) ↑

Isa 33:20-21 Behold Zion, the city of our appointed feasts! *Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an untroubled habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken.* ²¹But there the LORD in majesty will be for us *a place of broad rivers and streams, where no galley with oars can go, nor majestic ship can pass.* 📖

Isa 52:1 Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, *O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean.* 📖

Isa 54:9, 14 This is like the days of Noah^c to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so *I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you.* 📖 ... ¹⁴In righteousness you shall be established; *you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you.* 📖

^c Some manuscripts *For this is as the waters of Noah*

In v. 9b "rebuke" has the sense of "punish" (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV). God will never again punish Israel (cf. [Isa 51:22](#) ↓), as he often did previously with enemy invaders.

Isa 60:18 *Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise.* 📖

Rather than being needed to thwart invasion and devastation, Jerusalem's walls and gates will be reflective of God's everlasting salvation and the praise of him that this evokes.

Isa 62:8 The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: *"I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink your wine for which you have labored; ...* 📖



The things mentioned were consequences of being invaded.

Jer 30:8 And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and *foreigners shall no more make a servant of him.*^d

^d Or *serve him*

God's people will "never again" (NCV™; cf. AMP, NIrV) be made slaves.

Jer 31:40b *It [Jerusalem] shall not be uprooted or overthrown anymore forever.*

Joel 3:17, 20 So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and *strangers shall never again pass through it.* ...
²⁰*But Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations.*

Foreigners will never again invade Jerusalem (v. 17b), nor will the people be exiled (v. 20) by conquering enemies.

Zec 9:8 *Then I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that none shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again march over them,* for now I see with my own eyes.

Zec 14:11 *And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction.*^e *Jerusalem shall dwell in security.*

^e The Hebrew term rendered *decree of utter destruction* refers to things devoted (or set apart) to the Lord (or by the Lord) for destruction

Isa 45:17 *But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.*

Reflective of the fact that Israel will never again be invaded or destroyed, will be the reality of God's everlasting salvation (cf. [Isa 60:18 ↑](#); [Isa 51:6, 8 ↓](#)).

Isa 51:6, 8, 22 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;^f but *my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.* ...⁸For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but *my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.* ...²²Thus says your Lord, the LORD, your God who pleads the cause of his people: "Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; *the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more;* ...

^f Or *will die like gnats*

✦ **Israel will endure forever:**

Isa 66:22 *For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.*

Pray for persecuted Christians%

d) Spiritual Renewal

Subsections

- God will cleanse Israel of all impurities and sin . . .
- . . . and God will forgive the people's sins
- Israel will be holy
- Israel will be righteous
- The people of Israel will be given God's Spirit
- The people of Israel will be given spiritual understanding

God will cleanse Israel of all impurities and sin . . .

See also:

- [Jer 33:8 ↓](#); [Jer 50:20 ↓](#)

Isa 4:4 ... *when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.*^g

^g Or *purging*

The second part of the verse is indicative of Israel's cleansing involving judgment (presumably prior to the everlasting salvation and peace spoken of in the previous sections). Similarly Zechariah 13:8-9a and Malachi 3:2-4 below suggest that Israel's purification will involve discipline and suffering.

Ezek 36:25, 29, 33 *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.* ...²⁹*And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.* And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. ...³³Thus says the Lord GOD: *On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt.*



Ezek 37:23 *They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings^h in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.* ☞

^h Many Hebrew manuscripts; other Hebrew manuscripts dwellings

Mic 5:10-14 *And in that day, declares the LORD, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots; ¹¹and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds; ¹²and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes; ¹³and I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you, and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands; ¹⁴and I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities.* ☞

In cleansing Israel God will destroy that in which it relied upon for its power and protection (vv. 10-11), and all that was evil within it (vv. 12-14). Zephaniah 3:11 below indicates that the latter includes removal of the proud.

Zeph 3:11 *On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.* ☞

Zec 3:3-5, 8-9 *Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." ⁵And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by. ☞ ... ⁸Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. ⁹For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes,ⁱ I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.* ☞

ⁱ Or facets

The high priest Joshua is representative of either or both the priests and the nation of Israel. The "stone" (v. 9) may refer to the Messiah, but this is debatable. Its "seven eyes" most likely symbolizes omniscience, of either the Messiah or God. The promise to "remove the sin of this land in a single day" (v. 9) may well refer to the day of Jesus Christ's return, but Good Friday could instead be primarily in view.

Zec 13:1-2, 8-9a *"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. ²"And on that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness. ☞ ... ⁸In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. ⁹And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested.* ☞

Particularly in v. 1, Christ's death may be partially in view as such cleansing is only possible through his death and reference is made to it in v. 7 and in the previous chapter (12:10). The prophets (v. 2b) were false prophets.

Mal 3:2-3 *But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.^j* ☞

^j Or and they will belong to the LORD, bringers of an offering in righteousness

This is generally understood as referring to the Messiah's coming and God's judgment through him.

Rom 11:25-27 *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers:^k a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; ²⁷"and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."* ☞

^k Or brothers and sisters

The most common interpretations of the term "all Israel" are: the bulk of the Jews of the end times; all believing Jews of every generation; and all believers (cf. NSB). In using the phrase "all Israel will be saved" Paul possibly has in mind Isaiah 45:25 – "In the LORD all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory."

... and God will forgive the people's sins

Jer 31:34 *And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* ☞



Jer 33:8 *I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.*

Isa 33:24 And no inhabitant will say, "I am sick"; *the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.*

Jer 50:20 *In those days and in that time, declares the LORD, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none, and sin in Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.*

Mic 7:18 Who is a God like you, *pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?* He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

Israel will be holy

See also:

- *Note: God's promise of a new or renewed heart and spirit – so that his people will be committed to him, p. 859*

Isa 4:3 And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, *everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, ...*

Isa 62:12 And they shall be called *The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD*; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.

Jer 31:40 *The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be sacred to the LORD.* It shall not be uprooted or overthrown anymore forever.

Ezek 37:28 *Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.*

Israel will be shown to be holy when God's presence is among them forever (cf. [Joel 3:17](#) ↓).

Joel 3:17 So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwells in Zion, *my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it.*

Obad 1:17 But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and *it shall be holy*, and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.

Zec 8:3 Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and *Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain.*

Zec 14:20-21 And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "*Holy to the LORD.*" And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar. ²¹And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. *And there shall no longer be a trader^l in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.*

^l Or *Canaanite*

Verses 20-21a depict holiness characterizing all aspects of life in Jerusalem, even all things in the city.

Isa 35:8 And a highway shall be there, and *it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.*^m

^m Or *if they are fools, they shall not wander in it*

The "highway" is that which leads to Zion. This suggests that only those who are holy, spiritually clean, will be able to enter and reside in Jerusalem.

Israel will be righteous

Isa 1:26 And *I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.*

The first statement refers to Jerusalem having "good judges and wise counselors" (NLT; cf. [Isa 32:1](#) ↓), a factor in it being righteous.

Isa 26:2 *Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.*

The "righteous nation" probably refers primarily to the righteous remnant of Israel.

Isa 32:1, 16-17 *Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.* ... ¹⁶*Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.* ¹⁷*And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trustⁿ forever.*

ⁿ Or *security*

Isa 33:5 The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; *he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, ...*



Isa 45:25 *In the LORD all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory.* 𐄂

Isa 54:14 *In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you.* 𐄂

The "righteousness" is that of Jerusalem – "rightness, in conformity with God's will and order" (AMP).

Isa 60:17b, 21 *I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness.* 𐄂 ... ²¹*Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.*^o 𐄂

^o Or that I might display my beauty

"I will make ... your taskmasters righteousness" (v. 17b) quite possibly means that the people will live their lives in accordance with righteousness (v. 21b), although it could instead refer to righteous authorities governing them.

Isa 61:3 ... to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; *that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.*^p ... 𐄂

^p Or that he may display his beauty

Isa 61:10-11 *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* ¹¹*For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.* 𐄂

Some commentators understand "righteousness and praise" (v. 11) to be referring to Israel's righteousness (v. 10) and its praise of God – very pertinent to the theme of this subsection. The other possibility is that it is referring to the righteousness and praise of all nations (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Isa 62:1-2 *For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.* ²*The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.* 𐄂

Zeph 3:13 ... those who are left in Israel; *they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue.* For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. 𐄂

The people of Israel will be given God's Spirit

Isa 59:21 "And as for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD: *"My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore."* 𐄂

Ezek 36:26-27 *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷*And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*^q 𐄂

^q Or my just decrees

Being given a new heart (cf. [Jer 24:7](#) ↴), in association with a new spirit (v. 26) – along with God's spirit – further points to Israel's spiritual renewal.

Ezek 37:14 *And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.* 𐄂

In being given God's Spirit, the decimated nation of Israel would be given life.

Ezek 39:29 *And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God.* 𐄂

Joel 2:28-29 ^r *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.* ²⁹*Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.* 𐄂

^r Ch 3:1 in Hebrew

Even with the reference to "all flesh" (v. 28) – and the NT's broader application of these verses – the renewed Israel would appear to be the primary focus of the promise as originally given here. A similar comment could be made of the above references, which likewise have a clear application under the present new covenant.



The people of Israel will be given spiritual understanding

See also:

▪ [Isa 59:21](#) ↑

The references in this subsection to eyes being opened and ears hearing, may allude to God previously having judicially blinded and deafened his rebellious people spiritually (cf. Isa 6:9-10; Matt 13:13-15; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26-27; Rom 1:8). As such they signify the everlasting reversal of this judgment. Note that these references are understood by some commentators as having a physical connotation as well as a spiritual one.

Isa 29:18, 24 *In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.* ... ²⁴*And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction.*

In v. 18, "a book" could refer to God's word, but the meaning may be more general.

Isa 32:3-5 *Then the eyes of those who see will not be closed, and the ears of those who hear will give attention. ⁴The heart of the hasty will understand and know, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak distinctly. ⁵The fool will no more be called noble, nor the scoundrel said to be honorable.*

The stammering tongue being able to "speak distinctly" (v. 4) may well also be reflective of spiritual healing and understanding. Verse 5 indicates that, with the renewed spiritual understanding, any fools or wicked people will be recognized for what they are.

Isa 35:5 *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ...*

Isa 54:13 *All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children.*

Being "taught by the Lord" implies receiving spiritual understanding.

Jer 24:7 *I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.*

Jer 31:33-34 *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother,*

saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.



Verse 33 suggests a far more complete understanding and compliance with God's law. As reflective of spiritual understanding, the people will know God (v. 34a; [Jer 24:7a](#) ↑).

Ezek 39:7 *And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.*

↳ **God's steadfast guidance of his people:**

Isa 30:21 *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.*

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) A Renewed Relationship with God

See also:

- [d\) Being with God](#), p. 744
- [The people of Israel will be given God's Spirit](#), p. 1003

Subsections

- [Israel will turn to God](#)
- [Israel will worship God – and trust in him](#)
- [Israel will be devoted to God](#)
- [God will be as a husband to Israel, renewing his relationship with her](#)
- [The people of Israel will be God's people and he will be their God](#)
- [God will dwell in Jerusalem, living among his people forever](#)
- [Note: References to a temple of God in Jerusalem in the future](#)



Israel will turn to God

Isa 10:21 *A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.* 

Jer 24:7 I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for *they shall return to me with their whole heart.* 

Hos 3:5 *Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.* 

Jer 31:6 *For there shall be a day when watchmen will call in the hill country of Ephraim: 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.'* 

Jer 50:4 *In those days and in that time, declares the LORD, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together, weeping as they come, and they shall seek the LORD their God.* 

‡ Israel's mourning for "the one they have pierced":

Zec 12:10 And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, *when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.* 

This is commonly understood to depict Israel's eventual turning to Jesus Christ in deep remorse over their crucifixion of him.

Israel will worship God – and trust in him

Isa 27:13 And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and *those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.* 

Zeph 3:10 From beyond the rivers of Cush *my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.* 

Isa 12:1-6 *You^s will say in that day: "I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. ²"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD^t is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation."*
³With joy you^u will draw water from the wells of salvation.
⁴And you will say in that day: *"Give thanks to the LORD, call*

upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵"Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known^v in all the earth. ⁶Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your^w midst is the Holy One of Israel." 

^s The Hebrew for *you* is singular in verse 1

^t Hebrew for *Yah, the LORD*

^u The Hebrew for *you* is plural in verses 3, 4

^v Or *this is made known*

^w The Hebrew for *your* in verse 6 is singular, referring to the *inhabitant of Zion*

Isa 25:8-9 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. *⁹It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."* 

As is the case with the adjacent passages, this is indicative of praise and worship of God as well as trust in him.

Isa 26:1, 4-5 *In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks.  ... ⁴Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. ⁵For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust. *

The song of praise to God that "will be sung in the land of Judah" (v. 1) extends to at least v. 6 and possibly as far as v. 19.

Isa 10:20 *In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.* 

The phrase "him who struck them" had the king of Assyria in view. Unlike other aspects of the verse, it may not have an eschatological application.

Zeph 3:12 But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. *They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, ...* 

Seeking refuge in God is equivalent to trusting in him.

‡ They will acknowledge God's holiness and be in awe of God:

Isa 29:23 For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, *they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.* 



Israel will be devoted to God

The following verses show various aspects of the people of Israel's devotion to God, including: service (Ezek 20:40a; Isa 6:19, 21); obedience (Ezek 37:24; Jer 31:33); and everlasting faithfulness (Jer 32:39-40; Ezek 43:7b). All of these are reflected in the first verse listed (Jer 50:5).

Jer 50:5 They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, saying, *'Come, let us join ourselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.'* 

This reflects Israel's devotion to God in showing the people's unwavering commitment to live in accordance with his will.

Ezek 20:40a "For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there *all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land.*" 

Isa 66:19, 21 ... and I will set a sign among them. And *from them I will send survivors to the nations*, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. *And they shall declare my glory among the nations.*  ... ²¹*And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.* 

In v. 19 "survivors" may refer to a remnant of faithful Israelites who had survived God's judgment; alternatively it may be people from the Gentile nations that are in view (cf. v. 18). Similarly it is debatable as to whether "some of them" (v. 21) refers to such Israelites or to Gentiles. If Israelites are in view, then this is illustrative of their service (cf. **Ezek 20:40a** ) and hence devotion to God in the end times. Note that similar to v. 21, 61:6a also speaks of God's people in the end times being his priests – "... but you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God ..."

Ezek 37:24 My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. *They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.* 

Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.* And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 

As noted earlier, this suggests a far more complete understanding and compliance with God's law.

Jer 32:39-40 *I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever*, for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰*I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them.*

And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. 

Ezek 43:7b *And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies^x of their kings at their high places,^y ...* 

^x Or *the monuments*; also verse 9

^y Or *at their deaths*

God will be as a husband to Israel, renewing his relationship with her

See also:

▪ **Hos 2:1** 

Isa 54:5-8 *For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. ⁶For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. ⁷For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. ⁸In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer.* 

"For a brief moment I deserted you" (v. 7) probably refers initially at least to the Babylonian exile. For what was a relatively brief time, God cast off his unfaithful people – in accordance with the warnings stated in his covenant with them.

Isa 62:4-5, 12 *You shall no more be termed Forsaken,^z and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,^a but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,^b and your land Married;^c for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. ⁵For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.  ... ¹²And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.* 

^z Hebrew *Azubah*

^a Hebrew *Shemamah*

^b Hebrew *Hephzibah*

^c Hebrew *Beulah*

The Hebrew terms translated as "Forsaken" and "Desolate" (v. 4) allude to a deserted and "Childless" (CEV) wife, as reflected by the contrasting names in the subsequent statement and in v. 12, where "Sought Out" refers to God seeking after Jerusalem. Note that God's rejoicing over his people (v. 5b) and delighting in them (v. 4b) – as a



bridegroom – is similarly spoken of in 65:19a – “I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people ...”

Hos 2:14-16, 19-20, 23 *“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. ¹⁵And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor^d a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁶“And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’” ... ¹⁹And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. ²⁰I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. ... ²³and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy,^e and I will say to Not My People,^f ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”* 

^d Achor means *trouble*; compare Joshua 7:26

^e Hebrew *Lo-ruhama*

^f Hebrew *Lo-ammi*

God is speaking of Israel in vv. 14-15, 23 and directly to her in vv. 16, 19-20. In saying that Israel will no longer call him “My Baal” (v. 16), God may be referring either to: the people turning from worship of false gods (cf. v. 17); and/or that ‘his people will have a deep personal relationship with him (like a devoted wife and husband) rather than merely a legal tie (like a wife and her “master”)’ (CEV text note), for in Hebrew the term “Baal” is the same as one used for “husband” which is “master” (CEV, NIV, NKJV, NLT).

Ezek 20:41 *As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations.* 

Although not using marriage terminology, this and the following verses (Zec 2:12; Ezek 39:29) also point to God renewing his relationship with his people.

Zec 2:12 *And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.* 

Ezek 39:29 *And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.* 

Though not as specific as the previous passages, this also is indicative of God renewing his relationship with Israel.

✦ God's new covenant relationship with Israel:

Jer 31:31-34 *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with*

their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” 

For comment, see the comment on Jer 31:31-34 – under *Judah and Israel will be reunited in the land – and share in God's blessings*, p. 983.

The people of Israel will be God's people and he will be their God

See also:

- Jer 31:33 
- Ezek 34:30 ; Ezek 37:27 ; Rev 21:3 
- ... *If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God*, p. 333
- *They are God's people . . .*, p. 766
- ... *and God is their God*, p. 766

The theme of this subsection denotes the consummate fulfillment of a key aspect of the first covenant that God made with Israel – that they would be his people and he would be their God (cf. ... *If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God*, p. 333). Note that the following subsection reflects a further key aspect of the first covenant.

Jer 24:7 *I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.* 

Jer 30:22 *And you shall be my people, and I will be your God.* 

Jer 31:1, 6 *“At that time, declares the LORD, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people.”*  ... ⁶*For there shall be a day when watchmen will call in the hill country of Ephraim: ‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.’”* 



Ezek 37:23b But I will save them from all the backslidings^g in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and *they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

^g Many Hebrew manuscripts; other Hebrew manuscripts *dwelling*s

Hos 1:10 ^h Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And *in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Childrenⁱ of the living God."*

^h Ch 2:1 in Hebrew

ⁱ Or Sons

Although applied in the NT to God's acceptance of the Gentiles (cf. Rom 9:25-26; 1Pet 2:10), this and 2:23b below ultimately have God's reconciliation with the Israelites in view.

Hos 2:1, 23b ^j *Say to your brothers, "You are my people,"^k and to your sisters, "You have received mercy."^l ... ²³ ... And I will have mercy on No Mercy,^m and *I will say to Not My People,ⁿ 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'**

^j Ch 2:3 in Hebrew

^k Hebrew *ammi*, which means *my people*

^l Hebrew *ruhama*, which means *she has received mercy*

^m Hebrew *Lo-ruhama*

ⁿ Hebrew *Lo-ammi*

Mic 4:5 For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but *we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.*

Zec 8:8b And *they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.*

Zec 13:9b They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. *I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'*

‡ **The people of Israel will acknowledge the LORD as their judge, lawgiver and king:**

Isa 33:22 *For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us.*

Such acknowledgment of the LORD is reflective of the people's willing submission to him as their God.

God will dwell in Jerusalem, living among his people forever

See also:

- Ezek 43:4-7a
- *God will dwell with his people*, p. 744
- *God's people will see God*, p. 745
- *The nations will know and acknowledge God's presence in and care of Israel*, p. 1012
- *The nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God . . .*, p. 1013
- *The nations will bring their wealth to Jerusalem, as the city of God*, p. 1014
- *Israel's glory will primarily be God, with the glory of his presence*, p. 1017

Isa 52:8 The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye *they see the return of the LORD to Zion.*

Jer 3:16-17 And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, declares the LORD, *they shall no more say, "The ark of the covenant of the LORD." It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed; it shall not be made again. ¹⁷At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.*

The ark of the covenant of the LORD – which signified God's presence amongst his people under the first covenant – will not be missed (v. 16), for God himself will dwell in Jerusalem (v. 17).

Ezek 34:30 And *they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them*, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord GOD.

Ezek 37:26b-28 And I will set them in their land^o and multiply them, and *will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷My dwelling place shall be with them*, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, *when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.*

^o Hebrew lacks *in their land*

Ezek 48:35 The circumference of the city shall be 18,000 cubits. And *the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There.*



Joel 3:16-17, 21 *The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel.* ¹⁷*“So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it. ...* ²¹*I will avenge their blood, blood I have not avenged,^p for the LORD dwells in Zion.”*

^p Or *I will acquit their bloodguilt that I have not acquitted*

Mic 4:7 ... and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and *the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore.*

Zeph 3:15, 17 The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. *The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.* ... ¹⁷*The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.*

Zec 1:16-17 Therefore, *thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.* ¹⁷*Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.*

These verses with the reference to the rebuilding of God's temple (v. 16a) had a fulfillment in the return of the exiles from Babylon and the subsequent rebuilding of the temple. The prophecy also appears applicable to the renewed Israel and Jerusalem of the end times. Note that “measuring line” (v. 16) seems to refer to the work involved in reconstruction, alluding to the restoration of Jerusalem and possibly also of the temple.

Zec 2:10-11 Sing and rejoice, *O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.* ¹¹*And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.*

Note that in the last clause Zechariah appears to refer to himself, whereas God appears to be the subject of the preceding clause – “And I will dwell in your midst ...” (cf. CEV, GNT, NirV).

Zec 8:3 *Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain.*

✦ **In the afterlife, God will live with his people as their God:**

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, *“Behold, the dwelling place^a of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^r and God himself will be with them as their God.^s”*

^a Or *tabernacle*

^r Some manuscripts *peoples*

^s Some manuscripts omit *as their God*

Note: References to a temple of God in Jerusalem in the future

See also:

- [Ezek 37:26b-28](#) ↑; [Zec 1:16](#) ↑
- [God's people will have the right to the tree of life and the water of life](#), p. 737

Some commentators understand at least a number of the following verses to be speaking of a new future temple of God in Jerusalem. (See the comment below under the first Ezekiel passage.)

Isa 2:3 ... and many peoples shall come, and say: *“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”* For out of Zion shall go the law,^t and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

^t Or *teaching*

Isa 56:4-7 For thus says the LORD: *“To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant,⁵ I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. ⁶“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”*



Jer 33:11a ... the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as *they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD*: "Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!"

Ezek 40:2, 48 In visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down on a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south. ... ⁴⁸Then he brought me to *the vestibule of the temple* and measured the jambs of the vestibule, five cubits on either side. And the breadth of *the gate* was fourteen cubits, and *the sidewalls of the gate*^u were three cubits on either side.

^u Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *was fourteen cubits, and the sidewalls of the gate*

Ezekiel 40-47 contains a vision/s of a temple (cf. **Ezek 41:4-5, 13 ↓; Ezek 43:4-7a ↓**). One interpretation is that it speaks of a Millennium temple, during a messianic kingdom on earth. Another view is that the temple and its practices are symbolic of the afterlife.

Ezek 41:3-5, 13 Then he went into *the inner room* and measured the jambs of the entrance, two cubits; and the entrance, six cubits; and the sidewalls on either side^v of the entrance, seven cubits. ⁴And he measured the length of the room, twenty cubits, and its breadth, twenty cubits, across *the nave*. And he said to me, "This is the Most Holy Place." ⁵Then he measured *the wall of the temple*, six cubits thick, and the breadth of *the side chambers*, four cubits, *all around the temple*. ... ¹³Then he measured the temple, a hundred cubits long; and the yard and the building with its walls, a hundred cubits long; ...

^v Septuagint; Hebrew *and the breadth*

Note that "the nave" (v. 4) is likely the main room of the temple (cf. CEV), the outer sanctuary adjoining the Most Holy Place.

Ezek 43:4-7a As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, ⁵the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, *the glory of the LORD filled the temple*. ⁶While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, ⁷and he said to me, "Son of man, *this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever*."

Hag 2:6-9 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. ⁷And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and *I will fill this house*

with glory, says the LORD of hosts. ⁸The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. ⁹*The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former*, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.

This refers initially to the second temple that the Jews built after the Babylonian exile. In saying that its glory would prove to be greater than that of the first temple, "the former" (v. 9a), Haggai's words may refer to the spiritual temple that is the NT church and/or a new temple of the renewed Jerusalem.

Mal 3:1-3 Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And *the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple*; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and *he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD*.^w

^w Or *and they will belong to the LORD, bringers of an offering in righteousness*

The reference in v. 3 to the Levites bringing offerings has worship in the temple in view.

Zec 6:11-13 Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹²And say to him, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. ¹³*It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD* and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

This crowning of the high priest (v. 11) is understood to be symbolic, portraying the messianic King-Priest who would build the temple of God (v. 12).

✚ In the new Jerusalem, God's presence amongst his people will be such that there will be no temple:

Rev 21:3, 22 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place^x of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^y and God himself will be with them as their God.^z ... ²²And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

^x Or *tabernacle*

^y Some manuscripts *peoples*

^z Some manuscripts omit *as their God*



Pray for persecuted Christians

f) Exaltation and Glorification

Israel will be exalted among the nations because of what God will do for her. In fact God will glorify Israel.

Subsections

- Israel will be dominant among the nations, who will serve it
- The nations will know and acknowledge God's presence in and care of Israel
- The nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God . . .
- . . . and nations will be established with Israel as God's people
- The nations will bring their wealth to Jerusalem, as the city of God
- God himself will exceedingly bless Israel
- God will glorify Israel
- Israel's glory will primarily be God, with the glory of his presence
- Israel's renewal will bring God glory
- Note: Israel will have no more shame

Israel will be dominant among the nations, who will serve it

See also:

- [Isa 60:14](#) ↕
- [Israel will defeat its enemies](#), p. 995

Mic 4:1, 8 *It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it,  ... ⁸And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem. *

The "mountain of the house of the LORD" (v. 1) is Mount Zion. Verse 1 speaks of Jerusalem's rule over and exaltation above the nations. Likewise v. 8 seems to refer to her dominion over the nations.

Mic 5:6-8 *... they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border. ⁷Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. ⁸And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. *

Often references to renowned enemies of Israel – such as Assyria (v. 6) and those in Isaiah 11:14 below – signify Israel's enemies in general. For further comment on this passage see [Israel will defeat its enemies](#), p. 995.

Isa 11:14 *But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them. *

Isa 14:2 *And the peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the LORD's land as male and female slaves. They will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them. *

Isa 27:6 *In days to come^a Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit. *

^a Hebrew *In those to come*

Israel's prominence throughout the world may be foremost in view here. Alternatively, though not unconnected, the clause "fill the whole world with fruit" may be speaking of the blessings that will come through Israel to the world, possibly alluding to the spread of the gospel and God's kingdom.

Isa 45:14 *Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: 'Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.'" *

Isa 49:23 *Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame. *



Isa 60:10-12 *Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. ¹¹Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. ¹²For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste.*

The final clause of v. 11 speaks further of the subservience of the kings of the nations, quite possibly even of them being led as captives in a victory procession (cf. NIV, NLT).

Isa 61:5 *Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; ...*

Amos 9:11-12 “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, ¹²that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,”^b declares the LORD who does this.

^b Hebrew; Septuagint (compare Acts 15:17) *that the remnant of mankind and all the nations who are called by my name may seek the Lord*

This speaks of Israel possessing nations, but note the alternative rendering in the text note (cf. Acts 15:17).

✦ Israel will possess nations:

Isa 54:3 *For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.*

Amos 9:12 also speaks of Israel possessing other nations – “... that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name,” declares the LORD who does this.” Obadiah 1:19-20 similarly speaks of Israel possessing nations surrounding her.

The nations will know and acknowledge God's presence in and care of Israel

See also:

- [Isa 45:14](#)
- [Jer 3:17](#)

The nations' acknowledgement of God's presence in Israel is also implied by the following three subsections.

Ezek 39:7 And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And *the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.*

Zec 8:23 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'*

Ezek 37:26-28 I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land^c and multiply them, and *will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.*

^c Hebrew lacks *in their land*

Isa 60:14 *The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

This indicates that the nations will acknowledge God's presence in Jerusalem and also that she belongs to God.

Isa 49:26 I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. *Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*

Note that this and the following verses speak of the nations knowing or acknowledging God's care of Israel.

Isa 52:9-10 Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for *the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*

The nations will witness “the salvation of our God” (v. 10) when he redeems Jerusalem (v. 9; cf. [Isa 49:26](#)).

Isa 61:9 Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; *all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.*

Jer 33:9 And *this city^d shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.*

^d Hebrew *And it*



‡ **All the peoples will praise and honor Jerusalem:**

Zeph 3:19-20 Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. ²⁰At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD. 

Similarly Isaiah 62 implies that God will make Jerusalem "a praise in the earth" (v. 7; cf. Deut 26:19) – pointing out that: "The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory ..." (v. 2).

The nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God...

Ps 102:21-22 ... that they may declare in Zion the name of the LORD, and in Jerusalem his praise, ²²when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the LORD. 

Isa 56:6-8 "And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— ⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." ⁸The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, "I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered." 

Verse 8 appears to primarily speak of God bringing people of other nations to join the gathered exiles of Israel in worship of him. The phrasing also points to these peoples being joined to Israel as God's people, the theme of the following subsection.

Jer 3:17 At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart. 

Zec 14:16 Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. 

Isa 2:2-3 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, ³and many peoples

shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law,^e and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 

^e Or teaching

In conjunction with coming to Jerusalem to worship God, the nations will submit to God's law and word.

Isa 25:6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. 

Celebrating feasts (cf. Zec 14:16 ↑) – for which the people gathered in Jerusalem – was an important part of Israelite worship of God. Such worship of God in Jerusalem, by "all peoples", appears to be in view here.

Zec 6:15 "And those who are far off shall come and help to build the temple of the LORD. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And this shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God." 

This appears to refer to the temple of the future renewed Jerusalem. The readiness of people from "far away" – probably Gentiles rather than exiled Jews – to help to build the temple, reflects their desire to worship God, in Jerusalem.

Zec 8:22 Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. 

... and nations will be established with Israel as God's people

See also:

▪ [Isa 56:8](#) ↑

Ps 87:4-6 Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; behold, Philistia and Tyre, with Cush^f— "This one was born there," they say. ⁵And of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her"; for the Most High himself will establish her. ⁶The LORD records as he registers the peoples, "This one was born there." Selah 

^f Probably Nubia

This speaks of God recording people of formerly wicked nations as being born in Zion, the city of God – implying that they will be established amongst God's people.



Isa 19:24-25 *In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."* 

Jer 12:16 *And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, 'As the LORD lives,' even as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people.* 

This is speaking of nations who had been wicked neighbors of Israel (cf. v. 14).

Zec 2:11 *And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.* 

Isa 14:1 *For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and sojourners will join them and will attach themselves to the house of Jacob.* 

This speaks of individuals from other nations joining Israel.

✦ In contrast, the earth will become desolate:

Mic 7:12-13 *In that day they^g will come to you, from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt to the River, from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain. ¹³But the earth will be desolate because of its inhabitants, for the fruit of their deeds.* 

^g Hebrew *he*

People will come to Jerusalem (v. 12) for the rest of the earth will be basically a wasteland (v. 13).

The nations will bring their wealth to Jerusalem, as the city of God

Ps 68:29 *Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bear gifts to you.* 

Isa 18:7 *At that time tribute will be brought to the LORD of hosts from a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place of the name of the LORD of hosts.* 

Isa 45:14 Thus says the LORD: *"The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to you and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will*

plead with you, saying: 'Surely God is in you, and there is no other, no god besides him.'" 

The latter part of the verse indicates that God's presence with Israel was the reason why the nations brought products and merchandise to them.

Isa 60:5-9, 11, 13, 16-17 Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult,^h because *the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. ⁶A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD. ⁷All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will beautify my beautiful house. ⁸Who are these that fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows? ⁹For the coastlands shall hope for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from afar, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has made you beautiful.  ... ¹¹Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.  ... ¹³The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.  ... ¹⁶You shall suck the milk of nations; you shall nurse at the breast of kings; and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. ¹⁷Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver; instead of wood, bronze, instead of stones, iron. I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness.* 

^h Hebrew *your heart shall tremble and grow wide*

Verse 7 appears to speak of sheep being brought by nations as offerings. The "milk of nations" (v. 16) speaks of the cream of their goods, that will be for the use of the people of Jerusalem (cf. NCV, NLT; [Isa 61:6](#) ↓).

Isa 61:6 ... but you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; *you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast.* 

Here and in Isaiah 66:12 immediately below, the "glory" of the nations is a reference to their wealth.

Isa 66:12 For thus says the LORD: *"Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees.* 



Hag 2:7-9 And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. ⁸The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. ⁹The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.

These verses appear to have eschatological significance. This is supported by the context, with the preceding verse (v. 6) being quoted in Hebrews 12:26-27 in reference to Jesus Christ's return.

Zec 14:14 Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance.

Note that this is actually speaking of the wealth of the surrounding nations being captured, rather than these nations voluntarily bringing it to Jerusalem.

✦ Nations will be drawn to the glory of Zion:

Isa 55:5 Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Similarly Isaiah 60:3 speaks of nations being drawn to the light of God's glory in Zion – "And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."

God himself will exceedingly bless Israel

See also:

- [Isa 60:7, 9, 13, 16-17](#) ; [Isa 66:12](#) ; [Hag 2:7-9](#) ; [Isa 55:5](#)

Isa 44:3-4 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. ⁴They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams.

This is an example of a passage with a number of applications or stages of fulfillment. It quite likely initially referred to the exiles returning to the land of Israel from Babylon. Particularly with the reference to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, it pertains to the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and to believers in general. It is often understood to also look ahead to the renewed Israel for its final fulfillment.

Isa 61:7-9 Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy. ⁸For I the LORD love justice; I

hate robbery and wrong;ⁱ I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their offspring shall be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.

ⁱ Or robbery with a burnt offering

A "double portion" (v. 7; cf. [Zec 9:12](#)) probably alludes to the double share given to a firstborn son (cf. Deut 21:17) and may have in view Israel as being God's firstborn son (cf. Ex 4:22; Jer 31:9). As such Israel will be blessed more than any other nation. Note that the "everlasting covenant" (v. 8; cf. [Jer 32:40](#)) is usually understood to be a reference to the new covenant.

Jer 32:40-42 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. ⁴¹I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul. ⁴²"For thus says the LORD: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them.

Jer 33:9 And this city^j shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

^j Hebrew And it

Ezek 34:26 And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing.

The term "my hill" refers to Mount Zion.

Ezek 36:11b And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

The land of Israel is being spoken of here, reflective of the blessed state of Israel's people.

Zec 9:12, 16-17 Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double. ... ¹⁶On that day the LORD their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land. ¹⁷For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty! Grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the young women.



The reference to "his beauty" may well be to that manifested in his people or land (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT).

Isa 65:18, 20, 22-23 But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, *I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.* ... ²⁰*No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.* ... ²²*They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy^k the work of their hands.* ²³*They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity,^l for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them.*

^k Hebrew *shall wear out*

^l Or *for sudden terror*

This shows some particular ways in which God will greatly bless Jerusalem. Note that in a similar vein 33:24a says, 'And no inhabitant will say, "I am sick" ...'

God will glorify Israel

See also:

- [Isa 60:1-2](#)

Isa 4:2 *In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.*

A number of commentators consider "the branch of the LORD" to refer to the righteous remnant of Israel (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT), although traditionally it has been taken to refer to the Messiah (cf. NIV). Particularly if the latter is the case, the "fruit of the land" may well have a spiritual meaning, perhaps speaking of spiritual fruit arising from "the branch".

Isa 35:1-2 *The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; ²it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.*

Verses 1-2a demonstrate the glory (v. 2b) that will be given to Israel and its land. Note that the crocus (v. 1b) is a small plant which has bright yellow, purple or white flowers.

Isa 54:11-12 O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted, *behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires.*^m *I will make your pinnacles of agate,ⁿ your gates of carbuncles,^o and all your wall of precious stones.*

^m Or *lapis lazuli*

ⁿ Or *jasper, or ruby*

^o Or *crystal*

This illustrates God's glorification of Jerusalem.

Isa 55:5 Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for *he has glorified you.*

Isa 60:9, 13, 15 For the coastlands shall hope for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from afar, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because *he has made you beautiful.* ... ¹³*The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.* ... ¹⁵*Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age.*

Isa 62:2-3, 6-7 *The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.* ³*You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.* ... ⁶*On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, ⁷and give him no rest until *he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.**

Note that the "new name" (v. 2) appears to refer to one or more of the new names Zion is called later in vv. 4, 12 – which speak of God's new relationship with her in terms alluding to marriage.

Jer 30:19 Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who celebrate. I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; *I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.*

Zeph 3:19-20 Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and *I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.* ²⁰*At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and*



praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD. 

‡ Glorious things are spoken of Jerusalem:

Ps 87:1-3 On the holy mount stands the city he founded; ²the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. ³*Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God.* Selah 

Israel's glory will primarily be God, with the glory of his presence

See also:

- [Isa 35:2](#) 
- [God's people will share in God's and Jesus Christ's glory](#), p. 747

Isa 28:5 *In that day the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory,^p and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people, ...* 

- ‡ The Hebrew words for *glory* and *hosts* sound alike
- God would or will become the pride and glory of his people.

Isa 60:1-3, 19-20 Arise, shine, for *your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.* ²For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but *the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.* ³*And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*  ... ¹⁹The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light;^a but *the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.*^r ²⁰*Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.* 

- ^a Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint, Targum add *by night*
- ^r Or *your beauty*

Jerusalem's "light" (vv. 1, 3) is largely due to the presence of God's glory over her, as her "everlasting light" (vv. 19, 20).

Zec 2:5 And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, *declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.* 

Ps 102:15-16 Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and *all the kings of the earth will fear your glory.* ¹⁶*For the LORD builds up Zion; he appears in his glory; ...* 

Isa 24:23 *Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.* 

Note that the above passages speak of Israel's glory primarily being due to God's glory or glorious presence being in her, in Jerusalem in particular. This and the following passage speak further of the glory of God's presence being in her, pointing to Israel's glory rather than explicitly speaking of it.

Isa 66:18-20 For I know^s their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming^t to gather all nations and tongues. And *they shall come and shall see my glory,* ¹⁹and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, *to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.* ²⁰*And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem,* says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. 

^s Septuagint, Syriac; Hebrew lacks *know*

^t Hebrew *and it is coming*

The references to the nations coming to see God's glory (v. 18b) and to them bringing Israelites to God's "holy mountain Jerusalem" (v. 20a), imply that the passage has the glory of God's presence in Jerusalem in view when it speaks of God's glory in vv. 18-19.

‡ The temple being filled with glory:

Hag 2:6-9 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. ⁷And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and *I will fill this house with glory,* says the LORD of hosts. ⁸The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. ⁹*The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former,* says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts. 

As noted earlier, at least some commentators think that this will have an ultimate fulfillment in a temple in the renewed Jerusalem. In v. 7, "I will fill this house with glory" may well speak of the glory of God's presence (cf. CEV), though material splendor may instead be in view.

Israel's renewal will bring God glory

See also:

- [God's glory is reflected in his powerful deeds](#), p. 18
- [God's saving of his people reveals God's glory](#), p. 924



Isa 26:15 But *you have increased the nation, O LORD, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land.* 

Despite its past tense, this appears to be prophetic – or at least to have a future application.

Isa 44:23 Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For *the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and will be glorified^u in Israel.* 

^u Or *will display his beauty*

God will be glorified in redeeming Israel (cf. [Isa 46:13](#) ↓).

Isa 60:21 Your people shall all be righteous; *they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.^v* 

^v Or *that I might display my beauty*

Isa 61:3 ... to grant to those who mourn in Zion— *to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.^w* 

^w Or *that he may display his beauty*

The term “oaks of righteousness” depicts the people of Jerusalem as being “lofty, strong, and magnificent, distinguished for uprightness, justice, and right standing with God” (AMP).

Isa 43:5-7 Fear not, for I am with you; *I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. ⁶I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, ⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.* 

Quite likely v. 7 is saying that God created his people so as to bring himself glory, presumably at least partly through his restoration of them (vv. 5-6).

Isa 55:12-13 *“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. ¹³Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”* 

The restored Israel would in effect be a “memorial to the LORD” (NASB; cf. NRSV), “a lasting witness to the glory of the LORD” (CEV). As such it will bring God great fame and honor (cf. AMP, NlrV, NLT).

Isa 46:13 I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; *I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory.* 

Jer 33:9 And *this city^x shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.* 

^x Hebrew *And it*

† God's glory will be seen in the renewed Israel:

Isa 35:1-2 *The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; ²it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.* 

The last statement is quite possibly speaking of God's glory and majesty being evident in Israel's wonderful and glorious restoration. Alternatively, it may be referring to the glory of God's presence coming to Israel, as per the previous subsection.

Note: Israel will have no more shame

Isa 29:22 Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: *“Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale.* 

The phrase “grow pale” may be speaking of being “pale with shame” (GNT; cf. CEV, NCV), but being “pale with fear” (NLT; cf. AMP) is a possibility.

Isa 45:17 But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation; *you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.* 

Isa 54:4 Fear not, for *you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.* 

The “shame of your youth” most likely refers to Israel's enslavement in Egypt and the “reproach of your widowhood” to the Babylonian exile (cf. NlrV). The latter alludes to the nation's loss of their close relationship with God, who had been and would again be like a husband to them (cf. v. 5).



Isa 61:7 *Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy.* 📖

Joel 2:26-27 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And *my people shall never again be put to shame.* ²⁷You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And *my people shall never again be put to shame.* 📖

This ends a section on the promise of restoration after a severe locust plague. But in speaking of God's people "never again" being shamed and with earlier passages (cf. 1:2-2:11) speaking of "the day of the LORD", these verses may well have an eschatological application.

Zeph 3:11, 19 *On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me;*

for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. 📖 ... ¹⁹Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and *I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.* 📖

Isa 25:8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and *the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth*, for the LORD has spoken. 📖

God will take away that which brings his people shame and disgrace – basically the consequences stemming from her sin.

Pray for persecuted Christians



VOLUME II.

WHAT TO DO

Unit E

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Being Right with God

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I. Getting Right with God

See also:

- a) *Baptism*, p. 1438
- a) *Confession of Jesus Christ*, p. 1450

The Bible does not simply repeat one basic formula as to how to get “right with God”. However there are two prominent themes, which basically encompass the other things that the Bible mentions. These two fundamental themes are repentance and belief in Jesus Christ.

Bear in mind that in using the expression “right with God”, this chapter largely has in view being deemed righteous in God’s eyes, which involves the forgiveness of one’s sins. As such, it also means that we are at peace with God.

Note the topic of *Baptism* cross-referenced above, for it is also relevant to the subject of getting right with God, as basically it signifies that one has become “right with God”.

a) God’s Invitation

Subsections

- God and Jesus Christ invite all people to come to them and be saved . . .
- . . . For God wants all people to be saved, making salvation open to everyone
- God wants us to earnestly seek him – and so find him
- We have the choice of whether or not to respond to God and Jesus Christ
- We must believe in God and what he says
- We need to be open to believing and responding to God
- Now is the time to seek God and to respond to him
- Other preliminary points to consider
- Note: Apart from God, life is pointless

God and Jesus Christ invite all people to come to them and be saved . . .

Isa 45:22 *Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.* ☞

Isa 55:1-3 *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.* ☞

God invites all people to come and have their spiritual thirst and hunger satisfied, that their “soul may live” (v. 3).

Matt 11:28-30 *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* ☞

Jesus’ invitation is in a sense an invitation to salvation as the promised “rest” appears to encompass rest from: trying to obey the OT law to be righteous before God, particularly with how it was embellished by the Jews; the burden of sin; and any troubles in our lives that weary and burden us.

Matt 22:9-10 *Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find. ¹⁰And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.* ☞

The wedding banquet for the king’s son in this parable (cf. vv. 1-14) appears to allude to the messianic banquet of the afterlife and so the invitation to the banquet amounts to an invitation to salvation. Note that in saying that “both good and bad” (v. 10) were invited, Matthew may be emphasizing that all people are invited – even those who are considered to be bad.

John 7:37 *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”* ☞

This is in effect an invitation to salvation (cf. *Rev 2:17* ↓), which involves the satisfying of one’s spiritual thirst.

John 10:9 *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.* ☞

This suggests that we are invited to enter the “door” that is Jesus, and so be saved.

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.* ☞



Note that the two occurrences of “Come” may be calls for Jesus Christ to return (cf. vv. 12, 20), rather than appeals to non-believers (here made by the Holy Spirit and the “Bride” or church). However the latter is definitely the focus in the second half of the verse.

... For God wants all people to be saved, making salvation open to everyone

See also:

- ... *Jesus Christ died for all people*, p. 618
- a) *Prologue: God Draws People to Himself*, p. 758

1Tim 2:3-4 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of *God our Savior*, ⁴*who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* 📖

2Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,^a *not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* 📖

^a Some manuscripts *on your account*

Acts 17:30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now *he commands all people everywhere to repent, ...* 📖

The fact that God commands all people to repent suggests that salvation is open to everyone.

Rom 10:11-13 For the Scripture says, “*Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.*” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; *for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.* ¹³For “*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*” 📖

Here Paul stresses that salvation is open to all people. Note that as v. 13 suggests, to “call on” the Lord (v. 12) in effect means to pray for salvation, believing in him (cf. BKC).

1Tim 4:10 For to this end we toil and strive,^b because we have our hope set on *the living God, who is the Savior of all people*, especially of those who believe. 📖

^b Some manuscripts *and suffer reproach*

The description of God as “the Savior of all people” implies that his salvation is open to all, although it only comes to fruition for “those who believe”.

Titus 2:11 For *the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ...* 📖

Most likely this means that in his grace God has made salvation open to all people. (cf. NBC)

Luke 2:10-11 And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, *I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.* ¹¹*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* 📖

The phrase “all the people” (v. 10) probably refers to all the Jewish people, but quite possibly it alludes to or at least is applicable to all humankind (cf. vv. 30-32) – “everyone” (CEV, NLT). From this it can be inferred that this good news of a savior and his salvation is for everyone.

John 1:7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, *that all might believe through him.* 📖

Note that the reference is to John the Baptist.

John 3:16-17 For *God so loved the world,^c that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order *that the world might be saved through him.* 📖

^c Or *For this is how God loved the world*

‡ **God is not willing that any “little ones” be lost:**

Matt 18:12-14 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴*So it is not the will of my^d Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.* 📖

^d Some manuscripts *your*

Many commentators consider that “little ones” is referring to young believers or believers generally who change and “become like children”, humbling themselves (vv. 3-4). If, however, it does refer to or is applicable to children generally (cf. v. 10), then this reference also supports the assertion that God wants all people to be saved.

God wants us to earnestly seek him – and so find him

See also:

- *Seek God – with all your heart*, p. 1196
- *Seek God wholeheartedly and you will find him*, p. 1197

Acts 17:26-27 And *he made from one man every nation of mankind* to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷*that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him.* Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ... 📖



Acts 15:16-17 After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, ¹⁷*that the remnant^e of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things ...* 

^e Or *rest*

In these verses James quotes Amos 9:11-12, which probably ultimately refers to the end of the age. Here James appears to use it to affirm that the contention that God wants the Gentiles to come to him to be saved (cf. v. 19) is consistent with the Scriptures.

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that *he rewards those who seek him.* 

Presumably enabling people to find him is one prime way in which God “rewards those who seek him”.

Deut 4:29 *But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.* 

The reference is actually to God’s people seeking him again after being unfaithful, but it is also applicable to people initially seeking him. The same applies below to Jeremiah 29:13-14a and Amos 5:4-6.

1Chr 28:9 And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. *If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.* 

Jer 29:13-14 *You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.* ¹⁴*I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.* 

Matt 7:7-8 Ask, and it will be given to you; *seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.* ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and *the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.* 

This is in fact referring to persistence in prayer, but this teaching is also applicable to earnestly seeking God and “knocking” on “the door” to God’s kingdom.

✦ **God’s call to wayward Israel to seek him and live:**

Amos 5:4-6 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: *“Seek me and live; ⁵but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter*

into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing.” ⁶*Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel, ...* 

This call is applicable to all people, for them to seek God and have spiritual life.

We have the choice of whether or not to respond to God and Jesus Christ

See also:

▪ **1Chr 28:9** 

John 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.* 

This indicates that we have the choice of believing in or rejecting Jesus Christ.

Deut 30:15-19 See, *I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.* ¹⁶*If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God^f that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules,^g then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.* ¹⁷*But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish.* ¹⁹*I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ...* 

^f Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God*

^g Or *his just decrees*

Moses gave the people what was in effect a choice between life and death (vv. 15, 19). He urged the people to choose life (v. 19) by loving and obeying God (v. 16) – as opposed to choosing the path to death, by turning away from God to other gods (v. 17).

Josh 24:14-16, 22 “Now therefore *fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness.* Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and *serve the LORD.* ¹⁵*And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the*



Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."¹⁶Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, ...²²Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." 

Note that in v. 15 Joshua is speaking of a further choice of which gods to serve – if the people chose not to serve God.

Isa 1:19-20 *If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.* 

God's words to the people of Judah, who had turned away from him, indicate that they had the choice as to whether or not to respond to him. This reflects the assertion that all people have such a choice.

Ps 119:30, 173 *I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me. ... ¹⁷³Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts.* 

Isa 56:4 For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, ... 

John 7:17 *If anyone's will is to do God's^h will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.* 

^h Greek *his*

Prov 1:29 Because they hated knowledge and *did not choose the fear of the LORD, ...* 

Matt 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! *How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!* 

On the whole, the people of Jerusalem were not willing to respond to Jesus – i.e. they chose not to come to him.

Heb 12:25 See that you *do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.* 

✦ People are responsible for rejecting the gospel:

Acts 18:6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 

We must believe in God and what he says

See also:

- *Believing in Jesus Christ is integral to believing in God . . .*, p. 1042

We must believe in God, believing that he exists and believing what the Bible teaches about him, including the words that the Bible attributes to him.

Heb 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* 

Acts 16:34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that *he had believed in God.* 

1Pet 1:21 ... who through him are *believers in God*, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that *your faith and hope are in God.* 

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me* has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. 

Jesus' words were from God, who sent him. It is critical that we believe God's words.

Rom 4:16-24 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of *the God in whom he believed*, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸*In hope he believed* against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹*He did not weaken in faith* when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰*No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,* ²¹*fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.* ²²That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." ²³But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be counted to us who *believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ...* 

In describing Abraham as "the father of us all ... in the presence of the God in whom he believed" (vv. 16-17), Paul indicates that Abraham is the spiritual father of all people



who follow in his steps in believing in God (cf. vv. 23-24) and believing in what God says (vv. 20-21). Note that in speaking of Abraham as “the father of many nations” (vv. 17, 18), Paul links and draws parallels between Abraham being the father of many nations physically and him being the father of all believers spiritually.

We need to be open to believing and responding to God

See also:

- *Spiritual ignorance and lack of perception is caused partly by the ungodly being closed-minded . . .*, p. 1669

Note that most of the following passages illustrate the need to be open to believing and responding through the examples of people who were not open to doing so, in some cases even in the face of compelling evidence (cf. [Luke 16:29-31](#) ↓; [John 5:39-47](#) ↓; [John 12:37-40](#) ↓).

Jer 6:10 *To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it.* 

The term “uncircumcised” indicates that their ears were effectively closed to God’s word, as if they were people not in a covenantal relationship with God. The verse illustrates that those whose ears or minds are closed to God’s word, will not heed or listen to it. Additionally, it shows that such people often find God’s word objectionable, further hardening themselves against responding to it.

Matt 18:2-4 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³and said, “Truly, I say to you, *unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* ⁴*Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* 

Similarly in [Mark 10:15](#) Jesus says, “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” These verses refer to the humility, openness and receptiveness of little children, characteristics which are required to believe Jesus’ message and enter God’s kingdom (cf. [11:25](#)).

Mark 16:14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and *he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.* 

Luke 11:34-36 *Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.* ³⁵*Therefore be careful lest*

the light in you be darkness. ³⁶*If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.* 

We need to ensure that we are not spiritually blind. We need good eyes – openness to spiritual truth, which will enlighten us.

Luke 16:29-31 But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹*He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’* 

Verse 31 indicates that for those whose minds are closed to God’s word – and so refuse to repent (v. 30) – not even the testimony of someone raised from the dead will open their minds. This would be shown to some extent at least by Jesus Christ’s resurrection, which possibly is alluded to here.

John 3:19-21 And this is the judgment: *the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.* ²⁰*For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.* ²¹*But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.* 

The phrase “comes to the light” (v. 21a; cf. v. 20) speaks of coming to Jesus Christ, the light. This passage indicates that unrepentant evil doers will not come to Jesus Christ for their deeds will be shown for what they are (v. 20). Thus because of their evil ways they are not open to believing and responding to Jesus Christ – in contrast to those who seek to do what is true or right (v. 21).

John 5:39-47 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and *it is they that bear witness about me,* ⁴⁰*yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* ⁴¹*I do not receive glory from people.* ⁴²*But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.* ⁴³*I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me.* If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴*How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?* ⁴⁵*Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope.* ⁴⁶*For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.* ⁴⁷*But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?* 

The Jews, particularly the Jewish authorities, blankly refused to believe Jesus and to come to him to have life (v. 40); they were not open to Jesus and his message. Factors in this



included: studying the Scriptures with closed minds (vv. 39-40) and so in fact not believing what the Scriptures actually teach (vv. 45-47); not having the “love of God” (v. 42), probably love for God (cf. CEV, GNT, Nlrv); and their desire for glory or praise from men rather than from God (vv. 41-44).

John 12:37-40 *Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” ³⁹Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”*



Verses 39-40 speak of God’s judicial blinding of many of the Jews – with their subsequent lack of spiritual perception and openness – as being the reason for their unbelief (vv. 37-38).

Luke 8:15 *As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.*

One can infer from this that having “an honest and good heart” is important for being open to responding to God’s word and holding to it.

✦ One needs to recognize one’s sin:

Matt 21:31b-32 *Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.*

Here Jesus is addressing the self-righteous chief priests and elders. These verses exemplify the fact that admitted sinners are open to believing and responding to God’s message, in contrast to those who are self-righteous. To be open to the message one must recognize one’s sin (cf. 9:13b).

Now is the time to seek God and to respond to him

Isa 55:6 *Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ...*

Hos 10:12 *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*



2Cor 6:1-2 *Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ²For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

To underline the urgent need to respond to – or to secure – the offer of salvation that God has given in his favor or “grace” (v. 1), Paul cites Isaiah 49:8, applying it to the present time.

Heb 4:6-7 *Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”*

“Today” – the present time, which will not continue indefinitely – is the time to respond positively to God’s voice. Here the particular context concerns taking hold of the opportunity of entering God’s rest (cf. vv. 1-12).

Mark 1:14-15 *Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*

Jesus Christ’s life, ministry and sacrifice inaugurated the kingdom of God in its current form – a spiritual, present reality, to be fully consummated at the end of the age when God’s authority will be fully imposed once and for all. With the nearness of its present form – before its consummation – now is the time for the required response, to “repent and believe in the gospel” (v. 15)

Luke 12:54-59 *He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? ⁵⁷“And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. ⁵⁹I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny.”ⁱ*

ⁱ Greek *lepton*, a Jewish bronze or copper coin worth about 1/128 of a *denarius* (which was a day’s wage for a laborer)

Despite the fact that the people could read the signs which indicated a change in the weather (vv. 54-55), they could not



– or were not willing to – interpret the signs of the present time (primarily what God was doing through Jesus) and respond accordingly. Jesus uses the illustration in vv. 58-59 to portray their plight and highlight the urgency for them to take action now to be reconciled to God. Jesus' teaching is very much applicable today. Note that in v. 58, "accuser", "magistrate", "judge" and "officer" may all refer to God, reflecting various aspects of his position in regard to people while they remain not reconciled to him.

Luke 13:23-25 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, ²⁴"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.'"



Instead of addressing the issue of how many would be saved (v. 23), Jesus speaks of what one needs to do in order to be saved – i.e. we must do all we can to enter the narrow door of salvation (cf. [Matt 7:13-14](#) ↕). In speaking of this, Jesus refers to the need to act now, saying that the time will come when the door will be closed and it will be too late for those who want to enter then (v. 25).

Other preliminary points to consider

See also:

- [Be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus Christ](#), p. 1192
- [Be willing to give up everything – even life's most basic and dearest things](#), p. 1395
- [c\) Spiritual Ignorance \(I\): Causes and Results](#), p. 1668
- [a\) God's People Face Persecution](#), p. 1982

Matt 7:13-14 Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy^j that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

^j Some manuscripts *For the way is wide and easy*

This implies that determined effort is required to: find the "gate" or way that leads to life; enter through the "gate" (cf. [Luke 13:23](#) ↑); and keep to the narrow way to life.

Luke 14:15-24 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" ¹⁶But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.

¹⁷And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant^k to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' ¹⁹And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' ²⁰And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' ²²And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴For I tell you,^l none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

^k Greek *bondservant*; also verses 21, 22, 23

^l The Greek word for *you* here is plural

This is a parable portraying God's invitation to all people to come into his kingdom (v. 15). It largely contrasts the responses of the self-sufficient – with their higher priorities (vv. 18-20) – and the needy, who it implies generally do respond positively (vv. 21-22). As such it warns against: being self-sufficient, seeing little need for God in our lives; and giving other things a higher priority than God, leaving no time for him.

Note that the instruction to go beyond the city limits to urge people to come in (v. 23), may allude to the extension of God's offer of salvation to the Gentiles. Thus the uninterested group would then appear to largely signify those of the Jews who were self-sufficient and self-righteous – notably the religious leaders of the day.

Luke 14:28-33 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." ³¹Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

The cost of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is enormous (v. 33). So those who want to respond and follow him should first count the cost (cf. vv. 29-32).



Heb 2:2-3a For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? 

If people were accountable under the OT law – as a means of obtaining righteousness in God’s sight – how much more so are we in the light of God’s greater offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. Neglecting it will bring dreadful consequences.

Note: Apart from God, life is pointless

See also:

- *Note: Do not work for things that do not satisfy or do not last – and so are in effect meaningless*, p. 1402

The following references are from Ecclesiastes. Its main theme, often underlying some of its more despairing conclusions, is that apart from God everything is pointless. In conveying this, “vanity” is often used. The word translated as “vanity” literally means “vapor” (cf. 1:2 text note), pointing to something being without substance, fleeting and/or elusive. Thus “vanity” presumably has the sense of being “in vain” – being worthless, empty, futile and/or unfulfilling.

Relevant to this whole section (*God’s Invitation*) is the assertion apparent in the references that to live without God – with life’s realities being what they are – leaves one’s life a largely pointless existence.

Ecc 1:2-10 *Vanity^m of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. ³What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? ⁴A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. ⁵The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastensⁿ to the place where it rises. ⁶The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. ⁷All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. ⁸All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. ⁹What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. ¹⁰Is there a thing of which it is said, “See, this is new”? It has been already in the ages before us.* 

^m Hebrew *vapor* (so throughout Ecclesiastes)

ⁿ Or *and returns panting*

Verses 5-7 portray the unchanging patterns of nature, which the author uses to illustrate that no matter what people do, nothing really satisfies (v. 8) or changes (vv. 9-10).

Ecc 1:14-15 *I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.^o ¹⁵What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.* 

^o Or *a feeding on wind*; compare Hosea 12:1 (so throughout Ecclesiastes)

Verse 15 appears to be saying that much of what is wrong in life cannot be fixed – although there other interpretations.

Ecc 2:1-2 *I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity. ²I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?”* 

Ecc 2:15-16 *Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?” And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. ¹⁶For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!* 

Ecc 2:22-23, 26 *What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? ²³For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.  ... ²⁶For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.* 

In v. 26 the author asserts that the sinner’s efforts are useless to him, toiling for no benefit to himself.

Ecc 3:19 *For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity.* 

Ecc 4:4 *Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man’s envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.* 

If one’s labor basically stems from envy of others – wanting what they have – then it is a rather pointless, hollow exercise.

Ecc 4:13-16 *Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice. ¹⁴For he went from prison to the throne, though in his own kingdom he had been born poor. ¹⁵I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that^p youth who was to stand in the king’s^q place. ¹⁶There was no end of all the people, all of*



whom he led. *Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.* 

^p Hebrew *the second*

^q Hebrew *his*

The previous king was foolish (v. 13), and so presumably the people were not happy with him. At first the new king, the youth, pleased the people – but later subjects were not pleased with him either. Such cycles of making a change in leadership only to be followed by disenchantment with the leader is to a large degree a pointless phenomenon. (The thought could also be applied to making some other kinds of changes in life.)

Eccl 11:8, 10 So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but *let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.*  ...¹⁰Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain^r from your body, for *youth and the dawn of life are vanity.* 

^r Or *evil*

In later life, with one's failing health, there will be many dark days; enduring many of them appears a meaningless proposition (v. 8). By the same token we should not be overly troubled by problems and physical disorders we encounter earlier in life, for youth and good health are short lived anyway and so soon come to nothing (v. 10).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Repentance

See also:

- *b) Addressing Sin (I): Return from Sin to God*, p. 1837
- *c) Addressing Sin (II): Deal with Sin before God*, p. 1841

The words in the Bible that are translated as “repent” speak of: changing one’s mind, regret and consequently turning around. When people are called to repent, they are called to change their mindset and turn away from sin to God.

Repentance and belief (or faith) are inextricably linked. Prior to repentance we must believe that God exists and that he requires us to turn to him. On repenting we must believe in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of the sin that we have turned away from.

Subsections

- We must repent
- Confess your sins . . .
- . . . and turn from sinful ways
- In turning from sin, do what is good and right . . .
- . . . and turn to God
- Repentance is required for the forgiveness of sins
- Repentance leads to life
- Repentance leads to spiritual enlightenment
- Not repenting will result in judgment and eternal punishment
- Note: The great rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents

We must repent

See also:

- [Mark 1:4](#) 
- . . . *We are to both believe and repent*, p. 1043

Matt 3:1-3 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²*“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: *‘Prepare^s the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’*” 

^s Or *crying: Prepare in the wilderness*

The call in v.3b is in effect a call for repentance (complementing the one in v. 2). Its implication appears to be that people should prepare themselves for the Lord, straightening out their lives – making them right and true.

Matt 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* 

Like John the Baptist in 3:1 above, Jesus emphasizes the need and urgency for one to repent by warning them that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand”, meaning that the kingdom “has come or is coming soon” (NLT text note). See also the introductory comment on *c) The Kingdom of God*, p. 1744.

Mark 6:12 So they went out and proclaimed that *people should repent.* 

Acts 17:30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but *now he commands all people everywhere to repent*, ... 



‡ Jesus called people who recognized themselves as sinners, to repentance:

Luke 5:32 *I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.* 

In this context “the righteous” refers to those who saw themselves as such – self-righteous people.

Confess your sins . . .

See also:

- [Confess your sin to God](#), p. 1842

Mark 1:4-5 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were *being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.* 

This suggests that confession of sins is a significant act in the process of repentance, with the people “confessing their sins” (v. 5) in undergoing John’s “baptism of repentance” (v. 4).

Acts 19:18 Also many of those who were now believers came, *confessing and divulging their practices.* 

1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 

This was actually written to Christians, rather than people turning to God for the first time. Confession, like repentance, is something believers need to keep doing when they inevitably sin. (See also [Confess your sin to God](#), p. 1842.)

Luke 15:21 *And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’* ^t 

^t Some manuscripts add *treat me as one of your hired servants*

Here Jesus was drawing a parallel between the Prodigal Son’s return to his father – which involved this confession of his sin – and that of repentant sinners coming to God.

. . . and turn from sinful ways

See also:

- [Stop sinning, turning away from sin](#), p. 1837

Ezek 33:11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but *that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways*, for why will you die, O house of Israel? 

2Tim 2:19 But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord *depart from iniquity.*” 

Acts 3:26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by *turning every one of you from your wickedness.* 

John 8:11 She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; *go, and from now on sin no more.*” 

Jesus was speaking here to a woman who had been caught in adultery.

Jonah 3:8 ...but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. *Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.* 

In turning from sin, do what is good and right . . .

See also:

- [b\) The Need for Good Deeds](#), p. 1067

Ps 34:14 *Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.* 

Isa 1:16-17 *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.* 

Jer 7:5 For if you truly *amend your ways and your deeds*, if you truly *execute justice one with another*, ... 

Jer 35:15a I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, ‘*Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds*, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers.’ 



To “amend” our deeds means that we must change the way we act (cf. NIRV). As such we need to turn from evil and sin, and begin to do what is good and right (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: *break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed*, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.

Ezek 18:21 But if a wicked person *turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right*, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Matt 3:8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

People are to do things that show they have repented (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT; [Acts 26:20](#) ↓).

Acts 26:20 ... but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, *performing deeds in keeping with their repentance*.

... and turn to God

See also:

- [Acts 26:20](#) ↑
- [Isa 55:7](#) ↓
- [Return to God](#), p. 1840
- [Return to God with all your heart – not insincerely](#), p. 1840

Isa 45:22 *Turn to me and be saved*, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.

Acts 14:15 Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should *turn from these vain things to a living God*, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

Acts 20:20-21 ... how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of *repentance toward God* and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Thes 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how *you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God*, ...

Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed *turned to the Lord*.

Here the reference is to turning to Jesus Christ (cf. v. 20).

1Pet 2:25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now *returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls*.

In the light of the context, Peter seems to be speaking of his readers' pre-conversion state. Thus “returned” would appear to have the sense of “turned” (NLT). The “Shepherd and Overseer” is Jesus Christ.

2Ki 23:25 Before him there was no king like him, who *turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might*, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.

✦ **God accepts those who do what is right (and fear him):**

Acts 10:34-35 So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that *God shows no partiality*, ³⁵*but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him*.”

Repentance is required for the forgiveness of sins

See also:

- [... Forgive and God will forgive you](#), p. 1550
- [When we repent God forgives our sins ...](#), p. 1848

Note that the above subsections speak of what is involved in repenting. This and the following subsections speak of the outcomes of repenting (and of not repenting).

Mark 1:4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of *repentance for the forgiveness of sins*.

The repentance that John's baptism signified brought forgiveness of sins.

Luke 24:47 ... and that *repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations*, beginning from Jerusalem.

The inference is that repenting brings forgiveness of sins (cf. CEV, NLT), because of what Jesus has accomplished (cf. [Acts 2:38](#) ↓).

Acts 2:38-39 And Peter said to them, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children



and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Note that this speaks of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit as a further outcome of repentance.

Acts 3:19 *Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, ...*

Acts 5:31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

As with Luke 24:47 above, the inference is that repentance brings forgiveness of sins (cf. NLT).

Acts 26:17-18 ... delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Although in this and the following references repentance is not specifically referred to, the actions spoken of are indicative of it. As such the actions lead to God’s forgiveness.

Isa 55:7 ... let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Ezek 33:14-16 Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, ¹⁵if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.

1Jn 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

✦ Repentance is linked with redemption:

Isa 59:20 “And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the LORD.

This seems to anticipate Jesus Christ’s redemptive work. Note that Jeremiah 4:14a similarly links repentance with being saved: “O Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil, that you may be saved.”

Repentance leads to life

See also:

▪ [Ezek 33:14-16](#) ↑

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted *repentance that leads to life.*”

Ezek 18:21-23, 26-32 “But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²²None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. ²³Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? ... ²⁶When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. ²⁷Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. ²⁸Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ³⁰“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. *Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.*” ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.”

“ Or lest iniquity be your stumbling block

The references to living and dying in this passage are probably primarily in regard to physical life and premature death, but they also can be readily applied both to spiritual life in the present and in the afterlife.

Repentance leads to spiritual enlightenment

See also:

▪ [b\) Wisdom through God](#), p. 1636

2Tim 2:25-26 ... correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them *repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth*, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.



2Cor 3:14-16 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶But when one^v turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.



^v Greek *he*

One can infer from this that whenever anyone turns to the Lord they are spiritually enlightened; any “veil” blocking spiritual insight is taken away. Note that rather than turning to the Lord in repentance from sin, this may well be primarily speaking of turning from the ways of the old covenant to the Lord Jesus Christ and the new covenant that he introduced. Even so, what it says is applicable to repentance from sin.

John 7:17 *If anyone’s will is to do God’s^w will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.*

^w Greek *his*

Choosing to do what one knows of God’s will – and evaluating Jesus’ teaching in the light of this – leads to the realization that Jesus’ teaching does come from God (cf. [Luke 7:35](#) ↓). Thus this reflects that repentance leads to spiritual enlightenment.

‡ **By following Jesus’ teaching, one’s life will show his teaching to be true:**

Luke 7:35 *Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.*

Jesus most likely meant that his and John’s wisdom or teaching is “shown to be true” (GNT; cf. AMP) “by the lives of those who follow it” (NLT, cf. CEV, GNT).

Not repenting will result in judgment and eternal punishment

Rom 2:5 *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.*

Matt 3:8-10 *Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.* ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰*Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Repentance needs to be genuine, reflected in what we do (v. 8). Anything but genuine repentance will result in destruction (v. 10), as John the Baptist warned the Jews (vv. 9-10).

Matt 11:20-24 *Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.* ²¹*“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* ²²*But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.* ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? *You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.* ²⁴*But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”*

Matt 12:41 *The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.*

The implication is that unlike the people of Nineveh, the Jews largely did not repent. As such they faced condemnation at the final judgment.

Luke 13:1-5 There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³No, I tell you; but *unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.* ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but *unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*”

Although the victims referred to had died terrible, untimely deaths, this did not mean that they were worse sinners than others. All people are sinners and whoever does not repent will also perish – they will die spiritually, a tragic spiritual ending paralleling the tragic physical deaths mentioned here.

John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! *Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.*”

Scholars differ in their understanding of what Jesus meant in referring to something “worse”. It may be eternal punishment or something in the present life.

Ps 7:12 *If a man^x does not repent, God^y will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; ...*

^x Hebrew *he*

^y Hebrew *he*

Although not or not necessarily speaking of eternal punishment, the punishment for not repenting in this and the



following passages serve to further illustrate that God will punish those who do not repent.

Ps 55:19 *God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, Selah because they do not change and do not fear God.* 

Ezek 3:19 *But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.* 

Rev 16:8-12 *The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed^z the name of God who had power over these plagues. *They did not repent and give him glory.* ¹⁰*The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish ¹¹and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.* ¹²*The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.* *

^z Greek *blasphemed*; also verses 11, 21

The implication may be that any who had repented (vv. 9b, 11b) would have been spared from the ensuing judgments (vv. 10-11a, 12).

Note: The great rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents

Note that the following are adjacent passages in Luke 15.

Luke 15:1-7 *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³So he told them this parable: ⁴“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.* 

Commentators differ over whether the “ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (v. 7) refers to people already saved or, with irony, to people such as the scribes and the Pharisees (v. 2) who consider themselves righteous with no need to repent.

Luke 15:8-10 *“Or what woman, having ten silver coins,^a if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”* 

^a Greek *ten drachmas*; a *drachma* was a Greek coin approximately equal in value to a Roman *denarius*, worth about a day’s wage for a laborer

Luke 15:11-14, 17, 20-24 *And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.  ... ¹⁷“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!  ... ²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²²But the father said to his servants,^c ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.* 

^b Some manuscripts add *treat me as one of your hired servants*

^c Greek *bondservants*

The role of the father parallels that of God – and presumably the celebration parallels that in heaven over a repentant sinner.

† Rather than be angry, God’s people should share in the rejoicing over a repentant sinner:

Luke 15:25-32 *“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave*



me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!" ³¹And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

The attitude of the older son reflects that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (cf. v. 2). This latter part of the parable of the Prodigal Son is in effect an exhortation to them to, like God, be accepting of repentant sinners. Note that in view of this and the criticism of Jewish leaders (cf. v. 2) which apparently prompted the ensuing parables (above), the rejoicing of God's people – along with that of angels in heaven (cf. v. 7 ↑, v. 10 ↑) – over a repentant sinner is probably being portrayed here (vv. 25, 32; cf. vv. 23-24 ↑).

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Belief in Jesus Christ (I): General

See also:

- a) *Baptism*, p. 1438
- a) *Confession of Jesus Christ*, p. 1450

Subsections

- Believe in Jesus Christ
- Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
- Further key things to know and believe about Jesus Christ
- Believing in Jesus Christ is integral to believing in God . . .
- . . . One's response to Jesus Christ is one's response to God, who sent him
- Superficial belief is not enough . . .
- . . . We are to both believe and repent

Believe in Jesus Christ

Believing in Jesus Christ involves believing what the Bible says about: who he is; what he taught and did; his death and resurrection; and the results of his death and resurrection. Regarding the results of his death and resurrection, we are to believe that as a result of his death and resurrection Jesus

Christ provides the things discussed below in (e) *Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes*, p. 1049).

John 6:29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

1Jn 3:23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

To "believe in the name" of Jesus Christ is basically to believe in Jesus Christ (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) and all that he signifies.

John 3:16, 18 For God so loved the world,^d that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ... ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

^d Or For this is how God loved the world

John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"^e ³⁶He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." ³⁸He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

^e Some manuscripts *the Son of God*

Note that the term "the Son of Man" (v. 35) is a title Jesus commonly used for himself. It is a messianic title (cf. Dan 7:13-14), but it also underlines Jesus' humanity.

John 12:36a While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.

As elsewhere in John's gospel, "light" is associated here with Jesus and his teaching. "While you have the light" presumably has Jesus' departure in view. It reflects the urgency to "believe in the light" while one still has the opportunity to do so.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

1Tim 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He^f was manifested in the flesh, vindicated^g by the Spirit,^h seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

^f Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^g Or *justified*

^h Or *vindicated in spirit*



Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

See also:

- [John 3:16, 18](#) ; [1Jn 3:23](#)
- [John 4:42](#) ; [John 17:8](#)
- *That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . .* [what to explain in spreading the gospel], p. 1740

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may *believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 11:27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord; *I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.*”

John 6:69 ... and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.

The “Holy One of God” is a title referring to the Messiah or Christ (cf. [John 11:27](#)).

1Jn 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

1Jn 5:5, 13 Who is it that overcomes the world except *the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* ... ¹³I write these things to you who *believe in the name of the Son of God* that you may know that you have eternal life.

Implicit in believing “in the name of the Son of God” (v. 13; cf. [John 3:18](#) ; [1Jn 3:23](#)) is believing that Jesus is the Son of God.

Acts 8:35-37 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture *he told him the good news about Jesus.* ³⁶And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?”ⁱ

ⁱ Some manuscripts add all or most of verse 37: *And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

See v. 37, in the text note.

Further key things to know and believe about Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ*, p. 479
- *e) Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes*, p. 1049
- *b) What Things to Explain* [in spreading the gospel], p. 1739

John 4:42 They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that *we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.*”

John 10:37-38 If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, *believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.*

In saying: “the Father is in me and I am in the Father” Jesus points to the oneness or unity of himself and God – including their unified purpose in their work.

John 17:8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and *have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.*

Rom 10:9 ... because, if you *confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead*, you will be saved.

The confession “Jesus is Lord” indicates that one believes Jesus is Lord over all creation.

1Thes 4:14 For since *we believe that Jesus died and rose again*, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

↳ **Thomas’s initial doubt and then belief in Jesus’ resurrection:**

John 20:24-29 Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin,^j was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “*We have seen the Lord.*” *But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”* ²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand,



and place it in my side. *Do not disbelieve, but believe.*"
²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

^j Greek *Didymus*

Similarly Mark 16:9-13 contains further instances of Jesus' followers at first not believing that he had risen. These instances are followed by Jesus' appearance and rebuke in v. 14b: "... he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen."

Believing in Jesus Christ is integral to believing in God . . .

See also:

- [1Jn 2:22-23](#)
- [. . . God himself testified to Jesus and his claims](#)

Believing in Jesus Christ is necessary for believing in what God has said and done/accomplished – an essential part of believing in God himself.

[John 12:44](#) And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me."

[Acts 16:31, 34](#) And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ... ³⁴Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that *he had believed in God.*

[John 5:24](#) Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me* has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Jesus' words were from God, who sent him. As such, believing what Jesus said is integral to believing what God says.

[1Pet 1:17-21](#) And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

It can be inferred from this passage that it is through "knowing" (v. 18a) – and so believing – such things about Jesus Christ that we believe in God, the one who raised and glorified him (v. 21a). As such, basically our faith and hope are in God (v. 21b) as the one who has orchestrated all that has been accomplished by and through Jesus Christ.

[1Jn 4:14-16a](#) And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.

Here knowing and believing God's love for us (v. 16) is correlated with believing that Jesus is God's Son (v. 15), whom God in his wondrous love sent to save the world (v. 14).

. . . One's response to Jesus Christ is one's response to God, who sent him

See also:

- [John 12:44](#) ; [John 5:24](#)

Whatever is one's response to Jesus Christ is in effect one's response to God, for it was God who sent Jesus Christ, to accomplish his will.

[John 13:20](#) Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and *whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*

[Luke 10:16](#) "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and *the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.*"

[Mark 9:37](#) "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and *whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.*"

[John 5:23](#) ... that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. *Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

[John 15:23](#) *Whoever hates me hates my Father also.*

[1Jn 2:22-23](#) Who is the liar but *he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?* This is the antichrist, *he who denies the Father and the Son.* ²³*No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.*

Verse 2 indicates that to deny Jesus – more specifically, to deny that Jesus is the Christ – is to deny God as well. Verse



23 then enlarges on this, correlating both denying Jesus Christ with not having God and acknowledging Jesus Christ with having God.

✦ **We need to have faith in the power of God, who raised Jesus:**

Col 2:11-12 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which *you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* 

This is probably speaking of faith in God having the power to have raised Jesus Christ from the dead and to also raise us – both to spiritual life now and life ever after.

Superficial belief is not enough . . .

See also:

- *True faith involves good deeds . . .*, p. 1068
- *. . . One's Christianity should be proven by one's deeds*, p. 1069

Luke 8:13 *And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.* 

Such belief is superficial rather than deep-rooted. It is not entrenched in one's thoughts, persistently influencing one's behaviour. Moreover, it does not last.

John 2:23-25 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, *many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.* ²⁴*But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people* ²⁵*and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.* 

Jesus may well have had in view superficial belief that is based on miraculous signs alone and that comes with following what others are thinking – one that does not produce commitment.

Acts 8:13, 18-23 *Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles^k performed, he was amazed.*  ... ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, *he offered them money,* ¹⁹*saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."* ²⁰But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you

could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for *your heart is not right before God.* ²²*Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.* ²³*For I see that you are in the gall^l of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."* 

^k Greek *works of power*

^l That is, a bitter fluid secreted by the liver; bile

Simon's belief (v. 13) was shallow or at best intellectual. It had not affected his heart (vv. 21-22) and his inner state (v. 23), leaving him vulnerable to condemnation (v. 20).

James 2:19-20 *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!* ²⁰Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that *faith apart from works is useless?* 

Faith that does not produce good deeds is useless, merely superficial. True faith or belief must affect our lives as a whole – as the following subsection indicates.

Ps 106:12-14 *Then they believed his words; they sang his praise.* ¹³*But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel.* ¹⁴*But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert; ...* 

This is an example of superficial or weak faith in God, evidenced by the people's later actions (vv. 13-14).

. . . We are to both believe and repent

See also:

- **Acts 8:13, 18-23** ; **James 2:19-20** 
- *Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned*, p. 715
- *Obedience accompanies belief and faith*, p. 1062

As reflected by the previous subsection, our belief in Jesus Christ must be a genuine, committed belief – of which one key aspect is repentance.

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent and believe in the gospel.*" 

Acts 20:20-21 ... how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of *repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.* 



Acts 11:17-18 If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we *believed in the Lord Jesus Christ*, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted *repentance that leads to life*." 

In v. 17 Peter speaks of fellow Jews and himself as having "believed in the Lord Jesus Christ", whereas in v. 18 the Gentiles are spoken of as having repented. In view of this and the context, the suggestion is that Peter saw belief and repentance as complementary aspects of "getting right" with God.

Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number *who believed turned to the Lord*. 

Acts 19:18-19 Also *many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices*. ¹⁹*And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all*. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. 

Here belief is accompanied by repentance demonstrated by confession of sin (v. 18b) and turning from evil things (v. 19a).

Acts 26:17-18 ... delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may *turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me*. 

This closely associates repenting ("turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God") with faith ("that they may receive... a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me").

Rom 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about *the obedience of faith*— 

Obeying God – here associated with faith or belief – is of course a key aspect of repentance.

Jonah 3:5-10 And *the people of Nineveh believed God*. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. ⁶The word reached^m the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷And he

issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. *Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands*. ⁹Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." ¹⁰When God saw what they did, how *they turned from their evil way*, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it. 

^mOr *had reached*

Note the remorse shown by the Ninevites, in conjunction with believing (v. 5) and repenting (vv. 8, 10). See also *Be sorrowful over your sin*, p. 1843.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Belief in Jesus Christ (II): Reasons to Believe

See also:

- *c) Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus*, p. 494

Subsections

- [Jesus Christ's words and knowledge](#)
- [Jesus Christ's deeds](#)
- [Jesus Christ's death and resurrection](#)
- [Testimonies about Jesus Christ . . .](#)
- [. . . God himself testified to Jesus and his claims](#)

Jesus Christ's words and knowledge

See also:

- [John 17:8](#) 
- *Jesus' teaching was amazing and powerful – leading people to believe in him . . .*, p. 568

John 1:47-50 *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no*



deceit!"⁴⁸Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."⁴⁹Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"⁵⁰Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."



Here and in some of the following passages, Jesus' words clearly reflect his complete knowledge – his omniscience – a compelling reason to believe in him and what he taught.

John 4:17-18, 29 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." ... [The woman:]²⁹"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

Jesus' words, revealing his knowledge of all things, caused the woman to believe or at least seriously consider that Jesus could well be the Messiah.

John 4:41-42 And many more believed because of his word.⁴²They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

John 8:30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

John 14:28-29 You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.²⁹And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.

Confirmation of Jesus' knowledge of the future gives reason to believe in him (cf. John 2:14-22; 13:19). Note that "I am going to the Father" (v. 28b) appears to speak of Jesus' ascension, which implies that "I am going away" (v. 28a) is also. As such, "I will come to you" (v. 28a) is often understood to refer to Jesus' second coming (cf. v. 3) – which may well be the case. However by then it would be too late to believe, if confirming their belief in him for salvation is what Jesus has in mind in v. 29. Another possibility is that it refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit, which could be what is in view with the identical clause in v. 18 (cf. vv. 16-17).

John 16:30 Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God.

The clause "do not need anyone to question you" may be meaning that Jesus had the capacity to answer a person's question even before it was asked (cf. NCV).

Jesus Christ's deeds

See also:

- [Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ](#), p. 503
- [Jesus' deeds validated his claims about himself and God](#), p. 545
- [Jesus' deeds led many people to believe in him](#), p. 546

John 2:11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

In turning water into wine (cf. vv. 1-10) Jesus "manifested His glory". As such Jesus "displayed His greatness and His power openly" (AMP), pointing to his divine nature – leading his disciples to believe in him.

John 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

John 4:49-53 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."⁵⁰Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.⁵¹As he was going down, his servantsⁿ met him and told him that his son was recovering.⁵²So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour^o the fever left him."⁵³The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household.

ⁿ Greek *bondservants*

^o That is, at 1 P.M.

John 7:31 Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"

John 11:14-15, 41-45 Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died,¹⁵and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ...⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus,



come out.”⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ...

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

✦ **Jesus criticized the attitude of refusing to believe in him unless one saw miracles:**

John 4:48 So Jesus said to him, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”

Miracles give one little choice but to believe. Such belief is hardly faith and may even restrict the growth of one’s faith in God, making it dependant on further miracles to develop. Moreover, miracles are not enough to convince people who are not open to believing – “Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him ...” (John 12:37). Jesus also criticizes the seeking of signs in Matthew 12:38-39 in the following subsection.

Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection

See also:

- *Note: Jesus Christ’s resurrection affirmed significant things about him*, p. 606

Matt 27:50-54 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵²The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

^p Or a son

Note that “what took place” (v. 54) may well not include the resurrection of the many holy people (v. 52), which seems to have not been apparent till after Jesus’ resurrection (v. 53). For further comment see *Jesus Christ’s resurrection was essential for our resurrection*, p. 604.

John 2:18-22 So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” ¹⁹Jesus answered them, “Destroy

this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

In v. 18 the Jews questioned Jesus’ authority to drive the money-changers and traders out of the temple (cf. vv. 14-16), preventing their commercial activities being carried out in the temple. Some commentators consider that they also had in view his reference to the temple as “my Father’s house” (v. 16) as being a messianic allusion and were essentially questioning such a claim to be the Messiah. Jesus gave his death and resurrection (vv. 19, 21) as proof that he had such authority and – if his messiahship was in question – that he was the Messiah. Thus when his death and resurrection occurred, his disciples believed him (v. 22). Note that in referring to destroying and raising up the “temple” or his body, possibly Jesus is alluding to himself replacing the actual temple as the means of accessing God.

John 8:28 So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.

Jesus Christ is speaking of his crucifixion, where he would be “lifted up” on the cross. This would lead to people knowing that he was who he claimed to be – presumably through the events marking his death (cf. [Matt 27:50-54](#) ↑) and his subsequent resurrection.

John 13:19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.

It appears that “before it takes place” refers to Jesus’ death – with the preceding events, including his betrayal (cf. v. 18) – and his subsequent resurrection. In addition to the importance of his death and resurrection themselves in showing who Jesus was, the fact that he predicted them also proved his claims (cf. [John 2:18-22](#) ↑). The phrase “I am He” (cf. 8:38) is most likely meaning that he is the Messiah, the one for whom the Jews were waiting.

John 20:6-8 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’^a head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ...

^a Greek his

The clause “he saw and believed” is primarily referring to believing that Jesus had risen. But additionally we can



conclude that because Jesus had risen, John would have then naturally believed in Jesus and his claims – if he had not already.

✦ The period of Jesus' death would be a sign for the Jews:

Matt 12:38-40 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." ³⁹But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but *no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.* ⁴⁰*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* 📖

Jesus' supernatural emulation of Jonah's experience – and the fact that he prophesied it – would be a sign to his generation of the validity of his claims. Note that the phrase "three days and three nights" is commonly understood to be referring somewhat figuratively to three days or parts thereof.

Testimonies about Jesus Christ . . .

Luke 1:1-4 *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.* 📖

Luke's gospel – as with the other gospels – is a carefully investigated account (v. 3). As such, it gives one confidence about the certainty of what it (and the NT) teaches about Jesus – giving reason to believe it and so reason to believe in Jesus Christ. The fact that there were many other written accounts of testimonies of eyewitnesses (vv. 1-2) adds to the certainty.

John 5:31-34 If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true. ³²*There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.* ³³*You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.* ³⁴Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but *I say these things so that you may be saved.* 📖

John the Baptist's testimony regarding the truth about Jesus gives reason to believe and be saved (cf. [John 10:40-42](#) ↓). In v. 32, Jesus could be referring to God (cf. [v. 37](#) ↓) rather than to John and his testimony, though John and his testimony are clearly in view in vv. 33-34. Note that in the first part of

v. 34, Jesus is saying that he does not accept – or at least does not depend upon – human testimony.

John 4:39 *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."* 📖

John 10:40-42 He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. ⁴¹And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but *everything that John said about this man was true.*" ⁴²*And many believed in him there.* 📖

It would appear that "many believed in him" (v. 42) because of John's testimony (v. 41b) in relationship with what would have taken place when many people came (v. 41a) to Jesus. These things would primarily have been Jesus' performing of miraculous healings and his teaching – which would have confirmed critical aspects of John's testimony.

John 19:31-37 Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, *they did not break his legs.* ³⁴*But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.* ³⁵*He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.* ³⁶*For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken."* ³⁷*And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."* 📖

Verses 36-37 explain the significance of what was testified to in vv. 33-35; i.e. it was a fulfillment of Scripture regarding the Messiah, pointing to Jesus being the Messiah.

John 20:30-31 Now *Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;* ³¹*but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* 📖

The phrase "these are written" (v. 31) refers to the miraculous signs that John did record as testimony to Jesus Christ being the son of God, so that people might believe.



John 17:20-21 I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹*that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* 

The unity of his followers in himself and God is a practical testimony from believers in all eras to others of Jesus' claims, here in particular to him being sent by God. Note that in regard to the phrase "be in us", some "ancient authorities read *be one in us*" (NRSV text note; cf. CEV, NCV).

... God himself testified to Jesus and his claims

See also:

- [John 5:32](#) 

Matt 3:16-17 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, *the heavens were opened to him,*^r *and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;* ¹⁷*and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son,*^s *with whom I am well pleased."* 

^r Some manuscripts omit *to him*

^s Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

As well as God's voice (v. 17), the Holy Spirit's descent on Jesus "in bodily form, like a dove" (Luke 3:22) was effectively a testimony from God, being apparent not only to Jesus but also to John (cf. John 1:32) and so presumably also to others present.

Matt 17:5 He was still speaking when, behold, *a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son,*^t *with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."* 

^t Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

At Jesus' transfiguration (cf. vv. 1-3) God repeated his testimony to Jesus given at Jesus' baptism (cf. [Matt 3:17](#) 

John 5:37-39 And *the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.* His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸*and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.* ³⁹*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ...* 

The testimony of God referred to (v. 37) may be: the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism (cf. [Matt 3:16-17](#) 

Scriptures are stated to bear witness about Jesus in v. 39 further points to God giving testimony to Jesus, through his word.

John 12:27-30 "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name." *Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."* ²⁹*The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."* ³⁰*Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.* 

God's voice, in response to Jesus' words, served to testify to and illustrate the authenticity of Jesus' claims to being of God (as implied in v. 30). God's words appear to mean that he had glorified his name through Jesus' life, and would now do so again through Jesus' death and resurrection. Note that the crowd as a whole did not recognize the voice for what it was (v. 29a), although some at least realized it was a supernatural voice (v. 29b).

Acts 2:22 Men of Israel, hear these words: *Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—* 

John 6:26-27 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because *you saw signs*, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For *on him God the Father has set his seal.*" 

God's "seal" is thought by some commentators to refer to God's authentication – his "seal of approval" (NIV®; cf. GNT) – of Jesus as the one who can give "food that endures to eternal life" (v. 27) by enabling him to perform miraculous signs (v. 26), such as miraculously providing physical food for thousands of people (cf. vv. 10-14). Alternatively it may be a more general reference to him being approved by God in being chosen and sent on his mission, or a reference to his anointment with the Holy Spirit.

John 8:17-18, 54 In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. ¹⁸I am the one who bears witness about myself, and *the Father who sent me bears witness about me.*  ... ⁵⁴Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. *It is my Father who glorifies me*, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'^u 

^u Some manuscripts *your God*



In saying that God witnessed to him (v. 18) and glorified him (v. 54), likewise bearing witness to him, Jesus may well have had his miracles primarily in view.

1Jn 5:9-11 If we receive the testimony of men, *the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.* ¹⁰*Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.* ¹¹*And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* 

Verse 1 gives the essence of God's testimony. The verses preceding this passage (vv. 5-8) are generally understood to indicate that the testimony was given through Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

John 1:51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you,^v *you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*" 

^v The Greek for *you* is plural; twice in this verse

One interpretation of this verse is that Jesus is implying that the disciples would see heaven, or God, testifying to who he is. For further comment see *God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit*, p. 797.%

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes

Note that in conjunction with the following things being outcomes of believing in Jesus Christ, we are to believe in Jesus Christ for these things being granted to us, believing that he has made them possible by what he did. (This is reflected in some of the comments.)

Subsections

- We are forgiven of our sins and purified
- We are granted righteousness and justified before God
- We are saved
- We have eternal life
- We become a child of God
- We are given God's Holy Spirit

- Other results of believing in Jesus Christ
- Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are condemned and do not have life . . .
- . . . Further implications of not believing in Jesus Christ

We are forgiven of our sins and purified

See also:

- [Acts 13:38-39](#) ↓
- *Jesus Christ's sacrifice of himself for us means that our sins can be forgiven . . .*, p. 592

We are to believe in Jesus Christ for God's forgiveness of our sins. As such we are to believe Jesus Christ to be (with what he has accomplished) the means of forgiveness – and trust in him for the forgiveness of our own sins.

Acts 10:43 To him all the prophets bear witness that *everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.* 

The term "his name" here speaks of Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished.

Acts 15:9 ... and he made no distinction between us and them, *having cleansed their hearts by faith.* 

Acts 26:18 ... to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that *they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.* 

In association with being forgiven, believers receive a place among those who are "consecrated *and* purified by faith in Me" (AMP). As such, they become part of God's holy people.

‡ **By faith people receive the benefits of the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ:**

Rom 3:25a ... [Christ Jesus] whom *God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.* 

The term "propitiation" speaks of the wrath of God against guilty sinners being turned away or quenched. This only occurs through our sins being taken away by faith in what Jesus Christ accomplished through his death.



We are granted righteousness and justified before God

See also:

- ... and that we can therefore be justified and righteous before God, p. 593
- a) *Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ*, p. 640

On being forgiven, we are made righteous and justified before God. We are to believe in Jesus Christ for all these things. Note that the theme of this subsection is dealt with in more detail in *Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ*, cross-referenced above.

Rom 1:17 For in it *the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,*^w as it is written, “*The righteous shall live by faith.*”^x ¶

^w Or *beginning and ending in faith*

^x Or *The one who by faith is righteous shall live*

Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 to support his assertion that one can only be deemed righteous by faith, implying by it that because of their faith the righteous will live. Note that the phrase “revealed from faith” appears to be speaking of this righteousness being revealed through faith, with the subsequent phrase “for faith” meaning either: that it is for those who have faith (cf. CEV); or that it is for having (ongoing) faith.

Rom 3:21-26 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²*the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.* For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are *justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,* ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, *to be received by faith.* This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and *the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.* ¶

The clause “to be received by faith” (v. 25) appears to speak of being “justified by his grace as a gift” (v. 24a).

Rom 5:1 Therefore, since *we have been justified by faith,* we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¶

^y Some manuscripts *let us*

Rom 10:6, 10 But *the righteousness based on faith* says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) ¶ ... ¹⁰For *with the heart one believes and is justified,* and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¶

For comment on v. 6b, see the comment on **Rom 10:1-10** – under ... *This is the way of the righteousness from God, who justifies by faith – not by law*, p. 642.

Gal 3:5-9, 24 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶just as *Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness?”* ⁷Know then that it is *those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.* ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that *God would justify^z the Gentiles by faith,* preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ⁹So then, *those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.* ¶ ... ²⁴So then, the law was our guardian until *Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.* ¶

^z Or *count righteous*; also verses 11, 24

Just as Abraham believed God and was credited with righteousness, the same applies to those who believe, Abraham’s spiritual children. They have faith and so are blessed with justification along with Abraham (v. 9; cf. *By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him*, p. 644.)

Acts 13:38-39 Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹and *by him everyone who believes is freed^a* from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. ¶

^a Greek *justified*; twice in this verse

Regarding the use of “freed”, as per the text note the Greek term can be translated as “justified” (NIV®, NKJV).

We are saved

Mark 16:16 *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.* ¶

Note that baptism is an affirmation of one’s faith, rather than an additional requirement of salvation.

Luke 7:50 And he said to the woman, “*Your faith has saved you; go in peace.*” ¶



Acts 16:30-31 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, *what must I do to be saved?*” ³¹And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

In v. 31 Paul and Silas tell their jailer that if he and his family believed in Jesus Christ they would be saved, i.e. those who believed would be saved (cf. AMP, CEV). Verse 34 tells of how he and his whole family came to faith.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God *for salvation to everyone who believes*, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Rom 10:9 ... because, *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

The confession “Jesus is Lord” is a statement of one’s belief in him.

1Cor 1:21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach *to save those who believe.*

Eph 2:8 For by grace *you have been saved through faith.* And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ...

2Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits^b to be saved, *through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*

^b Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

The phrase “belief in the truth” refers to belief in the gospel message about Jesus Christ, believing its claims about him and what he accomplished.

1Tim 4:10 For to this end we toil and strive,^c because we have our hope set on the living God, who is *the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*

^c Some manuscripts *and suffer reproach*

The description of God as “the Savior of all people” implies that his salvation is open to all, but it only comes to fruition for “those who believe”.

2Tim 3:15 ... and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise *for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

Heb 10:39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of *those who have faith and preserve their souls.*

1Pet 1:8-9 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, *you believe in him* and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹*obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

2Thes 2:10 ... and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused *to love the truth and so be saved.*

We have eternal life

See also:

- *b) Life through Jesus Christ*, p. 611
- *Those who have believed in Jesus Christ will be saved and have eternal life*, p. 714

Those who believe in Jesus Christ have spiritual, eternal life. It begins when one believes and continues forever.

John 3:14-16, 36 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵*that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*^d ¹⁶For God so loved the world,^e that he gave his only Son, *that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* ... ³⁶*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

^d Some interpreters hold that the quotation ends at verse 15

^e Or *For this is how God loved the world*

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*

In believing we move from the state of spiritual death to that of spiritual life, life that is eternal.

John 6:27-29 *Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.* For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

²⁸Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” ²⁹Jesus answered them, “*This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.*”

By believing in Jesus Christ we do the “work” required for the spiritual food – found in Jesus himself (v. 27a; cf. v. 48-58 ↓) – that endures to eternal life.

John 6:40, 47-58 For this is the will of my Father, *that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have*



eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” ^e ...
⁴⁷Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.
⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” ⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread^f the fathers ate and died. *Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.*” ^f

^f Greek lacks *the bread*

There are two subtly different interpretations of what Jesus meant when he spoke metaphorically of “eating” of him, the bread of life, and drinking his blood, shed in his death. One is that it simply means to believe in him and depend on his death, for eternal life. The other is that it means to partake of Jesus Christ – including following him, trusting him and living in fellowship with him – for the sustenance of one’s life, which likewise leads to eternal life.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, “*I am the resurrection and the life.*” ^g *Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.* Do you believe this?” ^g

^g Some manuscripts omit *and the life*

Those who believe in Jesus Christ will live even though they die physically (v. 25b); in a spiritual sense they will never die (v. 26a).

John 20:31 ... but these are written so that you may *believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and that *by believing you may have life in his name.* ^h

1Tim 1:16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to *believe in him for eternal life.* ^h

1Jn 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. ^h

Rom 1:17b “The righteous shall live by faith.” ^h

^h Or *The one who by faith is righteous shall live*

✦ **Through faith in the power of God we are raised with Jesus Christ:**

Col 2:12 ... having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ^h

Through faith in God’s power we are raised with Jesus Christ in a spiritual sense, to spiritual life.

We become a child of God

See also:

- *God’s people are his children*, p. 770
- *As God’s children, they are heirs of God*, p. 771

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ^h

When one is “born ... of God” one is made alive spiritually, and begins a process of growing into God’s likeness.

Gal 3:26 ... for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ^h

1Jn 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ^h

Note that instead of meaning that being “born of God” is an outcome of believing Jesus is the Christ, this may more precisely mean that believing is evidence that one has been “born of God”.



We are given God's Holy Spirit

See also:

- a) *God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People*, p. 831

John 7:38-39 *Whoever believes in me, asⁱ the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"* ³⁹*Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* ☞

ⁱ Or *let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As*

Acts 11:17 *If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?* ☞

The "gift" is the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 15).

Gal 3:2, 5 Let me ask you only this: *Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?* ☞ ... ⁵*Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—* ☞

The rhetorical questions imply that one receives the Holy Spirit by belief – not by observing the law.

Gal 3:13-14 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so *that we might receive the promised Spiritⁱ through faith.* ☞

ⁱ Greek *receive the promise of the Spirit*

The latter part of v. 14 may seem like it is talking about having faith in receiving the Spirit. But as reflected by v. 2 above, its context shows that it is almost definitely meaning that if we have faith in Christ, we will receive the Spirit that God has promised (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

‡ **On believing, one is included "in" Christ – sealed by the Holy Spirit:**

Eph 1:13 *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ...* ☞

On hearing and believing the gospel we are included "in" Jesus Christ (cf. a) *God's People Are 'in' Jesus Christ*, p. 778) in whom we are marked by the seal of the Holy Spirit, who is given to dwell within us.

Other results of believing in Jesus Christ

Rom 5:1-2 *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we^k have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith^l into this grace in which we stand, and we^m rejoiceⁿ in hope of the glory of God.* ☞

^k Some manuscripts *let us*

^l Some manuscripts omit *by faith*

^m Or *let us*; also verse 3

ⁿ Or *boast*; also verses 3, 11

Verse 2a quite probably is referring to believers being justified and at peace with God (v. 1), a position in which they stand by grace. Note that this and the following two references (John 16:27; 1Jn 4:15) speak of aspects of the new, rich relationship that those who believe have with God.

John 16:27 *... for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.^o* ☞

^o Some manuscripts *from the Father*

1Jn 4:15 *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.* ☞

1Pet 1:8-9 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, *you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.* ☞

Similarly Acts 16:34 speaks of the joy of the believing Philippian jailer: "And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God."

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and *whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*" ☞

The phrases "shall not hunger" and "shall never thirst" indicate that one's spiritual needs will always be satisfied.

John 12:36a, 46 While you have the light, *believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.*" ☞ ... ⁴⁶*I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.* ☞

The term "sons of light" (v. 36a) probably refers to living according to the light of Jesus' teaching, and so increasingly bearing the characteristics of Jesus, "the light". As such, one who trusts and believes in "the light" will not remain in spiritual darkness (v. 46).

1Jn 5:5 *Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* ☞



To “overcome the world” means to rise above its sinful way of life. This victory comes through believing that Jesus is the Son of God.

2Thes 1:10 ... when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. 

On Jesus Christ’s return, he will receive glory “in his saints” who have believed. This glory will presumably be due to what they are (cf. NCV) and their praise of him (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). Additionally, they shall marvel at him – no doubt with a sense of joy and delightful anticipation of all that awaits those who have believed in him.

Heb 4:1-3a Therefore, while *the promise of entering his rest* still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ²For *good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.* ³For we who have believed enter that rest ... 

^P Some manuscripts *it did not meet with faith in the hearers*

Likely the rest to be experienced in the afterlife is primarily in view, in which believers will be free of the struggles of this life.

✦ **Blessed are those who have not seen the risen Christ and yet have believed:**

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” 

Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are condemned and do not have life . . .

See also:

- [Heb 4:1-2](#) 
- *Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned*, p. 715
- *Those who do not believe and respond to the gospel will be condemned*, p. 1764

Mark 16:16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but *whoever does not believe will be condemned.* 

John 3:18, 36 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*  ...

³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; *whoever does*

not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. 

John 5:39-40 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰*yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* 

Verse 40 indicates that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ (cf. v. 28) do not have eternal life (cf. v. 39).

Acts 13:39-41, 46 ... and by him everyone who believes is freed^a from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: ⁴¹*“Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.”*  ... ⁴⁶And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, *“It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.* 

^a Greek *justified*; twice in this verse

After saying “everyone who believes is freed” (v. 39), by way of implication Paul then gives a solemn warning of the consequences if his listeners did not respond in belief. He quotes Habakkuk 1:5 where God warned those who scoffed at his word that they would “perish”, in which they would be punished in a way that they never thought possible (v. 41). The “word of God” (v. 46) primarily refers to the gospel about Jesus Christ. To reject it is to spurn eternal life.

2Thes 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for *those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.* ¹¹Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order *that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth* but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 

In the NT “truth” (vv. 10, 12) is often identified with Jesus and the gospel, which would appear to be the case here. Those who do not believe in Jesus and the gospel message centered on him, will be condemned (v. 12) and perish (v. 10). Note that v. 11 mentions a further result of not believing, at the time of “the lawless one” (v. 9): God will judicially delude such people so that they will believe the falsehood stemming from the lawless one (cf. v. 4), probably the antichrist of the end time. This is applicable to all eras, in that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are prone to believing what is untrue (cf. [Titus 1:15](#) .



Heb 3:18-19 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. 

The Israelites – who in their unbelief disobeyed God – were prevented from entering the promised land where they were to experience God’s rest. In its context this reference implies that likewise those who refuse to believe the gospel will not enter God’s rest in the afterlife (cf. [Heb 4:1-3a](#) 

1Jn 5:12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 

The context (cf. vv. 6-13) indicates that to “not have the Son of God” is akin to not believing in him.

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. 

The “faithless” may mean the “unbelieving” (NASB; cf. NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT), hence the verse’s inclusion here. Alternatively it may be speaking of the “untrustworthy” (NASB text note).

Luke 20:17-18 But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written: “*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?*”^r ¹⁸Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” 

^r Greek *the head of the corner*

This ends “The Parable of the Tenants” (cf. vv. 9-16) in which Jesus portrayed the Jews’ rejection of him. Verse 18 is possibly referring to a saying of the time. It appears to mean that: like a pot that falls on a stone or one on which a stone falls, so everyone who rejects Jesus “the capstone” (v. 17) will be doomed (cf. NSB).

1Pet 2:7-8 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,*”^s and “*A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.*” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 

^s Greek *the head of the corner*

Those who do not believe in Jesus, the “stone” (cf. [Luke 20:17-18](#) 

John 8:24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins. 

The expression “die in your sins” probably refers to – or at least involves – dying without one’s sins being forgiven (cf. CEV), pointing to the consequences of eternal death.

... Further implications of not believing in Jesus Christ

See also:

▪ [2Thes 2:9-12](#) 

John 5:38 ... and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. 

John 8:46-47 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God. 

It can be inferred from this that those who did not believe do not belong to God (cf. [John 10:26](#) 

John 10:26 ... but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. 

This makes a similar point to 8:46-47 above, indicating that those who do not believe do not belong to Jesus Christ, not being of his “flock”.

John 16:8-9 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ... 

This speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit who would convict the world of being guilty of sin by not believing in Jesus Christ. Thus it indicates that in not believing in Jesus Christ, one is in fact committing sin.

Titus 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. 

This associates not believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ with defiled “minds and ... consciences”. Lack of belief leaves one vulnerable to such things, and accompanying false beliefs – such as what Paul has in view here. He is speaking in particular of people incorrectly believing some things to be morally impure.

1Jn 5:10-11 Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 



✦ **Blessed are those who are not offended by Jesus:**

Matt 11:6 And *blessed is the one who is not offended by me.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) Reasons for Assurance

The verses in this section give reasons for assurance of things such as being saved and being in a close relationship with God – and as a consequence give assurance of being made right with God. Reasons for assurance of such things can also be found in the other sections of this chapter (particularly in *Repentance* and *Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes*) and in a number of parts of other chapters – notably in *13. Salvation through Jesus Christ*, p. 587; and in chapters 16-20 (e.g. *God protects his people from all evil, including Satan*, p. 943; *God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own – until the end*, p. 943; and *God strengthens them spiritually, until Jesus Christ's return*, p. 937).

Subsections

- God's word, including his promises
- Jesus Christ's death and his ministry in his risen life
- Having the Holy Spirit
- Obeying God and doing what is right
- Loving other Christians
- Further reasons
- Note: God's people are free from condemnation

God's word, including his promises

God's word, including his promises (cf. **Rom 4:16 ↓**; **Heb 6:12-19 ↓**), gives great assurance to those who believe God. Numerous verses in this chapter are examples of God's word providing assurance, for those who believe. Below are a few exemplary ones.

1Jn 5:10-13 *Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.* Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in *the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.* ¹¹*And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* ¹²*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the*

Son of God does not have life. ¹³*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.* 📖

Believing the testimony God has given about his Son, in his word, brings assurance. For it means that one has the inner testimony (v. 10) that God has given us eternal life in Jesus Christ (vv. 11-12). Thus in believing God's word and consequently believing in Jesus Christ, we can know that we have eternal life (v. 13).

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹*but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* 📖

One can infer from this that in giving reason to believe "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (v. 31a), God's word (such as John's gospel) gives reason to believe and have assurance that we may have life through Jesus Christ (v. 31b).

Rom 4:16 That is why it [God's promise to Abraham] *depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ...* 📖

The promise relates to an aspect/s of salvation (cf. *By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him*, p. 644; **Heb 6:12-19 ↓**). It comes by faith and so is "guaranteed" to all who have faith. So those who have faith have the assurance of such a guarantee – rather than facing the uncertainty of performing works, in adherence to the OT law, in the dubious hope of earning it (cf. vv. 1-15).

Heb 6:12-19 ... so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. ¹³For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham, ^thaving patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and *in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.* ¹⁷*So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,* ¹⁸*so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.* ¹⁹*We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ...* 📖

^t Greek *he*



The promise made to Abraham is here applied to all God's people – "the heirs" (v. 17) – in regard to their salvation. God's promise to Abraham and his confirmation of it with an oath – the "two unchangeable things" (v. 18) – gives believers strong hope and assurance that as Abraham's spiritual heirs they will experience God's consummate fulfillment of the promise.

Jesus Christ's death and his ministry in his risen life

Rom 5:9-10 *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* 

The final clause of each verse refers to Jesus Christ's ongoing life and ministry for believers in his risen life.

Rom 8:34 *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.^u* 

^u Or *Is it Christ Jesus who died . . . for us?*

For comment, see the comment on **Rom 8:33-34** – under *Note: God's people are free from condemnation*, p. 1060.

Heb 7:25 *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost^v those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* 

^v That is, completely; or at all times

Believers can be assured that Jesus Christ will save them completely (cf. text note) as he always lives to speak to God on their behalf.

Heb 10:19-22 *Therefore, brothers,^w since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* 

^w Or *brothers and sisters*

The "holy places" (v. 19) alludes to God's presence. The phrase "full assurance of faith" (v. 22) appears to refer to a full assurance "that comes from having faith" (CEV). The phrase "with our hearts sprinkled clean" (v. 22) alludes to the sprinkling of blood for ceremonially cleansing under the old covenant; in parallel Jesus Christ's blood has in a sense "sprinkled" our hearts to cleanse us. The phrase "our bodies washed with pure water" (v. 22) is understood by some to be a reference to baptism, but more often it is seen as a

reference to being made clean by Jesus' sacrifice. The expression draws a parallel with the washing of the priests under the old covenant. Being cleansed as such by Christ's death and having him as our priest (v. 21) – coupled with faith about the reality of these things – gives great assurance of being accepted into God's presence.

✦ **It is God's will that Jesus Christ will not lose any believer, but raise them to life at the end of the age:**

John 6:39 *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.* 

Having the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *Having the Holy Spirit verifies that a person is one of God's people . . .*, p. 834
- *. . . Having the Holy Spirit indicates that God lives in a person*, p. 834
- *The Holy Spirit is God's seal, guaranteeing what is to come*, p. 835

Note that one can be confident that God has given the Holy Spirit to them through evidence such as: indications of the "fruits" of the Holy Spirit in a person's life (cf. Gal 5:22); having a spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit (some of which are more obvious than others); and recognition of the Holy Spirit's help, such as his empowerment or guidance. Moreover, one can sense or have an inner awareness of God, which is constant evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence (cf. **1Jn 3:24** ↓; **1Jn 4:13** ↓).

Acts 15:8 *And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ...* 

The clause "bore witness to them" speaks of God accepting these people (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT).

Rom 8:15-16 *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ...* 

The Holy Spirit enables us to instinctively call on God as our Father (v. 15), engendering a relationship in which we love, enjoy and trust God as a Father. In conjunction with this the Holy Spirit assures our spirit that we are God's children (v. 16).

Gal 4:6 *And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"* 



Similar to Romans 8:15 above, this implies that as the Spirit who calls out “Father” is in the hearts of believers, they also participate in calling on God as “Father” – reflecting the fact that they are God’s children and assuring them that this is so (cf. [Rom 8:16 ↑](#)).

1Cor 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

The “things freely given us by God” are all that by grace we have been given by God – which is inclusive of biblical truths and God’s blessings, notably salvation. Having an understanding of these things – through the Holy Spirit – gives one great assurance.

1Jn 3:24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^x and God^y in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

^x Greek *him*
^y Greek *he*

1Jn 4:13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

Rom 5:5 ... and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Through the Holy Spirit, given to a person when they believe, God fills each of his people with his love. One can conclude from this that sensing this love of God for them – given through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – gives believers a strong conviction that they are accepted by him.

✦ **Having the Holy Spirit is a guarantee of the fulfillment of God’s promises of the afterlife:**

2Cor 1:21-22 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.^z

^z Or down payment

This teaching is discussed more deeply in [The Holy Spirit is God’s seal, guaranteeing what is to come](#), p. 835.

Obeying God and doing what is right

See also:

- [True faith involves good deeds . . .](#), p. 1068
- [. . . One’s Christianity should be proven by one’s deeds](#), p. 1069

1Jn 2:3-6 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Note that apart from the last phrase, this passage is often translated to be referring to God rather than Jesus Christ (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Acts 10:34-35 So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Peter’s realization was largely focused on God’s acceptance of people from all nations, in contrast to only Jews. His words can nevertheless be readily applied to our need to realize and thus be assured that God accepts “anyone who fears him and does what is right”.

Heb 6:9-12 Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

We need to persist in doing the things God wants, things indicative of salvation (v. 9b) – such as serving other Christians, which also is indicative of love for God (v. 10). In doing so we will “have the full assurance of hope until the end” (v. 11).

1Jn 2:29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

Imitating God – notably his righteousness (cf. [1Jn 3:7](#), [10 ↓](#)) – evidences that one has been born of him, having his characteristics. (Note that Jesus Christ may be in view here rather than God. The point being made is applicable to both.)

1Jn 3:7, 10 Little children, let no one deceive you. *Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.* ... ¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.



3Jn 1:11 Beloved, *do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.* 

Those who persist in doing good show themselves to be of God – “God’s children” (CEV, NLT; [1Jn 2:29 ↑](#); [1Jn 3:10 ↑](#)).

Loving other Christians

See also:

- [1Jn 3:10 ↑](#)
- [Loving other Christians is indicative of being of God and Jesus Christ . . .](#), p. 1314
- [. . . Not loving other Christians has negative implications](#), p. 1314

1Jn 3:14, 18-20 *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.*  ... ¹⁸*Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.* ¹⁹*By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;* ²⁰*for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.* 

Tangible facts should take precedence over our feelings. So “whenever our hearts condemn us” (v. 20a) the fact of our sincere actions of love (vv. 14, 18) should “reassure our heart before him” (v. 19), realizing that God knows the whole picture (v. 20b).

1Jn 4:7, 12, 16-19 Beloved, *let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.*  ... ¹²*No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.*  ... ¹⁶*So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* ¹⁷*By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.* ¹⁸*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* ¹⁹*We love because he first loved us.* 

Christian love for each other is a product of God’s love (cf. vv. 7, 12), including his love for us (cf. vv. 16, 19). Knowledge of such love drives out fear of judgment and punishment (vv. 17, 18) – they cannot coexist; they are incompatible, both logically and experientially.

In regards to the first statement in v. 16, interpretation of it depends on whether it is referring to the preceding verses (cf. [1Jn 4:14-16 ↓](#)) or to what follows (v. 16b-17). Most modern translations imply the former, by having a paragraph

break immediately after the statement, i.e. in the middle of the verse. However the latter is a possibility. Also a possibility is an integration of the two views: the statement may mean that we know the love God has for us by the evidence of our love for others (vv. 16b-17) and thus – knowing the extent of it (cf. vv. 14-15a) – we can believe or rely on it for assurance of having a right and close relationship with him.

✦ **The love a woman showed Jesus was proof that her sins had been forgiven:**

Luke 7:44-50 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “*Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.* ⁴⁵*You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.* ⁴⁶*You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.* ⁴⁷*Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much.* But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” ⁴⁸And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among^a themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” 

^a Or to

Note that in v. 47a Jesus is saying that the woman’s great love showed that her many sins had been forgiven – rather than saying that it was the reason for why they were forgiven. It was in fact her faith that had saved her (v. 50).

Further reasons

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 

Jesus assures us that he will not reject anyone who comes to him.

Phil 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. 

This appears to be implying that the very fact that God had begun a good work in the Philippians gave Paul assurance that God would complete it, for God does not leave things unfinished. Seeing evidence of God’s work in our lives should likewise give us such assurance.

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for *I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*^b 

^b Or *what I have entrusted to him*; Greek *my deposit*



If the alternative rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), then Paul would appear to be speaking of trusting God to guard his ministry and its fruits, along with himself – even through death. As such, this would be inclusive of Paul's salvation. Knowing God, Paul was convinced that God would keep it secure.

1Jn 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 📖

1Jn 2:28 *And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.* 📖

We can be sure that if we continue in Jesus Christ (cf. *We live "in" Jesus Christ – and he in us – by faith . . .*, p. 1079) we will be confident and unashamed before him on his return.

1Jn 4:14-16a *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.* 📖

This gives two reasons for assurance – acknowledgement of Jesus with its implications (v. 15), and "the love that God has for us" (v. 16a). The latter quite possibly refers to God's love demonstrated in sending his Son to save us (v. 14). Also bear in mind the comment on v. 16a in the previous subsection.

✦ **The sharing of our faith gives us a full knowledge of all we have:**

Philem 1:6 *... and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.*^c 📖

^c Or for Christ's service

The phrase "the sharing of your faith" could be speaking of: the sharing in our faith with fellow believers, including the participation in and fellowship of our faith (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB); the sharing that is part of our faith, i.e. sharing of our possessions and/or ourselves with others (cf. NLT); or sharing what we believe with non-believers (cf. Nlrv).

Note: God's people are free from condemnation

John 3:18 *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* 📖

John 5:24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.* 📖

Rom 5:16-18 *And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass^d led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness^e leads to justification and life for all men.* 📖

^d Or the trespass of one

^e Or the act of righteousness of one

God's people are no longer under condemnation as Jesus Christ's work – his "act of righteousness" (v. 18) – has brought them righteousness and justification. Note that the gift (v. 16) is "the free gift of righteousness" (v. 17).

Rom 8:1-2 *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.^f ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^g free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.* 📖

^f Some manuscripts add *who walk not according to the flesh (but according to the Spirit)*

^g Some manuscripts *me*

It is through the OT law that people are condemned – when they break its commands. So being free of the law one is not open to its condemnation. Note, however, that this interpretation is based on taking "the law of sin and death" (v. 2) to refer to the OT law; see the comment on **Rom 8:2-3** – under *We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit*, p. 1073. Paul could instead be speaking of believers being set free from the controlling power of sin.

Rom 8:33-34 *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.^h* 📖

^h Or *Is it Christ Jesus who died . . . for us?*

With the rhetorical question in v. 34a, Paul may simply be asking how anyone could condemn us – as in v. 33a – when Jesus Christ is at God's right hand and interceding for us. However, it could be that the question has in view Jesus Christ (cf. AMP, NLT) as the judge and so therefore the one who will condemn the guilty. In this case too, believers would have no reason to fear condemnation as the one who pronounces condemnation is the very one who died for them and is now interceding for them.

Col 1:22 *... he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ...* 📖



When presented “holy and blameless and above reproach” before God, believers will clearly not face condemnation.

Ps 34:21-22 Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. ²²The LORD redeems the life of his servants; *none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.* 📖

Condemnation in earthly courts may be in view. Even so, this is still applicable to condemnation (and freedom from it) before God.

Isa 50:8-9 *He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.* 📖

The term “adversary” in the context speaks of an “accuser” (NIV®; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV). This is a prophecy indicating that God would vindicate his servant, the Messiah, keeping him from accusation and condemnation. It has an application to all God’s people.

✚ **God’s people are holy and blameless in his sight:**

Eph 1:4a ... even as *he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*



Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Staying Right with God

See also:

- *By faith we remain in a right relationship with God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1100

As seen in the first half of this chapter, being made right with God involves being forgiven and granted righteousness. Having been made right with God, it is critical that we live in accordance with this standing, so as to stay right with God. The following topics deal with some key aspects involved in staying right with God.

a) The Need to Obey God

See also:

- *II. Obeying God*, p. 1163

Obedience does not make us righteous nor earn us salvation. But we need to obey God in keeping with the righteous state before God that is granted to believers through faith in Jesus Christ. (See the introductory comment below on *Obedience leads to righteousness*.) Moreover, in striving to obey God and to do his will, we effectively accept or grasp the undeserved salvation made possible by God's grace. These same points can be made regarding good deeds – an aspect of obeying God – the subject of the following chapter section.

Subsections

- [Obedience accompanies belief and faith](#)
- [Obedience leads to righteousness](#)
- [Obedience leads to holiness and purity](#)
- [Obedience brings one into a close relationship with God and Jesus Christ . . .](#)
- [. . . God and Jesus Christ are with those who obey – they in God and he in them](#)
- [Obedience and doing God's will are critical for salvation](#)
- [Obedience and doing God's will lead to eternal life](#)
- [Not obeying God ultimately ends in eternal destruction](#)

Obedience accompanies belief and faith

See also:

- [. . . We are to both believe and repent](#), p. 1043
- [Faith produces obedience to God](#), p. 1096

Coming to faith on believing the gospel message, subsequently entails obedience to God.

Rom 1:5 ... through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the obedience of faith* for the sake of his name among all the nations, ... 

The phrase “the obedience of faith” (cf. [Rom 16:26 ↓](#)) may well be speaking of obedience that comes from faith, both initial belief and ongoing faith. Alternatively it may be speaking of faith itself as being an act of obedience, to the gospel message.

Rom 15:18-19 For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me *to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed*,¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum *I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ*; ... 

The Gentiles came to live in obedience to God through believing Paul's words and deeds – his proclamation of the gospel, supported by the miracles he performed. As such their obedience was a direct consequence of their belief.

Rom 16:25-27 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to *my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ*, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages²⁶ but *has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations*, according to the command of the eternal God, *to bring about the obedience of faith—*²⁷ to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. 

A key purpose of the spreading of the gospel (vv. 25-26b) is “to bring about the obedience of faith” (v. 26b).

2Cor 9:13 By their approval of this service, they^a will glorify God because of *your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ*, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ... 

^a Or *you*

This suggests that obedience should accompany genuine belief of the gospel, with Paul speaking of “this service” as proof of the Corinthians' faith (cf. NCV NIRV).



Acts 6:7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. 📖

The final clause indicates that these priests became believers, pre-emptive to becoming obedient to the commands of the body of truth referred to here as “the faith”. In effect it is saying that they “believed and obeyed” (NCV™).

John 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.* 📖

With the opposite results of having eternal life and not seeing life, this contrasts belief with not obeying. As such, by implication it associates belief with obeying.

Gal 5:7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 📖

The phrase “obeying the truth” speaks of obedience to the truth’s requirements, subsequent to belief of it.

✦ **Those who believe Jesus must obey him to be truly his disciples:**

John 8:31 *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ...”* 📖

Obedience leads to righteousness

Righteousness involves conformity to the will of God. As such obedience is critical for it.

However, as is the case earlier in this chapter, righteousness is also sometimes spoken of in a stricter legal sense – in regard to being deemed as righteous by God. This cannot be achieved just by obedience, simply because it is impossible to obey God’s law perfectly so as to be declared completely righteous before him. When Paul says in Romans 2:13 that “those who obey the law who will be declared righteous” the implication behind it is that no one can do this. It is only by faith in Jesus Christ that one can be declared as righteous in this sense.

But bear in mind that obedience goes hand in hand with faith, as shown above in *Obedience accompanies belief and faith*. Faith requires obedience and is shown to be valid by it. No one will be declared righteous on Judgment Day without having endeavoured to be obedient. So Paul can also say in Romans 6:16 (below) that obedience “leads to righteousness”, a concept applicable to all senses of the word “righteousness”.

Rom 6:16-18 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^b you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of

obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin *have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,* ¹⁸and, *having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.* 📖

^b Greek *bondservants*. Twice in this verse and verse 19; also once in verses 17, 20

Isa 48:18 *Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; ...* 📖

Note that some other translations interpret the Hebrew rendered here as “righteousness” to refer instead to success or blessing (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NRSV).

Ezek 18:9 ... [if a man] *walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord GOD.* 📖

Luke 1:6 *And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.* 📖

1Jn 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. *Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.* 📖

Those who practice righteousness – which basically involves obeying God – are righteous.

Ps 106:28-31 Then they yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead; ²⁹they provoked the LORD to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them. ³⁰Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed. ³¹And that was counted to him as righteousness from generation to generation forever. 📖

Phinehas’ action against apostasy, indicative of his devotion and obedience to God, was credited to him as righteousness.

Obedience leads to holiness and purity

See also:

▪ Ex 19:5-6 ↓

Deut 28:9 *The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.* 📖

Rom 6:19, 22 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now *present your members as slaves to*



righteousness leading to sanctification. ... ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and *have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification* and its end, eternal life.

Paul's readers had become "obedient from the heart" (v. 17) and so had become "slaves to righteousness" (v. 18) , all of which led to sanctification (v. 19b) or holiness. In v. 22 Paul similarly speaks of becoming slaves in obedience to God, which leads to holiness.

1Pet 1:22 *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth* for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ...

The word "purified" here refers to purity of character, which comes through obedience.

1Jn 1:7 *But if we walk in the light*, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and *the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

The expression "walk in the light" of course is akin to "obeying God". The Greek translated "cleanses" has a continuous tense, implying that the purification is ongoing rather than a single "once and for all" event. (cf. NBC)

Ps 119:2-3, 9 Blessed are *those who keep his testimonies*, who seek him with their whole heart, ³*who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!* ... ⁹*How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.*

Obedying God's statutes (v. 2) – walking in his ways (v. 3b) and living according to his word (v. 9b) – leads to purity as in doing so one will "do no wrong" (v. 3a) and so "keep his way pure" (v. 9a).

Obedience brings one into a close relationship with God and Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- *We live "in" Jesus Christ – and he in us – by faith . . .*, p. 1079

Jer 7:23 But this command I gave them: *'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people.* And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'

Ex 19:5-6 Now therefore, *if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;* ⁶*and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.

The description of the Israelites as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (v. 6) signifies dedication to God's service, necessarily involving a close relationship with him. A close relationship with God is also pointed to by "you shall be my treasured possession".

Mark 3:35 *For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.*

John 15:14-15 *You are my friends if you do what I command you.* ¹⁵*No longer do I call you servants,*^c for the servant^d does not know what his master is doing; *but I have called you friends*, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

^c Greek *bondservants*

^d Greek *bondservant*; also verse 20

Note that it can be inferred from this that as Jesus' followers are his friends, as opposed to mere servants, they obey him because they want to please him rather than because they have to do so.

1Jn 1:3-7 ... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and *indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* ⁴And we are writing these things so that our^e joy may be complete. ⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* ⁶*If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.* ⁷*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another*, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

^e Some manuscripts *your*

One can infer from this that if we obey God – walking in his light (v. 7a; cf. v. 5b) – we have fellowship with him and Jesus Christ (vv. 3b; cf. 6-7), along with one another (v. 7; cf. 3a).

1Jn 2:3 *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.*

Obedience to God's commands is indicative that one has come to know him. The more one obeys God the better one comes to know his will and God himself.

Lev 9:6 And Moses said, *"This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."*

This appearance of the LORD's glory took place in v. 23. Although we do not expect such appearances, this arguably does reflect that God manifests himself to those who are obedient.



... God and Jesus Christ are with those who obey – they in God and he in them

See also:

- ... *God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe and obey him*, p. 832

Lev 26:3, 11-12 *If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, ...¹¹I will make my dwelling^f among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹²And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.*

☞

^f Hebrew *tabernacle*

2Ki 18:6-7 *For he [Hezekiah] held fast to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses. ⁷And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.*

2Chr 17:3-4 *The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, ⁴but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel.*

☞

John 14:23 *Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

The promise to “make our home with him” quite possibly alludes to God’s and Jesus Christ’s fellowship with each believer, as part of their abiding presence.

Phil 4:9 *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

That which Paul exhorts the Philippian to put it into practice, would undoubtedly have involved – or been in accordance with – God’s and Jesus Christ’s commands.

1Jn 2:5-6 ... but *whoever keeps his word*, in him truly the love of God is perfected. *By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

Living in God involves living and acting as Jesus did (v. 6) – in obedience to God’s will and commands, as reflected with the reference to keeping God’s word in v. 5a.

1Jn 3:24 *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^g and God^h in him.* And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

^g Greek *him*

^h Greek *he*

2Jn 1:9 *Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. *Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.**

Obedience and doing God’s will are critical for salvation

Heb 5:9 *And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ...*

Heb 10:36 *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*

☞

God’s promises pertaining to salvation are grasped – though not earned – by doing his will.

Phil 2:12-13 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

We need to continue to obey (v. 12a) and to please God (v. 13b) so as to lay hold of our salvation (v. 12b).

Matt 7:21-27 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ ²⁴“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

Particularly in light of vv. 21-23, the storm in the parable of the wise and foolish builders probably has the final judgment primarily in view; at the very least it is applicable to it. Those who do God’s will (v. 21) and put Jesus’ words into practice (v. 24) will be saved rather than suffer destruction on Judgment Day.



✦ **Jesus lay down his life for those who obey him:**

John 15:13-14 Greater love has no one than this, *that someone lay down his life for his friends.* ¹⁴*You are my friends if you do what I command you.* 📖

Obedience to Jesus Christ means that we are his friends (v. 14) and in turn that he has laid down his life for us (v. 13). This indicates that obedience to Christ is required in order to be granted the benefits of his death, which of course includes salvation.

Obedience and doing God's will lead to eternal life

Matt 19:16-17 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, *"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"* ¹⁷And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. *If you would enter life, keep the commandments.*" 📖

Obedience to God's commands is critical for eternal life. Moreover, we must ensure that we do not make anything else a higher priority than God and Jesus Christ – which sadly this man did (cf. vv. 20-24).

John 8:51 Truly, truly, I say to you, *if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.* 📖

John 12:50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me. 📖

The phrase "his commandment" refers to God's "commands" (CEV, NCV, cf. NLT) – here primarily what he spoke through Jesus Christ (cf. v. 49). Obedience to God's commands leads to eternal life.

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, *the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.* 📖

1Jn 2:17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but *whoever does the will of God abides forever.* 📖

Prov 12:28 *In the path of righteousness is life,* and in its pathway there is no death. 📖

Here "life" probably refers to a secure and fulfilled life, rather than eternal life – although the teaching here is certainly applicable to it.

✦ **Following Jesus Christ, forsaking all for God's kingdom, leads to eternal life:**

Luke 18:28-30 And Peter said, *"See, we have left our homes and followed you."* ²⁹And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, *there is no one who has left house or wife or brothersⁱ or*

parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰*who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."* 📖

ⁱ Or wife or brothers and sisters

Not obeying God ultimately ends in eternal destruction

Eph 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things *the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* 📖

"God's wrath" is probably at least inclusive of the eschatological wrath of God, if not primarily referring to it.

2Thes 1:7b-9 ... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, *inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* ⁹*They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away fromⁱ the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ...* 📖

ⁱ Or destruction that comes from

Heb 4:6, 11 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and *those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,* 📖 ... ¹¹*Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.* 📖

When the Israelites arrived at Canaan the first time, because of their disobedience and disbelief they did not enter the place of God's rest for them. They instead died wandering in the desert. Similarly those who follow their example of disobedience will fail to enter God's final rest, and instead will face destruction. Hebrews 3:18 also speaks of this – "And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?"

1Pet 2:7-8 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"^k ⁸and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." *They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.* 📖

^k Greek *the head of the corner*

The phrase "disobey the word" (v. 8) is equivalent to not believing in Jesus Christ (v. 7). Such disobedience causes one to "stumble", a term which quite possibly alludes to one's "doom" (NASB; cf. CEV).

1Pet 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, *what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?* 📖



Deut 8:20 Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, *so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.* 

While not speaking explicitly of eternal destruction, this points to the assertion that it is ultimately the end of all who do not obey God.

✦ **Those who are not appropriately prepared for entering God's kingdom will be thrown out:**

Matt 22:8-13 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' ¹⁰And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹'But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹²And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 

The king symbolizes God. The wedding clothes possibly symbolize righteousness. As such these "wedding clothes" could be correlated not only with the righteousness granted through Jesus Christ's death, but also with subsequently living in obedience to God.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Need for Good Deeds

While good deeds do not make us right with God, they are critical for staying right with God – not least because they accompany things that are indicative of being right with God. As such, good deeds prove that one's faith and Christianity are valid – and consequently they are important for one's salvation.

Note that good deeds are involved in obeying God, the subject of the previous section.

Subsections

- We are to persistently do good deeds
- True faith involves good deeds . . .
- . . . One's Christianity should be proven by one's deeds
- Good deeds are critical for salvation and eternal life
- Note: Our good deeds or works do not earn righteousness and salvation, which are by grace

We are to persistently do good deeds

1Tim 6:18 *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ...* 

2Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency¹ in all things at all times, you may *abound in every good work.* 

¹ Or *all contentment*

Gal 6:10 So then, *as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.* 

Col 1:10 ... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, *bearing fruit in every good work* and increasing in the knowledge of God. 

The phrase "every good work" arguably suggests "all kinds of good deeds" (GNT) and even to "continually do good" (NLT).

1Thes 5:15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but *always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.* 

2Thes 3:13 As for you, brothers, *do not grow weary in doing good.* 

1Tim 5:9-10 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband,^m ¹⁰*and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.* 

^m Or *a woman of one man*

Titus 2:14 ... who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are *zealous for good works.* 



Titus 3:1, 14 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to *be ready for every good work*,
 ... ¹⁴*And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.*

James 3:13, 17 Who is wise and understanding among you? *By his good conduct let him show his works* in the meekness of wisdom. ... ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, *full of mercy and good fruits*, impartial and sincere.

The coupling of “good fruits” (v. 17) with being “full of mercy” implies that the former denotes “good deeds” (GNT, NLT; cf. CEV, NCV). Our lives are to be “full” of such good deeds.

1Pet 2:12, 15 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see *your good deeds* and glorify God on the day of visitation. ... ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that *by doing good* you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Rev 2:19 *I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.*

2Chr 31:20 Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and *he did what was good* and right and faithful before the LORD his God.

Neh 13:14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out *my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.*

Acts 9:36 Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas.ⁿ *She was full of good works* and acts of charity.

ⁿ The Aramaic name *Tabitha* and the Greek name *Dorcas* both mean *gazelle*

Acts 10:38 ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. *He went about doing good* and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

✦ **There is nothing better to do than to be joyful and do good:**

Ecc1 3:12 *I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ...*

True faith involves good deeds . . .

See also:

- [2Cor 9:13](#) ↴
- *Obedience accompanies belief and faith*, p. 1062
- *Faith produces obedience to God*, p. 1096
- *Faith produces work in service to God*, p. 1097

James 2:14-23, 26 *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?* ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good^o is that? ¹⁷So also *faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.* ¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and *I will show you my faith by my works.* ¹⁹*You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!* ²⁰*Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?* ²¹*Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?* ²²*You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;* ²³*and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.* ... ²⁶*For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

^o Or *benefit*

In vv. 21-23 James speaks of what Abraham did as affirming his righteousness, a righteousness which was earlier accredited to him because of his belief or faith. In conjunction with this his faith was perfected (cf. GNT, NASB, NCV, NJKV) and in a sense consummated by what he did – proven by his action/work that resulted from it.

Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

Faith is more than just a matter of one’s intellect. It involves an active trust in God that is manifested in acts of love, i.e. good deeds.

Eph 2:8-10 For by grace you have been *saved through faith*. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

One who has been saved through faith (v. 8) has been “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (v. 10).



Titus 3:8 The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so *that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works*. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

1Jn 3:23 *And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.*

This associates faith (“believe in the name of his Son”) with loving others and so also with good deeds, as loving others involves good deeds.

Ps 37:3 *Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.*^p

^p *Or and feed on faithfulness, or and find safe pasture*

... One’s Christianity should be proven by one’s deeds

See also:

- *Obeying God and doing what is right* [reasons for assurance], p. 1058

Our deeds should show or prove that we are Christians, being proof of the various things that typify Christians.

John 15:8 By this my Father is glorified, that you *bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

It is debatable as to precisely what Jesus is referring to by “fruit”. Most likely it is either: personal spiritual characteristics (cf. Gal 5:22-23); or spiritual outcomes of quality work for his kingdom, e.g. helping to bring people into the kingdom. The latter interpretation would make the verse pertinent to this subsection. Note that quite possibly, in some occurrences at least, “fruit” includes both concepts – spiritual characteristics and the work or deeds that flow from them.

Rom 16:10 *Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ.* Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus.

In his greetings in vv. 3-16, Paul makes a number of references to those who have worked hard in the Lord. Thus what Paul has in view in saying that Apelles “is approved in Christ” may well have been in regard to doing such work or deeds.

2Cor 8:24 *So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.*

The reference is to contributing to the needs of others (cf. 9:13).

2Cor 9:13 *By their approval of this service, they^a will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ...*

^a *Or you*

Here Paul effectively speaks of such aid being “proof” (GNT, NASB, NCV, NKJV; cf. CEV, NIV, NLT) of their faith.

3Jn 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. *Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.*

As noted earlier in this chapter, those who persist in doing good show themselves to be of God – “God’s children” (CEV, NLT).

Acts 26:20 ... but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, *performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.*

Deeds that are in keeping with repentance will “prove” (CEV, NIV, NLT) or “show” (GNT, NCV) we have repented.

‡ Do your best to be approved in God’s sight:

2Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,^r a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*

^r That is, one approved after being tested

Similarly Galatians 1:10a implies that we should do what we can to win the approval of God – “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?”

Good deeds are critical for salvation and eternal life

See also:

- **2Cor 9:13**
- *On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done . . .*, p. 712
- *. . . God’s people will be judged and rewarded according to what they have done*, p. 713
- *In turning from sin, do what is good and right . . .*, p. 1035
- *Obedience and doing God’s will are critical for salvation*, p. 1065
- *Obedience and doing God’s will lead to eternal life*, p. 1066

Good deeds do not in themselves produce salvation – but one who truly has been saved will be characterized by good deeds.



Heb 6:9-12 Though we speak in this way, yet *in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.* ¹⁰*For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.* ¹¹*And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end,* ¹²*so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* ☞

Luke 19:8-9 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, *“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”* ⁹*And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.* ☞

Jesus was not saying that salvation came because of what Zacchaeus did. Jesus quite possibly meant that what Zacchaeus did was indicative that he had been saved. This interpretation is supported by Jesus calling Zacchaeus “a son of Abraham” (v. 9), which may well refer to Zacchaeus’ faith as the reason “salvation has come to this house”, with Abraham being renowned for his faith.

James 2:14, 21-25 *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?* ☞ ... ²¹*Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?* ²²*You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;* ²³*and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.* ²⁴*You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.* ²⁵*And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?* ☞

Justification (vv. 21-25) is of course a key element of salvation (v. 14). Verses 21-25 appear to say that one’s justification is fulfilled or sealed – though not earned – by one’s deeds.

Rev 19:7-8 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, *for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;* ⁸*it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.* ☞

The “righteous deeds” can be understood as “good deeds” (GNT, NLT; cf. CEV, NCV). The “Lamb” is Jesus Christ, and the “bride” represents God’s people, or at least the New Jerusalem that they will inhabit. This looks forward to the consummation of Christ’s relationship or union with his people, associated with the consummation of their salvation. Thus it can be inferred from this that those who are depicted

by the “bride” – and so who will receive salvation – are characterized by good deeds.

2Tim 1:16-18 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, *for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains,* ¹⁷*but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—* ¹⁸*may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.* ☞

In v. 18a, Paul effectively asks the Lord to take Onesiphorus’s good deeds into account on Judgment Day and show him mercy, which would involve granting him salvation.

2Pet 1:5-8, 10-11 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,^s and virtue with knowledge, ⁶*and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,* ⁷*and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.* ⁸*For if these qualities^t are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ☞ ... ¹⁰*Therefore, brothers,^u be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.* ¹¹*For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* ☞

^s Or *excellence*; twice in this verse

^t Greek *these things*; also verses 9, 10, 12

^u Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

This indicates that practicing the qualities listed (vv. 5-7) will enable one to be effective and fruitful (v. 8) – which involves good deeds – ensuring one’s “calling and election” (v. 10) and entry into the kingdom (v. 11), both of which are associated with salvation.

Rom 2:7 ... *to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;* ... ☞

1Tim 6:18-19 *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,* ¹⁹*thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.* ☞

Amos 5:14 *Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said.* ☞



This can be applied to spiritual life, reflecting that seeking to do good is important for it.

‡ **Supposed servants of Christ who do evil will be assigned a place with the unbelievers:**

Luke 12:45-46 *But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.* 📖

The "unfaithful" (v. 46b) can be correlated with "unbelievers" (NASB, NIV, NKJV).

Note: Our good deeds or works do not earn righteousness and salvation, which are by grace

See also:

- *a) Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ*, p. 640
- *b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ*, p. 646

Our good deeds and "works" – including efforts we make in trying to obey aspects of the OT Law that are pertinent to believers – do not earn us righteousness and salvation. They are an effect of righteousness – not a cause of it. Rather, righteousness and salvation come by God's grace/mercy.

Rom 4:1-6 What then shall we say was gained by^v Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ²*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.* ³*For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."* ⁴Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵*And to the one who does not work but believes in^w him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,* ⁶just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom *God counts righteousness apart from works: ...* 📖

^v Some manuscripts say about

^w Or *but trusts*; compare verse 24

God credits righteousness to people; it is not earned. Note that with the phrase "does not work" (v. 5) Paul is speaking of one who does not try to earn righteousness by works or deeds.

Rom 9:30-32a What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, *a righteousness that is by faith*; ³¹*but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness^x did not succeed in*

reaching that law. ³²*Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.* 📖

^x Greek *a law of righteousness*

In vv. 31-32 Paul appears to be speaking of Israel failing to obtain the righteousness of the law – the righteousness that the law embodied. With his use of "Israel", Paul may be referring in particular to contemporary Jews, who insisted on trying to pursue righteousness this way – despite the failure of their forefathers – rather than by faith.

Eph 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* 📖

2Tim 1:9 ... [God] *who saved us and called us to^y a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace*, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^z ... 📖

^y Or *with*

^z Greek *before times eternal*

Titus 3:4-5 *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy*, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ... 📖

Rom 9:16 *So then it depends not on human will or exertion,^a but on God, who has mercy.* 📖

^a Greek *not of him who wills or runs*

"It" refers to God's choice of persons to be his people (cf. vv. 11-12) – also in view in the following reference (11:5-6). As such these verses speak of or allude to God's salvation not being earned through one's own efforts.

Rom 11:5-6 *So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.* 📖

The "remnant" refers to those that God had chosen from among the largely unbelieving Jewish nation.

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit

See also:

- c) *Release from the Law through Jesus Christ*, p. 651
- *"In" Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .*, p. 783

Through what Jesus Christ has accomplished, believers have been set free from the Mosaic Law (the law given through Moses) as the means of being made right with God. As such, many aspects of the law are no longer applicable, particularly the regulations regarding making atonement for sin.

This does not mean that we are permitted to sin. For we are still to obey the spiritual and moral commands of the law that remain pertinent to our relationship with God and our relationships with other people. But rather than being preoccupied with doggedly obeying rules, we are to be focused on living by God's Holy Spirit. In doing so we are better able to avoid sin and more effectively fulfill God's will.

Subsections

- Our freedom from the Mosaic Law does not permit us to sin . . .
- . . . In fact, sinning results in enslavement to sin
- We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit
- Instead of living by the sinful nature, live by the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . and live in God's grace
- Living by the Spirit brings life – in contrast to living by the sinful nature and to the law
- Note: Inner righteousness and right attitudes are needed, rather than mere compliance with rules

Our freedom from the Mosaic Law does not permit us to sin . . .

See also:

- a) *Consequences of Sin for God's People*, p. 1830
- II. *Avoiding Sin and Being Holy*, p. 1854

Gal 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 

Freedom from the Mosaic Law is being referred to.

Rom 6:1-2, 15 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?  ... ¹⁵What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 

Gal 2:17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 

The phrase "a servant of sin" has the sense "serving the cause of sin" (GNT). A common interpretation of this verse is that Paul is dealing with the charge that being justified in Christ, apart from the law, encourages sinful behavior as one is no longer subject to the law. Paul totally rejects this accusation. Another interpretation is that Paul is speaking of the realization of Jews that the way of justification in Christ apart from the Jewish law means that they, like the Gentiles (cf. v. 15), are sinners (cf. GNT, NCV). Paul would likewise then be rejecting the accusation that such a truth means that Christ promotes the cause of sin.

1Pet 2:16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants^b of God. 

^b Greek *bondservants*

We should not use our freedom from law as an "excuse" (CEV, NCV, NLT) to do wrong. Note that civil law rather than the Mosaic Law is in view here – but the same principle applies to both.

Jude 1:4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, *ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality* and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 

Here Jude condemns people using God's grace (which involves freedom from the law) as an excuse for sexual immorality.

Acts 24:24-25 After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you." 

Here Paul's teaching associates "faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 24) with "righteousness and self-control" (v. 25). This is contrary to the concept that the way of faith (with its freedom from the law) permits us to sin.



... In fact, sinning results in enslavement to sin

See also:

▪ *Captivity to sin* . . . , p. 374

▪ . . . *involving enslavement to sin*, p. 375

Rather than bringing freedom, choosing to sin in fact results in enslavement to sin.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *everyone who commits sin is a slave^c to sin.* 📖

^c Greek *bondservant*; also verse 35

Rom 6:16 *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^d you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?* 📖

^d Greek *bondservants*. Twice in this verse and verse 19; also once in verses 17, 20

Paul appears to imply that one lives either as a slave to sin or as a slave to righteousness. Therefore if one chooses to sin and not be committed to living righteously, one will be enslaved to sin.

1Cor 6:12 *“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be enslaved by anything.* 📖

“All things are lawful for me” (cf. **1Cor 10:23-24** ↓) appears to be Paul quoting some of the Corinthians who apparently – in order to justify their sexual immorality (cf. v. 13) – claimed that everything is permissible for Christians to do, presumably in reference to not being under law. Paul argues that while in one sense this might be true, obviously it is not a good idea to do things that are harmful. One way in which sin is harmful is that one becomes enslaved by it (cf. **2Pet 2:19** ↓), no longer being free to choose whether or not to indulge in it, as it increasingly dominates one’s life, taking one under its power (cf. CEV, NKJV).

2Pet 2:19 *They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves^e of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.* 📖

^e Greek *bondservants*

Eccl 8:8b There is no discharge from war, *nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it.* 📖

For comment, see the comment on **Eccl 8:8** – under *Captivity to sin* . . . , p. 374.

✦ In exercising one’s freedom from the law, one should be mindful of others:

1Cor 10:23-24 *“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up.²⁴ Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.* 📖

In speaking of doing what is “lawful”, v. 23 is in the same vein as 6:12 above. But here the effect on others – rather than on ourselves – seems to be in view (v. 24). In exercising one’s freedom from the law, one should not challenge the weaker faith of others so as to cause them to act against their conscience (cf. vv. 28-29b), but rather in doing so one should seek the good of others (v. 24).

We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit

Living by the Holy Spirit involves: being both alert to and responsive to the Spirit’s promptings; and being reliant on the Spirit’s power, to enable and transform us.

Rom 7:6 *But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.^f* 📖

^f Greek *of the letter*

The term “that which held us captive” is a reference to the aforementioned law. God’s people serve and obey him now by following the directing of the Holy Spirit, with his empowerment, rather than by focusing on “obeying the letter of the law” (NLT).

Gal 5:18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* 📖

2Cor 3:5-6 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us competent^g to be ministers of a new covenant, *not of the letter but of the Spirit.* For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 📖

^g Or *sufficient*

The “letter” refers to the law. God’s new covenant with his people is not of the law but of the Spirit, whereby his people are renewed by the Holy Spirit and live under the Holy Spirit’s influence.

2Cor 3:17 Now the Lord^h is the Spirit, and *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* 📖

^h Or *this Lord*

This spiritual “freedom” encompasses freedom from bondage to the law, along with freedom from sin and death.



Rom 8:2-3 For *the law of the Spirit of life has set youⁱ free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.* ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^j he condemned sin in the flesh, ...

ⁱ Some manuscripts *me*

^j Or *and as a sin offering*

The phrase “the law of sin and death” (v. 2) may refer to the OT law as “the law that brings sin and death” (NCV™), which is consistent with the usage of “law” immediately following in v. 3; thus v. 2 would indicate that the new “law” or system based on living by the Spirit has freed us from living under the OT law – as per the theme of this subsection. However a common alternative interpretation – supported by the preceding discussion on the “law of sin” (7:21-23) – is that both occurrences of “the law of” in v. 2 mean “the power of” (NLT). As such the meaning would be that the controlling (cf. v. 9) power of the Holy Spirit that gives life sets us free from the controlling power of sin, which brings death.

✦ **Through his Spirit being in us, God moves us to follow his laws:**

Ezek 36:27 And *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*^k

^k Or *my just decrees*

Largely through giving us his Holy Spirit, God enables us to follow his laws, as we live by his indwelling Spirit (cf. **Rom 8:4** ↓).

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

See also:

- **Rom 8:2-3** ↑

Rom 8:3b-5 By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^l he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who *walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.* ⁵*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.*

^l Or *and as a sin offering*

Note that v. 4 makes the important point that living under the power of the Holy Spirit enables one to in fact fulfill the law (cf. **Ezek 36:27** ↑).

Rom 8:8-12 *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* ⁹*You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact*

the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. ¹²*So then, brothers,^m we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.*

^m Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 29

In v. 12, “debtors” may have in view that we are indebted to God, as the one will give us life (v. 11). As such we are obligated “not to the flesh” (v. 12), but to live according to his Spirit, “the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead” (v. 11).

Gal 5:13, 16 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only *do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.* ... ¹⁶But I say, *walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Gal 5:24-25 And *those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* ²⁵*If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*

Eph 5:18 And *do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ...*

Believers are to continue on being replenished with the Holy Spirit. It is not a contrived experience, but one in which they are passively involved – they are to “let” (CEV, NLT) the Holy Spirit fill them (cf. ZBC). One who is filled by the Holy Spirit, can hardly live other than by the Holy Spirit.

Isa 30:1 “Ah, stubborn children,” declares the LORD, “who carry out a plan, but not mine, and *who make an alliance,ⁿ but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin;* ...

ⁿ Hebrew *who weave a web*

This condemnation both of acting apart from God’s Spirit and of sinning, points to the fact that we should live by the Holy Spirit instead of by the sinful nature.

. . . and live in God’s grace

See also:

- *b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ*, p. 646
- *Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace and Jesus Christ’s law*, p. 658

After experiencing God’s grace in being made right with him and being given salvation, Christians are to live in the realm



of his grace. This primarily involves being faithful to God and holding to the faith – thus remaining under his grace, staying right with him. It also encompasses trusting in God’s grace to meet one’s needs, including spiritual needs.

Living in God’s grace is complementary to living by the Holy Spirit. Additionally it contrasts in particular with living by the law.

Acts 13:43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, *urged them to continue in the grace of God.* 

Rom 11:22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you *continue in his kindness.* Otherwise you too will be cut off. 

Many commentators see Paul here as talking specifically of the Gentiles as a whole, rather than individual believers. But the concept of the need to continue in God’s “gracious kindness” (AMP) is obviously also applicable to individuals.

2Cor 6:1-2 Working together with him, then, *we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.* ²*For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* 

By urging the Corinthians “not to receive the grace of God in vain” (v. 1), Paul appears to be appealing to the Corinthians not to forfeit the salvation (v. 2) that God’s grace or favor (v. 2) has provided. But note that a number of commentators have a somewhat different interpretation.

Heb 12:15 *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ...* 

The expression “fails to obtain the grace of God” probably refers to failing to “secure God’s grace” (AMP), “turning back from” it (GNT). As well as seeking to ensure that no fellow believer “fails to obtain the grace of God”, we should of course also ensure that we ourselves do not.

1Pet 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that *this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.* 

The teaching contained in Peter’s letter was – or at least was in accordance with – “the true grace of God”, in which Peter encouraged his readers to stand firm.

2Pet 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 

Believers are to grow spiritually in or by Christ’s grace and knowledge of him (cf. **2Tim 2:1** ↓).

2Cor 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that *we behaved in the world with simplicity^o and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God,* and supremely so toward you. 

^o Some manuscripts *holiness*

Paul and his companions had conducted themselves according to God’s grace, in a manner consistent with it and in reliance on it.

2Tim 2:1 You then, my child, *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ...* 

This is speaking of believers being strengthened by the grace that they have through Christ and/or in their union with Christ (cf. GNT).

Heb 13:9 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for *it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace,* not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. 

‡ **Remain in God’s love:**

Jude 1:21 *... keep yourselves in the love of God,* waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 

Keep pleasing God so as to remain in the realm of his love.

Living by the Spirit brings life – in contrast to living by the sinful nature and to the law

See also:

- *The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life*, p. 843
- *... They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God’s word*, p. 857

Rom 8:1-2, 6, 13-14 *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.^p ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^q free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.  ... ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.  ... ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons^r of God. *



^p Some manuscripts add *who walk not according to the flesh (but according to the Spirit)*

^q Some manuscripts *me*

^r See discussion on “sons” in the Preface

As commented above in *We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit*, there are a couple of interpretations of the meaning of “the law” in v. 2, meaning that the last clause is either referring to the Mosaic Law (cf. NCV) or the power of sin (cf. NLT). But with either interpretation the verse still attests to how living by the Spirit “of life” sets us free from death. In v. 14, to be “led by the Spirit” speaks of living under the Spirit’s influence.

Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For *the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

2Cor 3:6-9 ... who has made us competent^s to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For *the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.* ⁷Now if *the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone*, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses’ face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸will not *the ministry of the Spirit* have even more glory? ⁹For if there was glory in *the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness* must far exceed it in glory.

^s Or *sufficient*

The “letter” (v. 6), “the ministry of death” (v. 7) and “the ministry of condemnation” (v. 9) all refer to the law – highlighting that it brings death rather than life. In indicating that “the ministry of the Spirit” (v. 8) brings righteousness (v. 9), vv. 8-9 point to the Spirit bringing life (v. 6), as righteousness and life are associated (cf. Gal 3:21 ↓), the former qualifying a person for the latter.

Gal 3:21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For *if a law had been given that could give life*, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

This indicates that the law cannot impart life.

Rom 4:15 For *the law brings wrath*, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

Rather than bringing life, the law brings God’s wrath and consequently eternal punishment (cf. NLT).

Gal 5:5 For *through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.*

Living by the Spirit (cf. NLT) enables believers to await the righteousness to come (which is either referring to being

pronounced right with God on Judgment Day, or being made righteous in ourselves following Jesus Christ’s return). One can infer from this that living by the Spirit enables believers to secure the everlasting life that is to come in conjunction with this righteousness (cf. comment on 2Cor 3:6-9 ↑).

✦ **One is sanctified by the Spirit, not by the law:**

Rom 2:29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and *circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.* His praise is not from man but from God.

Note: Inner righteousness and right attitudes are needed, rather than mere compliance with rules

See also:

- *The law’s principles – such as love, justice and mercy – are of central importance, above its rules*, p. 662
- *The new covenant is spiritual – of an internal nature and of the Holy Spirit*, p. 669

In conjunction with living by the Holy Spirit, true or inner righteousness (including right attitudes) is vital and should be sought – as opposed to merely complying with rules of the law.

Matt 5:20-22, 27-28 For I tell you, *unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* ²¹*“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’* ²²*But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother^t will be liable to judgment; whoever insults^u his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell^v of fire.* ... ²⁷*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’* ²⁸*But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

^t Some manuscripts insert *without cause*

^u Greek says *Raca to* (a term of abuse)

^v Greek *Gehenna*; also verses 29, 30

In v. 20 Jesus refers to the Jewish leaders’ lack of true, inner righteousness. They gave the appearance of complying with the law’s commandments – and indeed probably did largely comply with its rules and regulations. But their characters were not consistent with the spirit of the law. Jesus may well have had this latter point in view in subsequently speaking of attitudes that should accompany obedience to such commands as those forbidding murder (vv. 21-22a) and adultery (vv. 27-28).



Matt 23:25-28 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. ²⁷“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. ☞

In vv. 25-26, Jesus appears to refer to a tradition of the religious leaders of ensuring the outside of eating bowls were clean. Jesus uses this illustration to draw a parallel with their hypocritical and foolish practice of giving the appearance of being righteous by complying with rules instead of being concerned about inner righteousness. Jesus implies that if one is inwardly clean then one’s whole self, including one’s (outward) actions, will be clean in God’s sight.

Matt 19:16-23 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁷And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. *If you would enter life, keep the commandments.*” ¹⁸He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁰The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” ²¹Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²²When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ☞

In vv. 18-19 Jesus did not mention any commandments concerning the man’s relationship with God. Jesus’ instructions in v. 21 bore out the fact that the man’s riches had become a higher priority to him than God. Although outwardly he had appeared to have been keeping the commandments, his money had in a real sense become his God – thus breaking the first commandment (cf. Ex 20:3). Even adherence to the moral commandments is insufficient without God-centered priorities and attitudes.

Mark 7:14-23 And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵*There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.*” ¹⁷And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸And he said to them,

“Then are you also without understanding? *Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?*”^x (Thus he declared all foods clean.) ²⁰And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” ☞

^w Some manuscripts add verse 16: *If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear*

^x Greek *goes out into the latrine*

Jesus refers here to the law’s regulations concerning clean and unclean foods. The tradition of the Jewish elders of washing their hands so as not to eat with “unclean” hands is also in view (cf. vv. 1-5). Such regulations are not imperative; rather it is what is in a person’s heart that counts.

Luke 18:9-14 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^y thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” ☞

^y Or *standing, prayed to himself*

Rom 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. ☞

With his use here of “Jew”, Paul is speaking of being one of God’s people. This requires a heart made right with God, not merely compliance with outward regulations, such as Jewish circumcision.

Ps 51:16-17 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. ☞

In repentance from sin, what God really wants is a humbled spirit and remorseful heart (v. 17), rather than merely obligatory offerings (v. 16).



‡ A preoccupation with regulations can in fact lead to nullifying the law:

Mark 7:5-13 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”⁶ And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! ¹⁰For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “‘Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)^z—¹²then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

^z Or an offering

The Jews had developed many traditions, regulations which they had they placed alongside the law – often to the detriment of keeping the law.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Epilogue: Living ‘in’ Jesus Christ

See also:

- *II. Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ*, p. 778

Paul often speaks of believers being or acting “in” Christ. This refers to their close relationship and association with Jesus Christ, in which they are even identified with him. More specifically, it involves their spiritual union with Jesus Christ, and also the relationship that they have to God because of this association with Jesus Christ. (See also the introductory comment under *II. Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ*, p. 778.)

Believers are to live their lives in accordance with this relationship. As such, in addition to being mindful of the relationship, believers

should: be dependent on Jesus Christ in whom they subsist; and act in a way consistent with Jesus Christ and his teachings.

Subsections

- Live “in” Jesus Christ
- Remain “in” Jesus Christ
- We live “in” Jesus Christ – and he in us – by faith . . .
- . . . and by holding to his teachings
- Speak “in” Jesus Christ
- Act towards others “in” Jesus Christ
- Do God’s work “in” Jesus Christ
- Rejoice and take pride “in” Jesus Christ
- Further aspects of living “in” Jesus Christ

Live “in” Jesus Christ

Col 2:6-7 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk in him*, ⁷*rooted and built up in him* and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

1Cor 4:17 That is why I sent^a you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of *my ways in Christ*,^b as I teach them everywhere in every church.

^a Or *am sending*

^b Some manuscripts add *Jesus*

2Tim 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to *live a godly life in Christ Jesus* will be persecuted, ...

1Pet 3:16 ... having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile *your good behavior in Christ* may be put to shame.

The expression “your good behavior in Christ” reflects that we should live “in” Christ – “your good life in Christ” (NCV™).

‡ “Put on” Jesus Christ:

Rom 13:14 But *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The expression “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” quite possibly refers to immersing oneself in one’s union with Christ – surrounding oneself with Christ, acting in line with his purposes and for his glory, and in reliance on him. However, it has also been interpreted as a call to take on or adopt his character and example. The first interpretation is more pertinent to the theme of this subsection, but the second would also be relevant.



Remain “in” Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Col 2:6](#) ↑

John 15:4-6 *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.* 📖

The phrase “abide in” (cf. John 15:7-10; [1Jn 2:27-28](#) ↓) speaks of persistently dwelling in something – and is akin to “remain in” (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). Note that this speaks of abiding in Jesus Christ as producing spiritual “fruit” for God – applicable to both “fruit” in our own lives and “fruit” in/for God’s kingdom.

1Jn 2:27-28 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, *abide in him.* ²⁸*And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.* 📖

Note that here abiding in Jesus Christ is associated with the Holy Spirit – “the anointing” (v. 27) – abiding in believers.

Phil 3:8-9 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and *be found in him*, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 📖

With the phrase “be found in him” (v. 9) Paul is probably expressing his desire and hope to be found in union with Christ on Christ’s return.

Phil 4:1 Therefore, my brothers,^c whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, *stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.* 📖

^c Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21

1Thes 3:8 For now we live, if *you are standing fast in the Lord.* 📖

We live “in” Jesus Christ – and he in us – by faith . . .

See also:

- [Phil 4:1](#) ↑

Note that the concept of having Jesus Christ is associated with being “in” him (cf. [John 6:56](#) ↓).

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And *the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* 📖

“I live by faith in the Son of God” is usually understood to be speaking of having faith in Jesus Christ – which may well be the case (cf. AMP, NlrV, NLT). However in line with the references earlier in the verse to Christ living in oneself and to living “in the flesh” (which “in the Son of God” could be intended to parallel), the sense may be “I live by faith, in the Son of God”. The first half of the second sentence could then be rendered, “The life I now live in the flesh, I live in the Son of God, by faith.” Note that Paul’s earlier point that he no longer lives but Christ lives in him (cf. [Eph 3:16-17](#) ↓), is both vital and complimentary to living in Jesus Christ – as reflected in this subsection’s heading.

Col 2:5-7 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and *the firmness of your faith in Christ.* ⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.* 📖

Paul appears to associate having a firm faith in Christ (v. 5) – and being established in the faith (v. 7) – with living in Christ (v. 6) and being “rooted and built up in him” (v. 7).

John 6:56 *Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.* 📖

As commented earlier in this chapter, there are two subtly different interpretations of what Jesus meant when he spoke metaphorically of eating of him, the bread of life. One is that it simply means to believe in him and depend on his death, for eternal life; the other is that it means to partake of Jesus Christ for the sustenance of one’s life. Both interpretations – particularly the first – are connected with having faith in him. Similarly, both – particularly the second – can also be connected with holding to his teachings. Thus this verse reflects the assertion that we live or abide “in” Jesus Christ – and he in us – by faith and by holding to his teachings (as per the following subsection).



Eph 3:16-17 ... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ...

... and by holding to his teachings

John 15:7-10 *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. *Abide in my love.* ¹⁰*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

One abides in Jesus Christ (v. 7) and similarly in his love (vv. 9-10), by holding to his words (v. 7), keeping his commands (vv. 9-10).

1Jn 2:4-6 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. *By this we may know that we are in him:* ⁶*whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

Verses 4-5a suggest that being “in” Jesus Christ and living in the same way in which he did (vv. 5b-6) involve keeping his teachings.

1Jn 2:24 *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.*

The teaching referred to as “what you heard from the beginning” would be teaching based on Jesus Christ and his teachings (cf. 1:1; 2:7; 3:11; 2Jn 1:6; 2Jn 1:9 ↓).

1Jn 3:5-6 You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶*No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.*

2Jn 1:9 Everyone who goes on ahead and *does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*

✦ Similarly, those who obey God's commands abide in God, and he in them:

1Jn 3:24 *Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God,^d and God^e in him.* And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

^d Greek *him*

^e Greek *he*

Speak “in” Jesus Christ

Being “in” Jesus Christ we should speak and act “in” Jesus Christ, in a manner consistent with this standing. Doing so involves speaking and acting in accordance with Jesus Christ's teachings and faith in him (as reflected by the previous two subsections).

Bear in mind, however, that in this and the following subsection, references to doing things in Jesus Christ are not necessarily intended to imply or exemplify that we should consciously do such things in Jesus Christ – which is the thrust of the subheadings. Some at least may just be reflecting that as Christians we are “in” Jesus Christ and thus what we do is therefore done “in” Jesus Christ.

Rom 9:1 *I am speaking the truth in Christ*—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

2Cor 2:17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, *in the sight of God we speak in Christ.*

Note that with the phrase “in the sight of God” (cf. 2Cor 12:19 ↓), Paul implies that he spoke not only in awareness of God's presence, but also his scrutiny. He may be alluding to God as his witness that he spoke in Christ.

2Cor 12:19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? *It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ,* and all for your upbuilding, beloved.

1Thes 4:1 Finally, then, brothers,^f *we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus,* that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

^f Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 10, 13

As in the following verses, Paul appears to be speaking “in the Lord Jesus” as he gives instructions. Note that in these verses, Paul may have in mind that as he is “in” Jesus Christ he is therefore speaking “in” Jesus Christ – as opposed to saying that he is purposely speaking in accordance with his standing of being “in” Jesus Christ.



2Thes 3:12 Now such persons *we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ* to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.^g 📖

^g Greek *eat their own bread*

Eph 4:17 Now *this I say and testify in the Lord*, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 📖

Act towards others “in” Jesus Christ

Note that Paul’s references below to acting towards other believers “in” Jesus Christ, may well have their standing “in” Jesus Christ in view as much as that of Paul or his readers.

Rom 16:1-2 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant^h of the church at Cenchreae, ²that you may *welcome her in the Lord* in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. 📖

^h Or *deaconess*

Rom 16:8 Greet Ampliatus, *my beloved in the Lord*. 📖

Paul may be referring to loving Ampliatus “in” Christ (cf. NIV).

1Cor 16:19, 24 The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, *send you hearty greetings in the Lord*. 📖 ... ²⁴*My love be with you all in Christ Jesus*. Amen. 📖

Eph 6:1 Children, *obey your parents in the Lord*, for this is right. 📖

Col 3:18 *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord*. 📖

Phil 2:29 So *receive him in the Lord* with all joy, and honor such men, ... 📖

Phil 4:2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to *agree in the Lord*. 📖

Philem 1:20 Yes, brother, *I want some benefit from you in the Lord*. *Refresh my heart in Christ*. 📖

In the first sentence, Paul appears to ask Philemon to comply “in the Lord” to his earlier request (vv. 17-18).

Do God’s work “in” Jesus Christ

Rom 16:3, 9, 12 Greet Prisca and Aquila, *my fellow workers in Christ Jesus*, 📖 ... ⁹Greet *Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ*, and my beloved Stachys. 📖 ... ¹²Greet *those workers in the Lord*, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved *Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord*. 📖

The phrases in question are often interpreted to mean “in the service (or cause) of Jesus Christ” or “for Jesus Christ”. (This is also often the case for other such phrases in the remainder of this subsection.) While this could be so – and indeed they are at least an implication – arguably they are a simplification of the more precise meaning given in the comments at the beginning of both this chapter section and *II. Being ‘in’ Jesus Christ*, p. 778.

1Cor 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you *my workmanship in the Lord*? 📖

1Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that *in the Lord your labor* is not in vain. 📖

Paul may have in view his readers’ labor in the Lord (cf. AMP, CEV, NIV).

Eph 6:21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and *faithful minister in the Lord* will tell you everything. 📖

✦ **Believers are created in Christ to do good works:**

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works*, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. 📖

Rejoice and take pride “in” Jesus Christ

Arguably at least, the verses in this subsection are speaking of rejoicing and glorying “in” Jesus Christ, rather than speaking of Jesus Christ being the object of the rejoicing and glorying (though this is not an unrelated concept).

Phil 4:4, 10 *Rejoice in the Lord always*; again I will say, Rejoice. 📖 ... ¹⁰*I rejoiced in the Lord greatly* that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 📖

Phil 3:1-4a Finally, my brothers,ⁱ *rejoice in the Lord*. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. ²Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God^j and *glory in Christ Jesus*



and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also.

ⁱ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 13, 17

^j Some manuscripts *God in spirit*

“In” Jesus Christ, we are to rejoice (v. 1) – “be joyful in your union with the Lord” (GNT). In v. 3, when used as a verb “glory” (cf. Phil 1:26 ↓) refers to taking pride – with at least a “hint” of joy.

Phil 1:25-26 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that in me you may have ample cause to *glory in Christ Jesus*, because of my coming to you again.

Paul appears to be speaking of the Philippians having “abundant cause for exultation *and* glorying in Christ Jesus” (AMP) as a result of his ministry among them.

Rom 15:17 *In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.*

1Cor 15:31 I protest, brothers, by *my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord*, I die every day!

Further aspects of living “in” Jesus Christ

1Cor 4:17 That is why I sent^k you Timothy, my beloved and *faithful child in the Lord*, to remind you of my ways in Christ,^l as I teach them everywhere in every church.

^k Or *am sending*

^l Some manuscripts add *Jesus*

This could be speaking of Timothy’s faithfulness in living a life in accordance with being in the Lord, serving him (cf. CEV, NIRV); or in particular it could be speaking of Timothy’s faithfulness to Paul, in the Lord.

2Cor 13:4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For *we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.*

For comment, see the comment on **2Cor 13:4** – under . . . *This identification also has other implications – present and future*, p. 784.

Gal 5:6 For *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

2Tim 1:13 *Follow the pattern of the sound^m words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

^mOr *healthy*

Eph 4:21 ... assuming that you have heard about him and *were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,* ...

Particularly with the phrase “were taught in him”, Paul may be referring here to his readers being in Jesus Christ (cf. NCV). However he may instead simply be referring to teaching/truth based on Jesus’ life and teaching.

Eph 6:10 Finally, *be strong in the Lord* and in the strength of his might.

Believers are to be spiritually strong “in union with the Lord and by means of his mighty power” (GNT; cf. AMP).

Phil 2:19, 24 *I hope in the Lord Jesus* to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ... ²⁴and *I trust in the Lord* that shortly I myself will come also.

Note that these verses may be speaking of hoping and trusting the Lord rather than having hope and trust being “in” the Lord. As such they would not be so relevant to this subsection.

1Thes 5:16-18 *Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

This could be speaking of God’s will for those who are in Christ Jesus (cf. AMP, GNT, NLT).

Rom 16:10a Greet *Apelles, who is approved in Christ.*

Apelles’ actions had proven to be in accordance with being “in” Christ.

1Cor 4:15 For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For *I became your father in Christ Jesus* through the gospel.

Similarly in Philemon 1:16, Paul refers to Onesimus as “a beloved brother ... in the Lord.” These verses illustrate that believers are family, related to each other, “in” Jesus Christ.

[†] Paul could do everything “through” Jesus Christ, who strengthened him:

Phil 4:13 *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

Pray for persecuted Christians



Having Faith in God

I. Faith and Hope

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I. Faith and Hope

Faith in God is absolutely fundamental to the Christian life. We in fact need to continually live by faith, doing so in all areas of our lives. Hope is also vital for Christians. It is necessary for such things as sustaining and strengthening us – particularly in sustaining our faith.

a) Have Faith in God

See also:

- a) *Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ*, p. 640
- c) *Belief in Jesus Christ (I): General*, p. 1040
- e) *Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes*, p. 1049
- a) *Do Not Lack Faith*, p. 1115
- b) *Have Faith in God and Pray* [what to do in persecution], p. 2011

Subsections

- Have faith in God and Jesus Christ
- Live by faith
- Pursue faith – and grow in faith
- Have strong faith . . .
- . . . For faith is tested
- Persist in faith
- Reasons to trust in God: God's steadfast love; . . .
- . . . God's power; . . .
- . . . and God's past deliverance

Have faith in God and Jesus Christ

Mark 11:22 And Jesus answered them, “*Have faith in God.*” 

1Thes 1:8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but *your faith in God has gone forth everywhere*, so that we need not say anything. 

Paul appears to be saying that the Thessalonians' faith in God had become known everywhere (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

1Pet 1:20-21 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that *your faith and hope are in God.* 

The segment “who through him are believers in God” (v. 21a) may primarily be speaking of trusting in God (cf. NET, NRSV) – through Christ, with what God has done for and by him. Thus believers' “faith and hope are in God” (v. 21b).

Eph 1:15 For this reason, because I have heard of *your faith in the Lord Jesus* and your love^a toward all the saints, ... 

^a Some manuscripts omit *your love*

Eph 3:11-12 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through *our faith in him.* 

Col 2:5 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and *the firmness of your faith in Christ.* 

Rev 14:12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, *those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*^b 

^b Greek *and the faith of Jesus*

✦ Have a sincere faith:

1Tim 1:5 The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and *a sincere faith.* 

Faith must be sincere and genuine. Note that in 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul speaks of Timothy's “sincere faith”.

Live by faith

God's people are to live by faith, persistently having faith in God and the realization of his promises.

2Cor 5:6-7 *So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight.* 

Paul was “always of good courage” (v. 6a), knowing that his final destiny was to be with Jesus Christ in a more tangible sense (v. 6b; cf. v. 8). As such, he lived by faith, in the belief of this which he could not yet perceive (v. 7).



Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh *I live by faith in the Son of God*, who loved me and gave himself for me. 

Heb 10:37-38 For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸but *my righteous one shall live by faith*, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” 

This is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4b – “... the righteous shall live by his faith.” The writer of Hebrews appears to use it here to indicate that the righteous will live in faith (cf. AMP).

Pursue faith – and grow in faith

See also:

- *Grow in the faith and in your knowledge*, p. 1796
- *God gives his people faith*, p. 881

1Tim 6:11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 

2Tim 2:22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 

2Cor 10:15 We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that *as your faith increases*, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, ... 

2Thes 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers,^c as is right, because *your faith is growing abundantly*, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. 

^c Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

‡ Quality rather than quantity of faith is what matters:

Luke 17:5-6 *The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”* ⁶And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” 

Jesus’ reply appears to be emphasizing genuine or quality faith, rather than amount of faith. His illustration is hyperbole

emphasizing that through genuine faith one can do the seemingly impossible.

Have strong faith . . .

Matt 8:5-10 When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” ⁷And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” ⁸But *the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.”* ⁹For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant,^d ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel^e have I found such faith.” 

^d Greek *bondservant*

^e Some manuscripts *not even in Israel*

Acts 6:5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose *Stephen, a man full of faith* and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 

Rom 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because *your faith is proclaimed in all the world*. 

Such was the degree of the faith of Paul’s readers, it had become very widely known (cf. Eph 1:15; Col 1:4; Philem 1:5).

Rom 4:20-21 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but *he grew strong in his faith* as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 

The phrase “he grew strong in his faith” may mean that “his faith grew stronger” (NLT) – hence its inclusion here; but it also could mean that “His faith made him strong” (CEV; cf. AMP, GNT).

2Cor 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for *you stand firm in your faith*. 

Paul is either speaking of the Corinthians standing firm by means of their faith or firmly holding to their faith. The latter meaning would make the verse pertinent to this subsection, speaking of their faith being strong (cf. CEV). Bear in mind that each alternative implies that the other is true anyway. The same could be said of “firm in your faith” below in 1 Peter 5:9.



2Cor 8:7 But as you *excel in everything—in faith*, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you^f—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

^f Some manuscripts *in your love for us*

Col 2:5-7 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and *the firmness of your faith in Christ*. ⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and *established in the faith*, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Note that “the faith” (v. 7) refers to the body of Christian truth rather than one’s own faith. But the fact that it refers to what Christians believe indicates that it also involves one’s own faith – reflected by some translations having “your faith” – and thus it also is pertinent to this subsection, along with v. 5.

2Tim 1:5 I am reminded of *your sincere faith*, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

Titus 2:2 Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, *sound in faith*, in love, and in steadfastness.

The term “sound in faith” may be referring to having “strong faith” (NLT; cf. NCV) – hence the verse’s inclusion here. But with Paul speaking in the preceding verse of teaching what is in accordance with “sound doctrine”, it may instead refer to having a sound understanding of the truths of the faith (cf. 1:13).

Heb 10:22 ...let us draw near with a true heart *in full assurance of faith*, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

The expression “in full assurance of faith” points to “a faith that is sure and strong” (NirV®; cf. GNT, NCV) so as to give such assurance.

1Pet 5:9 Resist him, *firm in your faith*, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

... For faith is tested

James 1:3, 12 ... for you know that *the testing of your faith* produces steadfastness. ... ¹²Blessed is *the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test* he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

As suggested by “the testing of your faith” (v. 3), testing of one’s faith is in view in v. 12 – as is generally the case with references to believers being tested.

1Pet 1:6-7 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, *you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—*may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Matt 9:28-30a When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and *Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”* They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” ²⁹Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.” ³⁰And their eyes were opened.

In v. 28 Jesus tests or checks the blind men’s belief. Verses 29-30a indicate that their answer reflected sound faith.

Matt 15:22-28 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “*Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.*” ²³But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” ²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

^g Greek from that hour

Jesus appears to test the Canaanite woman’s faith by firstly not answering (v. 23a) and then highlighting the priority of the Israelites in his mission (vv. 24, 26). The woman’s faith “came through with flying colours”.

Luke 8:13 And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; *they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.*

Shallow belief – with “no root” – fails in “time of testing”; one’s faith needs to be strong.

John 6:5-6 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, *Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?”* ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.



Heb 11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ¹⁹He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.* 

✦ God allowed Satan to test Job:

Job 2:3-10 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." ⁴Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But *stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.*" ⁶And the LORD said to Satan, "*Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.*" ⁷So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes. ⁹Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." ¹⁰But he said to her, "*You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?*"^h In all this Job did not sin with his lips. 

^h Or *disaster*; also verse 11

Note that in v. 3b God refers to allowing Satan to earlier test Job (cf. 1:8-22). There the testing involved taking away virtually all Job had; here it involved afflicting him physically. Verse 10 shows Job's faith standing firm.

Persist in faith

See also:

- *Continue in the faith*, p. 1793

In conjunction with having faith in God in regard to issues we face in our everyday lives, we are to persist in our belief and faith in the Bible's teachings. This latter aspect is what is primarily in view in the following verses – and likely also in view in a number of the verses in the previous subsections.

1Tim 1:18-19 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹*holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ...* 

"By rejecting this" (v. 19b) refers primarily to rejecting "a good conscience" (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT, NRSV), which is vital for holding to our faith in the Bible's teachings.

Heb 3:14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we *hold our original confidence firm to the end.* 

The use of "confidence" (cf. **Heb 10:35** ↓) is akin to "faith" (CEV, NIV, NCV) – with the writer speaking of "trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed" (NLT).

Heb 10:35 Therefore *do not throw away your confidence*, which has a great reward. 

Heb 11:13 *These all died in faith*, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. 

The patriarchs appear to be largely in view here (cf. vv. 8-12). They persisted in faith until they died. They did not receive the things promised – notably possession of the promised land (v. 8) – but by faith they envisaged the future fulfillment of the promises. Ultimately by faith they were looking toward a heavenly land (cf. vv. 10, 16), as do all who live by/in faith (cf. vv. 39-40).

Luke 18:8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, *when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?* 

This points to the need to persist in faith (cf. AMP) until Christ's return. Jesus makes this statement immediately following a parable concerning persistence in prayer (vv. 1-8a), thus faith in prayer may be its prime concern. However, perseverance in faith amidst the pressures of this world is seen by some commentators to be more likely the main focus.

Reasons to trust in God: God's steadfast love; . . .

See also:

- *Reasons to have hope in God: God's steadfast love and faithfulness; . . .*, p. 1108
- *c) Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons*, p. 1124

Note that trusting in God is an integral part of having faith in him, as discussed in the following section *b) What Faith in God Involves Doing*, p. 1089.

Ps 13:5 But *I have trusted in your steadfast love*; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. 

Trusting in God's steadfast love is equivalent to trusting in God because of his steadfast love.



Ps 52:8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. *I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.*

1Jn 4:16a So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.

In speaking of coming “to believe” God’s love, John indicates that we should “adhere to *and* put faith in *and* rely on” (AMP; cf. NCV, NIV) God’s love.

Ps 21:7 For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.

The above verses speak of trusting in God’s love. This and the following verses refer to trusting in God while also speaking of God’s love, showing it to be a prime reason for trusting in him.

Ps 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but *steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.*

Ps 143:8 Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

... God’s power; ...

See also:

- [Ps 9:9-10](#) ↓
- ... *and the deeds of God, our Savior* [reasons to have hope in God], p. 1109

Ex 14:31 *Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.*

God’s great power led the people to not only fear God, but believe in him and consequently put their trust/faith in him (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Ps 31:14-15 But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.”¹⁵ *My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!*

The statement “You are my God” (v. 14; cf. [Ps 91:2](#) ↓) implies that the LORD is the one David trusts in as sovereign over his life, the one who by his incomparable power held David’s present and future circumstances in his hands (v. 15a).

Ps 91:2 I will sayⁱ to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

ⁱ Septuagint *He will say*

The psalmist speaks of God as being an effective refuge or fortress (cf. [Isa 26:4](#) ↓) – reflecting God’s power. He appears

to point to this as a prime reason for trusting in God, in conjunction with the fact that he is “my God”.

Isa 26:4 *Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.*

In the OT God is often compared to a rock, alluding to the protection and stability he gives to his people – through his power.

Ps 115:9-11 O Israel,^j trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.¹⁰ O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.¹¹ You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.

^j Masoretic Text; many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac *O house of Israel*

The description of God as his people’s “help and ... shield” points to his willingness to help them and the fact that in his great power he is able to help them.

Rom 4:20-21 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but *he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,*²¹ *fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*

2Cor 1:9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us *rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.*

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and *I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*^k

^k Or *what I have entrusted to him; Greek my deposit*

If the alternative rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), then Paul would appear to be speaking of trusting God to guard his ministry and its fruits, along with himself – even through death. As such, the verse suggests that it was because of God’s power that Paul was convinced that God was “able to” (cf. [Rom 4:20-21](#) ↑) guard what he had entrusted God with, against any foe or circumstance.



... and God's past deliverance

See also:

- [Ex 14:31](#) ↑

Ps 9:9-10 *The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. ¹⁰And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.* 📖

In v. 10 God's past deliverance is primarily in view (cf. vv. 3-6), as suggested by v. 9.

Ps 40:1-3 *I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. ²He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. ³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.* 📖

Many would see what God had done for David, leading them to trust (and fear) in God.

Ps 106:9-12 *He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry, and he led them through the deep as through a desert. ¹⁰So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy. ¹¹And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left. ¹²Then they believed his words; they sang his praise.* 📖

God's miraculous deeds of salvation (vv. 9-11) are reason to believe his promises (v. 12; cf. Num 14:11b), and thus trust in him.

Ps 116:2 *Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.* 📖

In saying that he will "call on" God, the psalmist indicates that he will trust God and pray only to him – particularly in times of need (cf. v. 4). The reason he gives for doing so is that God had previously responded to his pleas for help – "inclined his ear to me".

Isa 12:2 *"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD¹ is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation."* 📖

¹ Hebrew for *Yah*, the LORD

The second half of the verse may well allude to God's deliverance from the Egyptians, virtually quoting Exodus 15:2a which is part of a song celebrating this deliverance.

1Sam 17:37 *And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"* 📖

Ps 18:2-3 *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.* 📖

Because God was his deliverer, the "horn" of his salvation who had saved him from his enemies, David would take refuge in God and call on him in times of trouble – i.e. trust in God.

2Tim 4:17-18 *But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* 📖

The Lord (probably Jesus Christ) had earlier delivered Paul (v. 17), giving Paul reason to continue to believe and trust that the Lord would take care of him (v. 18).

✦ Trust God because he judges justly:

1Pet 2:23 *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) What Faith in God Involves Doing

See also:

- *Hope is vital for faith*, p. 1111

This section discusses what having faith in God (and Jesus Christ) involves doing. Generally speaking, it involves believing and trusting God. More specifically, it involves believing and trusting that God will: fulfill his promises; care for us; and respond to our requests.



Note that as is the case in several other sections, some subheadings refer to "God and Jesus Christ", while others only refer to "God". The latter are not intending to imply that what is said of God is not applicable to Jesus Christ. The subheadings are merely reflective of the content of the verses that follow.

Subsections

- [To have faith in God and Jesus Christ: believe in them and what they say; . . .](#)
- [. . . and trust in God](#)
- [Have faith that God will fulfill what he promises](#)
- [Have faith that God will care for you](#)
- [Have faith that God and Jesus Christ will do what you ask](#)
- [Note: Faith involves believing in what we do not see](#)

To have faith in God and Jesus Christ: believe in them and what they say; . . .

See also:

- [Note: Faith involves believing in what we do not see](#), p. 1094

Faith involves believing in God and Jesus Christ – and what they say. The following verses clearly link and even equate belief with faith. Moreover they imply that we are to have faith and believe.

Note that a number of them speak of saving faith/belief for righteousness through Jesus Christ rather than ongoing faith/belief in God in daily living, which is more the focus of this chapter. They nevertheless serve to illustrate the link between faith and belief.

Rom 3:22a ... the righteousness of God *through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe*. 

Those who have "faith in Jesus Christ" are those "who believe" (cf. [Gal 3:22](#) ↓). Note that the phrase "faith in Jesus Christ" can be understood as "believing with personal trust and confident reliance on Jesus Christ" (AMP).

Rom 4:5 *And to the one who does not work but believes in^m him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ...* 

^mOr *but trusts*; compare verse 24

Rom 4:11, 18-25 He [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that *he had by faith* while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was *to make him the father of all who believe* without being

circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,  ... ¹⁸*In hope he believed* against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹*He did not weaken in faith* when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but *he grew strong in his faith* as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²That is why *his faith was "counted to him as righteousness."* ²³But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. *It will be counted to us who believe in him* who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. 

2Cor 4:13 *Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, ...* 

Gal 3:22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 

1Pet 1:20-21 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹*who through him are believers in God*, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that *your faith and hope are in God*. 

1Tim 4:12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but *set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity*. 

This illustrates that "the believers" have faith, pointing to the correlation between faith and belief.

. . . and trust in God

See also:

- [Rom 4:20](#) ↑

Trusting in God is an integral part of having faith in God. As suggested earlier, having faith in God can be defined as believing and trusting God. For we are to believe in God and what he says, and also confidently trust in him and what he says in regard to our own lives (cf. comment on [Rom 3:22a](#) ↑). One could say having faith means that: in our minds we are to believe and in our hearts we are to trust.



Note that the following verses simply indicate that we are to trust God, rather than explicitly associating trust with faith by also mentioning the latter. However Romans 4:20 (in both of the adjacent subsections) in effect does do this, by speaking of “distrust” as being opposite to faith.

Prov 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.* 📖

We should trust God wholeheartedly and not rely on our own understanding, which is quite limited.

Ps 62:8 *Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah* 📖

Ps 26:1 *Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.* 📖

Ps 37:3, 5 *Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.ⁿ ... ⁵Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.* 📖

ⁿ Or *and feed on faithfulness, or and find safe pasture*

“Commit your way to the LORD” (v. 5) means to hand your way over to him – i.e. entrust God with what you do and the direction/s your life takes.

Ps 55:23 *But you, O God, will cast them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you.* 📖

Heb 2:13a *And again, “I will put my trust in him.”* 📖

Taken from Isaiah 8:17 where the prophet asserts his trust in God amidst difficult times, this quote is usually understood to be applied here to Jesus’ trust in God in his often difficult life on earth as a human being. By trusting God, Jesus both identified with and was an example to his “brothers” (cf. vv. 11-12).

2Ki 18:5 *He [Hezekiah] trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him.* 📖

Hezekiah’s exemplary trust in God was unparalleled amongst all the kings of Judah.

Ps 71:5-6 *For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. ⁶Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of you.* 📖

Isa 10:20 *In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.* 📖

This speaks of truly relying on or trusting in God.

✚ **Wise teachings lead one to trust in God:**

Prov 22:19 *That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you.* 📖

Have faith that God will fulfill what he promises

See also:

▪ **2Chr 20:20** ↓

▪ *Like Abraham, by faith we receive what God has promised . . .*, p. 1101

▪ *By faith we will receive the promises and salvation of the afterlife*, p. 1101

Note that God’s promises include promises to take care of us and to answer prayer – the subjects of the following two subsections. Also prominent amongst them are promises regarding the afterlife.

Luke 1:45 *And blessed is she who believed that there would be^o a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.* 📖

^o Or *believed, for there will be*

Acts 27:23-25 *For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ ²⁵So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.* 📖

Rom 4:18-21 *In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.* 📖

Verse 18 begins by saying that even though there was no reason for hope, Abraham – having hope in God – believed God’s promise.

Heb 11:13, 20-22, 24-26, 39-40 *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ... ²⁰By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹By faith*



Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. ¶ ... ²⁴By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ¶ ... ³⁹And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. ¶

The actions of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (vv. 20-22) expressed faith in God's promises for the future of their people. This is also true for Moses, though in addition mention is made of his faith in God's promise regarding his own reward (v. 26). In v. 39, "all these" is inclusive of a number of other men and women of faith in the OT (cf. vv. 32-34 ↓). Verses 39-40 show that here God's promises of the afterlife are ultimately in view.

2Pet 3:13-14 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¶

The two references to "waiting" (vv. 13, 14; cf. Gal 5:5 ↓) for a new heaven and earth indicate faith in God's promise of these things being fulfilled.

Gal 5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ¶

Opinions vary as to whether "righteousness" here refers to being pronounced "not guilty" on judgment day, or to being made completely righteous – following Jesus Christ's return. Either way, God promises both of these and we are to wait by faith for such promises to be fulfilled.

Ps 106:12 Then they believed his words; they sang his praise. ¶

Here God's "words" are "promises" (GNT, NIV, NLT).

Ps 119:41-42 Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; ⁴²then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word. ¶

God's "word" (v. 42) in which the psalmist trusted, primarily refers to God's "promise" (v. 41).

Isa 7:5-9 Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, ⁶"Let us go up

against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it^P for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," ⁷thus says the Lord God: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass. ⁸For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people. ⁹And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you^Q are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.'" ¶

^P Hebrew let us split it open

^Q The Hebrew for you is plural in verses 9, 13, 14

Verse 9 contains an exhortation to Ahaz, the king of Judah, to firmly have faith in God's promises (vv. 7-8) regarding the failure of a threatened invasion (vv. 5-6) to eventuate. Note that vv. 8a, 9a are pointing to the human leadership of the enemy, which are in stark contrast to the lordship of the sovereign God.

✦ **Jesus' promise to Martha, his exhortation to believe it and its fulfillment:**

John 11:23, 39-40, 43-44 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ¶ ... ³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ¶ ... ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." ¶

Jesus' question to Martha in v. 40 appears to refer to his earlier promise to her in v. 23. As such it suggests that implicit in such a promise is a call to believe it and an anticipation of the glorification of God in its fulfillment. In regard to the latter, the wording of the question may well allude to Jesus' earlier statement to his disciples in v. 4 that Lazarus' condition would be "for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Have faith that God will care for you

See also:

▪ [Acts 27:23-25](#) ↑

Ps 25:1-2 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. ²O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. ¶



Ps 143:8-9 *Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. ⁹Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge!*^r 

^r One Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint; most Hebrew manuscripts *To you I have covered*

Three times here David appeals to God to take care of him, and immediately following each of these David speaks of his trust in God to do so.

Isa 50:10 *Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.* 

This is most likely directed to godly people living in the darkness of difficult circumstances (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT), exhorting them to trust in and rely on God to take care of them. Alternatively, some interpret it as speaking to those living in the darkness of sin (cf. CEV).

2Chr 20:20 *And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.”* 

As his people prepare to face a vast invading army, Jehoshaphat encourages them to believe or have faith (cf. NCV, NIV) in God and in his word spoken by the prophets – the latter presumably primarily referring to an earlier prophecy of deliverance (cf. vv. 14-17).

2Chr 14:11 *And Asa cried to the LORD his God, “O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you.”* 

Rom 8:28, 38-39 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^s for those who are called according to his purpose.  ... ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* 

^s Some manuscripts *God works all things together for good, or God works in all things for the good*

Faith is implicit in the expressions “we know” (v. 28; cf. [Phil 1:19](#) ↓) and “I am sure” (v. 38; cf. [2Tim 1:12](#) ↓).

Phil 1:19 *... for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...* 

2Tim 1:12 *... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*^t 

^t Or *what I have entrusted to him*; Greek *my deposit*

If the alternative rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), then Paul would appear to be speaking of trusting God to guard his ministry and its fruits, along with himself – even through death.

2Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* 

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

Heb 11:23, 27, 29, 32-34 *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.  ... ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.  ... ²⁹By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.  ... ³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.* 

Various people of God are shown here to have had faith that God would take care of them amidst the threat of things such as powerful rulers and their forces, wild beasts, fire and the sword – most of which carried the threat of imminent death.

Heb 13:6 *So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”* 



Have faith that God and Jesus Christ will do what you ask

See also:

- *Faith is vital to prayer, for God to grant requests*, p. 1098
- *Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted*, p. 1228

Ps 5:3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you^u and watch.

^u Or I direct my prayer to you

Particularly in light of the alternative rendering in the text note (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), David appears to speak of making requests of God and then watching, presumably in faith, for God to answer.

Matt 8:5-10, 13 When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” ⁷And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” ⁸But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant,^v ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel^w have I found such faith. ... ¹³And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.

^v Greek *bondservant*

^w Some manuscripts *not even in Israel*

Matt 9:18, 25 While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” ... ²⁵But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.

The ruler showed astonishing faith, asking Jesus to bring his dead daughter back to life.

Matt 9:27-30a And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” ²⁸When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” ²⁹Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.” ³⁰And their eyes were opened.

“According to your faith” (v. 29) in effect means: “Because of your faith” (CEV, NLT; cf. NCV).

Mark 10:51-52 And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” ⁵²And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

In saying, “...your faith has made you well,” Jesus appears to indicate that the man’s faith meant that he had made himself open to Jesus healing him. As such he was healed because of his faith (cf. CEV, NCV).

Note: Faith involves believing in what we do not see

Heb 11:1, 6 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ... ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Verse 6 illustrates that faith involves believing in “things not seen” (v. 1), indicating that faith is needed to believe that the invisible God exists, and that he will reward those who earnestly seek him.

Heb 11:7-8, 27 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ... ²⁷By faith he [Moses] left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Abraham’s faith displayed in obediently leaving his homeland “not knowing where he was going” (v. 8) shows – like Noah’s and Moses’ actions – that faith involves believing in what we do not see.

1Pet 1:7-9 ... so that the tested genuineness of *your faith*—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of *your faith*, the salvation of your souls.

Verse 8 indicates that “your faith” (vv. 7, 9) involves believing in something – or someone – we have not seen.



John 20:29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*”

2Cor 5:7 ... for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Living by faith does not involve living by sight, but by faith or belief in what is not physically perceived or is yet to be realized (cf. vv. 1-8).

2Cor 4:18 ... as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Faith is implicit here, in focusing on and so believing in “things that are unseen”.

✦ Likewise, our hope is in what is not seen:

Rom 8:24 For in this hope we were saved. Now *hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?*

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Importance of Faith (I): Godly Living

Subsections

- By faith we stand firm
- Faith produces obedience to God
- Faith produces work in service to God
- Faith is vital to prayer, for God to grant requests
- If we have faith nothing will be impossible
- Further points on the importance of faith in living the Christian life

By faith we stand firm

See also:

- *God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world, including Satan*, p. 919
- *By faith we remain in a right relationship with God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1100

- *Hope helps us remain firm*, p. 1112

- *Spiritual weapons and armor include: faith; . . .*, p. 1815

Rom 11:20-21 That is true. *They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith.* So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.

By faith we “stand fast” as part of God’s people (v. 20a). Thus we should be wary of unbelief and its consequences (vv. 20b-21).

2Cor 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for *you stand firm in your faith.*

As noted earlier in this chapter, here Paul is either speaking of the Corinthians standing firm by means of their faith or firmly holding to their faith. The former meaning would make the verse pertinent to this subsection – though each alternative implies that the other is true anyway. The same quite possibly applies to the similar expressions below in 1 Peter 5:9 and Isaiah 7:9b.

Eph 6:16 In all circumstances *take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; . . .*

1Thes 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having *put on the breastplate of faith* and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

As with Ephesians 6:16 above, this uses battle equipment to illustrate the power of faith in providing protection against the dark forces that oppose “the day” – enabling us to stand firm.

James 1:2-3 Count it all joy, my brothers,^x when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that *the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

^x Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verses 16, 19

Faith that perseveres through testing becomes strong and enables us to hold fast, to be faithful to God in the face of persecution or temptation.

1Pet 1:4-5 ... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for *you*, ⁵*who by God’s power are being guarded through faith* for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.



This shows that it is God's power rather than our faith that actually shields us, but for this protection we need to have faith in God and his power.

1Pet 5:8-9 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 

Christians are to stand against Satan by faith in God.

2Chr 20:20 And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." 

This is speaking of being "established" or being enabled to "stand firm" (GNT, NLT; cf. NCV) against enemy forces, but is also applicable to standing firm in one's Christian life, particularly against opposing forces. The same applies to Isaiah 7:9b immediately below.

Isa 7:9b If you^s are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all. 

^s The Hebrew for you is plural in verses 9, 13, 14

✦ We are strengthened by faith:

Rom 4:20-21 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but *he grew strong in his faith* as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 

The phrase "strengthened in his faith" may mean that "His faith made him strong" (CEV; cf. AMP, GNT) – hence its use here; but as noted earlier it also could mean that "his faith grew stronger" (NLT). Note that Isaiah 30:15 similarly speaks of having strength through faith (or trust) – "in quietness and in trust shall be your strength".

Faith produces obedience to God

See also:

- *Obedience accompanies belief and faith*, p. 1062
- *Lack of faith is associated with not obeying God*, p. 1117

Rom 1:5 ... through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the obedience of faith* for the sake of his name among all the nations, ... 

The phrase "the obedience of faith" (cf. 16:27) may be speaking of "the obedience that comes from faith" (NIV®),

hence the verse's inclusion in this subsection. Alternatively it may be speaking of faith itself as being an act of obedience, to the gospel message.

Heb 11:7-9, 17 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.  ... ¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ... 

Regarding v. 7b, Noah's faith – and resultant obedience to God's command to build the ark (cf. Gen 6) – highlighted the rebellious state of those around him. He thus demonstrated that following God was not impossible, therefore showing the failure of others and consequently that they were deserving of condemnation. In contrast Noah himself was credited with righteousness, because of his faith.

Heb 11:24-31 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. ²⁹By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. 

Although not specifically stated in every case, these actions of faith were acts of obedience in response to direct commands from God, recorded elsewhere in the Bible. The only exceptions are the earlier actions of Moses (vv. 24-27) and Rahab's (v. 31). But even these acts of faith are here implied to be ones of obedience, with Moses being spoken of as spurning sin (v. 25) and Rahab being contrasted with "those who were disobedient" (v. 31). Note that there is disagreement as to whether v. 27 is referring to Moses initially fleeing Egypt – after having killed an Egyptian – or to the Exodus.



Acts 6:7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests *became obedient to the faith*. 

The final clause means that these priests began to obey or live in accordance with the teachings of “the faith”. “The faith” is the body of truths which Christians believe; believing them – or having faith – entails obedience.

2Pet 1:5 For this very reason, *make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,*^z and virtue with knowledge, ... 

^z Or *excellence*; twice in this verse

Our faith should lead to “moral excellence” (NASB, NLT) – indicative of obedience.

Faith produces work in service to God

See also:

- *True faith involves good deeds . . .*, p. 1068

A sound faith in God inspires service of him. A person with such faith will seek and be drawn into God’s will, and so they will not be idle when there is so much work to be done for God’s kingdom. Furthermore, if we look to God in faith wanting God to care for us and answer our requests, we should in turn be prepared to do what God wants.

Phil 2:17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon *the sacrificial offering of your faith*, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 

The expression “the sacrificial offering of your faith” likely speaks of the sacrifice and service coming from their faith (cf. NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV).

1Thes 1:3 ... remembering before our God and Father *your work of faith* and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 

The term “work of faith” (cf. **2Thes 1:11** ↓) suggests “work produced by faith” (NIV®; cf. AMP, GNT, NCV).

2Thes 1:11 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and *every work of faith* by his power, ... 

2Cor 4:13-14 *Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, and so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak,* ¹⁴knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. 

Paul’s faith and belief in God – such as his confidence that God would raise him from death (v. 14) – motivated him to pursue his work of telling others the gospel.

Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only *faith working through love*. 

In speaking of “faith working” this suggests that faith produces work for God – which should be done “through love”.

James 2:17-18 So also *faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*. ¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and *I will show you my faith by my works*. 

Rev 2:19 I know *your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first*. 

The listing of faith (and love) with works and service arguably implies support for the concept that faith produces service to God.

Rom 12:3-6 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to *the measure of faith that God has assigned*. ⁴For as in one body we have many members,^a and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ...* 

^a Greek *parts*; also verse 5

Commentators differ in their understanding of the phrase “measure of faith” (v. 3). One prominent view is that the context suggests that it is referring especially to our faith as applied to serving others, with v. 4 speaking of each member of the body having a “function”. As such it is possibly referring in particular to serving others with the gifts we have been given (cf. vv. 6-8), with the latter phrase “in proportion to our faith” (v. 6) probably alluding to “according to the measure of faith” (v. 3).

There are also different views regarding this latter phrase “in proportion to our faith”, as to whether “our faith” refers to the Christian faith or to faith in God. The latter arguably better fits the context. As such it appears to mean that the gift of prophesying – like all gifts – should be used according to (or to the extent of) the amount of faith one has. It can be inferred from this that faith not only produces service, but the extent to which we serve corresponds to the amount of faith we have.



‡ **God's work entrusted to us is "by faith":**

1Tim 1:4 ... nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than *the stewardship^b from God that is by faith.* ☞

^b Or *good order*

The "stewardship from God" may well refer to our responsibility in advancing God's kingdom and his plan of salvation. As such, given the context, the last clause may well speak of being given and/or of carrying out this responsibility by or in faith (cf. CEV, NCV, NIRV).

Faith is vital to prayer, for God to grant requests

See also:

- *Have faith that God will care for you*, p. 1092
- *Have faith that God and Jesus Christ will do what you ask*, p. 1094
- *Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted*, p. 1228

Matt 21:18-22 In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" And the fig tree withered at once. ²⁰When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, "How did the fig tree wither at once?" ²¹And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, *if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen.* ²²*And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.*" ☞

Belief is vital in petitioning God, particularly in regard to things that seem impossible, as Jesus figuratively points out (v. 21; **Mark 1:22** ↓; **Matt 17:20** ↓; **1Cor 13:2** ↓). Such a "mountain" signifies a seemingly insurmountable difficulty, presumably primarily alluding to difficulties encountered in advancing God's kingdom. (For further comment on this passage, see *Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted*, p. 1228.)

Mark 11:22-24 And Jesus answered them, "*Have faith in God.* ²³*Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.* ²⁴*Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received^c it, and it will be yours.*" ☞

^c Some manuscripts *are receiving*

James 1:6-8 *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.* ☞

James 5:14-15 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵*And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.* ☞

For comment, see the comment on **James 5:14-15** – under *Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted*, p. 1228.

1Chr 5:20 And when they prevailed over them, the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried out to God in the battle, and *he granted their urgent plea because they trusted in him.* ☞

2Chr 14:11-12 And Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. *Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you,* and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." ¹²*So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.* ☞

The phrase "we rely on you" may refer more to them generally trusting God rather than specifically to faith that God would answer the request for help. Nevertheless along with the act of actually making the request it at least to some degree reflects such faith.

Ps 22:5 *To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.* ☞

If we have faith nothing will be impossible

If we have faith nothing will be impossible, both in our service of God and in confronting issues in our lives. As such we are to have faith (and pray) that what we understand to be in accordance with God's will, will take place.

Matt 17:19-20 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁰He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, *if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.*"^d ☞

^d Some manuscripts insert verse 21: *But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting*



In v. 19 the disciples are referring to their inability to drive out a demon. In v. 20 Jesus is probably emphasizing the need for genuine or quality faith (cf. [Luke 17:6](#) ↓) – in contrast to the concept of a large quantity of faith (cf. [Luke 17:5](#) ↓). As noted in the previous subsection (cf. [Matt 21:18-22](#) ↑), the “mountain” (v. 20) signifies a seemingly insurmountable difficulty.

Luke 17:5-6 The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” ⁶And the Lord said, “*If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.*”

Mark 9:22-23 And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” ²³And Jesus said to him, “‘If you can’! *All things are possible for one who believes.*”

John 14:12-14 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.* ¹³*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* ¹⁴*If you ask me^e anything in my name, I will do it.*

^e Some manuscripts omit *me*

The amazing promise of doing even greater things than what Jesus had been doing (v. 12) – here coupled with the promises that he will do whatever we ask in his name (vv. 13-14) – would come to fruition through the power of the Holy Spirit. Commentators point to the response to Peter’s sermon at Pentecost and the expansion of the gospel way beyond Palestine as examples of the fulfillment of this promise. The promise would appear to be for all Christians.

Heb 11:29-30, 32-35a *By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.* ³⁰*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.* ... ³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³*who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,* ³⁴*quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.* ³⁵*Women received back their dead by resurrection.*

These are examples of seemingly impossible things being done through faith.

✦ Even with faith that can “remove mountains”, one is nothing without love:

1Cor 13:2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and *if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

In addition to teaching that such a person is “nothing”, this may also be suggesting that the works of such a person are similarly largely ineffective.

Further points on the importance of faith in living the Christian life

Ps 28:7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him *my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.*

Faith (or trust) prompts joy and thanksgiving. It likewise prompts praise (cf. [Ps 106:12](#) ↓). Note that “I am helped” may refer to God’s help or to David being encouraged through trusting God.

Ps 106:12 *Then they believed his words; they sang his praise.*

Eph 3:12 ... *in whom [Jesus Christ] we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.*

Through faith in Christ we can confidently access God (cf. [Heb 10:22](#) ↓).

Heb 10:22 ... *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

By faith we have full assurance that God consents to us drawing near to him.

1Tim 1:5 The aim of our charge is *love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

Faith is vital for love.

Rom 14:23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For *whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.*^f

^f Some manuscripts insert here 16:25-27

Here “faith” is being used in a subjective sense. It refers to our beliefs or convictions (cf. AMP) as to what is right, or at least what is right for ourselves, before God. As such, Paul is saying that acting in a way that is opposed to our beliefs and conscience is in effect sin.



‡ Our faith is extremely valuable:

1Pet 1:7 ... so that the tested genuineness of *your faith*—*more precious than gold* that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) The Importance of Faith (II): Blessings

Note that the topics in the previous section should also be viewed as blessings that come through faith.

Subsections

- By faith we remain in a right relationship with God and Jesus Christ
- Like Abraham, by faith we receive what God has promised . . .
- By faith we will receive the promises and salvation of the afterlife
- By faith our needs are met
- Trusting in God leads to his deliverance and protection
- Trusting in God brings joy and peace
- Further blessings of trusting in God

By faith we remain in a right relationship with God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- *God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own – until the end*, p. 943
- *By faith we stand firm*, p. 1095

Rom 11:20-21 That is true. *They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith.* So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. 📖

By faith we remain as part of God's people (v. 20a).

Col 1:21-23 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²*he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,* ²³*if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation^g under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.* 📖

^g Or to every creature

Continuing "in the faith" (v. 23) involves continuing to have faith (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT). By continuing "securely established and steadfast in the faith" (NRSV, v. 23a), we remain reconciled to God (v. 22a), in our righteous standing before him (v. 22b).

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. *And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* 📖

"I now live by faith in the Son of God" is usually understood to be speaking of trusting or depending on Jesus Christ. However in line with the references earlier in the verse to Christ living in oneself and to living "in the flesh" (which "in the Son of God" could be intended to parallel), the sense may be "I live in the Son of God by faith". The beginning of the second sentence could then be rendered, "The life I live in the body, I live in the Son of God by faith." As such the verse would underline the importance of faith for remaining in a right relationship with Jesus Christ. But it should be pointed out that there appears to be little or no obvious support for this interpretation amongst modern translations.

Eph 3:16-17a ... that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ...* 📖

Col 2:5-7 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and *the firmness of your faith in Christ.* ⁶*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,* ⁷*rooted and built up in him* and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 📖

Paul correlates having a firm faith in Christ (v. 5; cf. v. 7) with living in him (v. 6) and being "rooted and built up in him" (v. 7).

Heb 3:14 For *we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.* 📖



We “have become partakers of Christ” (NASB) – “partners of Christ” (NRSV; cf. GNT) and share in all that belongs to him (cf. NLT) – if we continue holding to our confidence or faith.

Like Abraham, by faith we receive what God has promised . . .

See also:

- [By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him](#), p. 644

Heb 6:12, 15 ... so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who *through faith and patience inherit the promises*.
 ¶ ... ¹⁵And thus Abraham,^h having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¶

^h Greek *he*

Note that it is debatable as to whether “the promises” (v. 12) is referring primarily to blessings of this life (cf. AMP, CEV, v. 15) or of the afterlife (cf. v. 11) – as per the following subsection. Quite possibly the writer is speaking generally, inclusive of both cases.

Rom 4:16, 18 That is why *it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all*, ¶ ... ¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, “So shall your offspring be.” ¶

For comment, see the comment on [Rom 4:13-24](#) – under [By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him](#), p. 644.

Heb 11:11-12, 32-33 *By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.* ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. ¶ ... ³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ... ¶

Gal 3:22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ¶

The “promise” primarily refers to righteousness or justification by faith (cf. vv. 6-11) – possibly along with the associated promise of the Spirit (v. 14b) and other related

concepts, notably salvation and life. All these are given to those have faith as Abraham did (cf. vv. 6-18).

John 4:49-53 The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. ⁵¹As he was going down, his servantsⁱ met him and told him that his son was recovering. ⁵²So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour^j the fever left him.” ⁵³The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” And he himself believed, and all his household. ¶

ⁱ Greek *bondservants*

^j That is, at 1 P.M.

Following the faith he showed initially in his request (v. 49), the official displays exemplary faith in his response to Jesus’ promise (v. 50) – faith that was well vindicated (vv. 51-53).

By faith we will receive the promises and salvation of the afterlife

See also:

- [Heb 6:12](#) ↑

Heb 10:35-39 Therefore *do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.* ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” ³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. ¶

“For you have need of endurance” (v. 36a) in the context may well have endurance in confidence/faith in view (v. 35) as much as persevering in doing God’s will (v. 36); the two are very closely associated anyway. The result of such endurance is receiving what God has promised (v. 36b; cf. v. 35, 39). In vv. 38-39 Paul further stresses the importance of continuing to live by faith, finishing by emphasizing that it is those who have faith who will “preserve their souls”.

Heb 11:39-40 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had provided something better for us, *that apart from us they should not be made perfect.* ¶

The phrases “what was promised” (v. 39b) and “something better” (v. 40a) probably refer to aspects of the consummated salvation and sanctification of the afterlife (cf.



CEV, NLT), as also referred to by the latter part of v. 40b. The people of faith in the OT did not receive such things in their lifetime or on their death, but will only do so together with us. Another possibility is that these verses have in view – or at least also encompass – all that God’s people have now from what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ.

1Pet 1:4-9 ... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 

The term “obtaining” (v. 9) suggests that their salvation – the outcome of their faith – is in the process of being realized, to be consummated on Christ’s return.

✦ **Having kept “the faith”, Paul would receive his reward:**

2Tim 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. 

Here Paul speaks of keeping the teachings of the Christian faith resulting in forthcoming reward. Similarly in 1 Timothy 6:12 Paul says, “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called ...”

By faith our needs are met

See also:

- [Have faith that God and Jesus Christ will do what you ask](#), p. 1094

2Chr 20:20-22 And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.” ²¹And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, “Give thanks to

the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.” ²²And when they began to sing and praise, *the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.* 

Jehoshaphat and his army were facing the daunting task of repelling a much larger invading army. As such they were in great need.

Mark 5:25-29, 34 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, ²⁶and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. ²⁸For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” ²⁹And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.  ... ³⁴And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” 

As noted earlier on 10:52 regarding the same wording, “...your faith has made you well” (v. 34; cf. [Luke 17:19 ↓](#)), Jesus appears to indicate that by faith the woman had made herself open to him healing her. As such she was healed because of her faith (cf. CEV, NCV).

Luke 17:12-19 And as he entered a village, he was met by *ten lepers*,^k who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”¹ 

^k *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

¹ Or *has saved you*

The request (v. 13) and response (v. 14b) of the ten men demonstrated their faith – and consequently they were healed (v. 14b). The gratitude of the Samaritan appears to demonstrate a more sincere faith, reflected in Jesus’ words to him (v. 19), which in turn appear to point to a deeper, spiritual aspect of his healing.

Acts 3:16 And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus^m has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. 



^mGreek *him*

The expression "by faith in his name" refers to faith in Jesus and his power, here in particular his power to heal.

Acts 14:8-10 Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and *seeing that he had faith to be made well,*ⁿ ¹⁰said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. 

ⁿ Or *be saved*

Mark 2:3-5, 11-12 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."  ... ¹¹"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹²And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" 

Here it is the faith of others that is spoken of as leading to the sick person being healed.

Trusting in God leads to his deliverance and protection

See also:

- [Ps 28:7](#) 

Note that the passages in the previous subsection also speak of God or Jesus Christ's deliverance. There "faith" or belief is said to have led to such deliverance, whereas here "trust" in particular is usually referred to. With trust being an aspect of faith, these two subsections are very closely related.

Ps 22:4-5 *In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.* ⁵*To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.* 

Jer 39:18 *For I will surely save you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but you shall have your life as a prize of war, because you have put your trust in me, declares the LORD.* 

1Chr 5:20 And when they prevailed over them, *the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried out to God in the battle, and he granted their urgent plea because they trusted in him.* 

2Chr 13:14-15, 18 And when Judah looked, behold, the battle was in front of and behind them. And *they cried to the LORD,* and the priests blew the trumpets. ¹⁵Then the men of Judah raised the battle shout. And when the men of Judah shouted, *God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.*  ... ¹⁸Thus the men of Israel were subdued at that time, and *the men of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the LORD,* the God of their fathers. 

2Chr 14:11-12 And Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. *Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you,* and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." ¹²*So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.* 

2Chr 16:8 *Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand.* 

Dan 3:28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, *who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him,* and set aside^o the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God." 

^o Aramaic *and changed*

Dan 6:23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and *no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.* 

Ps 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but *steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.* 

In saying that God's love "surrounds" those who trust him, this points to God's protection.

Ps 116:6 *The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.* 

The "simple" appear to be those who have "childlike faith" (NLT).

Prov 29:25 The fear of man lays a snare, but *whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.* 

Ps 37:5-6 *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.* ⁶*He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.* 



Some commentators interpret “righteousness” and “justice” as being used here as qualities of God. But other translations support the ESV, indicating that they are probably qualities of the person concerned; thus v. 6 appears to be referring to the vindication of one who trusts in God (v. 5).

Ps 20:7-8 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but *we trust in the name of the LORD our God.* ⁸They collapse and fall, but *we rise and stand upright.*

In trusting in God, Israel prevailed in battle, with God helping and strengthening them. This is applicable to God’s people prevailing in adversity, being protected and delivered through trusting in God.

Trusting in God brings joy and peace

See also:

- [Jer 17:7-8](#) ↓; [Ps 112:7-8](#) ↓

Ps 5:11 But *let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy,* and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.

Taking refuge in God is indicative of trusting in him.

Ps 13:5 But *I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.*

Here the psalmist may be speaking of rejoicing at the prospect of God’s salvation (cf. [Phil 1:18b-19](#) ↓), his rejoicing then being a direct result of trusting in God to affect his salvation. Alternatively he may be speaking of rejoicing when he experiences God’s salvation, his rejoicing then being an indirect result of trusting in God.

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

^p Hebrew *my glory*

David’s trust is implicit in v. 8.

Ps 21:6-7 For you make him most blessed forever;^a *you make him glad with the joy of your presence.* ⁷*For the king trusts in the LORD,* and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.

^a Or *make him a source of blessing forever*

Ps 28:7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; *in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults,* and with my song I give thanks to him.

Ps 33:21 *For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.*

Trusting in God brings release from one’s concerns and fears – with the knowledge that God has all our needs in hand. Such a realization inspires rejoicing (and peace). Note that other verses here (e.g. [Rom 15:13](#) ↓; [Isa 26:3](#) ↓) indicate that God actually provides joy and peace to those who trust him, rather than just speaking of trust itself leading to these things.

Ps 34:5 *Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.*

Those who look to God in trust are radiant with joy.

Isa 26:3 *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*

Rom 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,* so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Phil 1:18b-19 *Yes, and I will rejoice,* ¹⁹*for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...*

Paul’s faith is underscored by the phrase “I know” (v. 19a).

Ps 131:2 But *I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

David had “calmed and quieted” his soul or inner self – reflecting his trust and hope in God (cf. v. 3). As such he was like a “weaned child”, content and no longer anxious (for its mother’s milk).

Further blessings of trusting in God

Prov 28:25 A greedy man stirs up strife, but *the one who trusts in the LORD will be enriched.*

Ps 52:8 But *I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.*

The green olive tree is indicative of such things as prosperity and productivity (cf. [Prov 28:25](#) ↑; [Jer 17:7-8](#) ↓).

Jer 17:7-8 *“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.* ⁸*He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”*



Ps 112:7-8 *He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.⁸ His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.* 📖

"His heart is steady" implies confidence (cf. NCV, NLT).

Ps 125:1 *Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.* 📖

Isa 28:16 ... therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "*Behold, I am the one who has laid^r as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'*" 📖

^r Dead Sea Scroll *I am laying*

It is debatable as to whether "cornerstone" here speaks of God himself and/or his salvation, or the Messiah; certainly Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of this verse (cf. Rom 9:33; 10:11; 1Pet 2:4-6). Those who believe or trust in this "precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation", "will not panic" (NRSV).

Isa 30:15a For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "*In returning^s and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.*" 📖

^s Or *repentance*

In trusting God we find strength.

Ps 84:12 O LORD of hosts, *blessed is the one who trusts in you!* 📖

Prov 16:20 Whoever gives thought to the word^t will discover good, and *blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.* 📖

^t Or *to a matter*

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Have Hope in God

Hope for a believer involves an assurance of their future, based on the truth of God's promises – rather than merely being an unfounded optimism.

Subsections

- Put your hope in God and Jesus Christ
- Put your hope in God's promises
- Set your hope on God's timely care
- Set your hope on Jesus Christ's return and what will follow
- Reasons to have hope in God: God's steadfast love and faithfulness; . . .
- . . . and the deeds of God, our Savior
- Other godly sources of hope
- Further general points on hope

Put your hope in God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- *People put their hope in Jesus Christ*, p. 131

Ps 131:3 O Israel, *hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.* 📖

Ps 39:7 And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? *My hope is in you.* 📖

Ps 71:14 But *I will hope continually* and will praise you yet more and more. 📖

Particularly in light of the second part of the verse, the implication is that the psalmist is talking of hope in God.

Jer 17:13 O LORD, *the hope of Israel*, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you^u shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water. 📖

^u Hebrew *me*

1Tim 5:5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has *set her hope on God* and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ... 📖

1Pet 3:5 For this is how *the holy women who hoped in God* used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ... 📖

Eph 1:12 ... so that we who were the first to *hope in Christ* might be to the praise of his glory. 📖

1Thes 1:3 ... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and *steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.* 📖



Put your hope in God's promises

See also:

- *Hope* [blessings of God's word], p. 318
- *God's promises give his people hope*, p. 883
- *Have faith that God will fulfill what he promises*, p. 1091

Ps 119:81, 114, 116, 147 My soul longs for your salvation; *I hope in your word.* ... ¹¹⁴You are my hiding place and my shield; *I hope in your word.* ... ¹¹⁶*Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!* ... ¹⁴⁷I rise before dawn and cry for help; *I hope in your words.*

Verse 16 indicates that the psalmist had based his hope on God's promises. Likewise, the references to hoping in "your word" involve primarily having hope in the promises that God has made in his word – as is also the case in 130:5 below.

Ps 130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and *in his word I hope;* ...

Acts 26:6-7 And now I stand here on trial because of *my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers,*⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for *this hope* I am accused by Jews, O king!

For comment on this promise see the comment on **Acts 26:6-8** – under *Set your hope on Jesus Christ's return and what will follow*, p. 1107.

Rom 4:13, 18 For *the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world* did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ... ¹⁸*In hope he believed* against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."

It can be inferred from this that Abraham had hope both in the promise and because of it – a hope that led to belief (v. 18).

Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a servant^v of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²*in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began*^w ...

^v Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

^w Greek *before times eternal*

Believers put their hope in God's promise of eternal life.

Heb 6:17-18 So when God desired to show more convincingly *to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable*

character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸*so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.*

In speaking of holding to the hope set before us (v. 18b), the writer is speaking of putting our hope in what God has promised – to Abraham (cf. vv. 13-15) and Abraham's spiritual heirs. The "two unchangeable things" (v. 18a) are God's promise itself and his confirmation of it with an oath (v. 17).

Heb 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*

This implies that believers put their hope in what God has promised.

2Pet 3:13-14 *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since *you are waiting for these,* be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

The two references to "waiting" (vv. 13, 14) for a new heaven and earth indicate hope in God's promise of these things.

‡ **God's promises sustain us and give us reason to rejoice:**

Ps 119:50, 162 This is my comfort in my affliction, that *your promise gives me life.* ... ¹⁶²*I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.*

In v. 50, "your promise gives me life" may well refer to God's promise giving hope and reason to keep persevering, thus sustaining one's life.

Set your hope on God's timely care

Ps 33:17-19 The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. ¹⁸Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, *on those who hope in his steadfast love,* ¹⁹*that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.*

Ps 71:4-5 *Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.* ⁵*For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.*

The implication is that the psalmist continues to hope in God for deliverance such as is spoken of in v. 4.

Ps 119:166 *I hope for your salvation, O LORD,* and I do your commandments.



Isa 51:5 My righteousness draws near, *my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.* 

The return of the exiles is the immediate context for the reference to “righteousness” and “salvation”, and it is for such saving acts that other peoples will wait in hope. Quite possibly this has ultimately in view God’s foremost saving act – the promised salvation to come through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Zec 9:11-12 As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, *I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.* ¹²*Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.* 

The exiles were “prisoners of hope”, captivated by the hope of both deliverance (v. 11b-12a) and blessing (v. 12b). Note that the coming Messiah and his rule (cf. vv. 9-10) could also be the object of the hope spoken of here.

2Cor 1:10 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. *On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.* 

1Tim 6:17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, *nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.* 

✦ **Paul’s hope in God that he would have the courage to act so as to honor Christ:**

Phil 1:20 ... *as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.* 

Presumably Paul is speaking of hope in God, that through God he would not do anything in his trying circumstances that would bring shame (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), but would have the courage to always act in a way that would honor Christ.

Set your hope on Jesus Christ’s return and what will follow

See also:

- [Isa 51:5](#) ; [Zec 9:11-12](#) 

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

¹³waiting for *our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ...* 

We should wait in hope for Jesus Christ’s wonderful appearance – “our blessed hope”.

1Pet 1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action,^x and being sober-minded, *set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* 

^x Greek *girding up the loins of your mind*

1Jn 3:2-3 Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but *we know that when he appears^y we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.* ³*And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.* 

^y Or *when it appears*

The phrase “thus hopes in him” (v. 3) refers to hope in Jesus Christ’s appearance and becoming like him (v. 2).

Acts 24:14b-15 I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, ¹⁵*having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.* 

Acts 26:6-8 And now I stand here on trial because of *my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! ⁸Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?* 

The promise of God in which Paul had put his hope, presumably involved the resurrection of the dead (v. 8; cf. [Acts 24:15](#) ) and – according to a number of commentators – the Messiah and his kingdom. This is probably also what Paul had in mind later in 28:20b with the term “the hope of Israel” – “... it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.”

Rom 8:23-25 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as *we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* ²⁴*For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?* ²⁵*But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* 

Rom 5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith^z into this grace in which we stand, and *we^a rejoice^b in hope of the glory of God.* 

^z Some manuscripts omit *by faith*

^a Or *let us*; also verse 3



^b Or *boast*; also verses 3, 11

Believers have the hope of sharing in God's glory (cf. [Col 1:27](#) ↓). Some commentators think that the clause in question also, or alternatively, alludes to experiencing God's glorious presence.

Gal 5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for *the hope of righteousness*. 📖

As noted earlier in this chapter, opinions vary as to whether "righteousness" here refers to being pronounced "not guilty" on judgment day, or to being made completely righteous in the afterlife. Both are things following Jesus Christ's return on which we are to set our hope.

Col 1:5 ... because of *the hope laid up for you in heaven*. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ... 📖

"Hope" can be a verb – what believers do; or a noun – what believers hope for. In this case it is a noun – like a number of the other verses in this subsection – denoting the wonderful blessings for believers in the afterlife, for which they hope (cf. ZBC).

Col 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, *the hope of glory*. 📖

1Thes 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet *the hope of salvation*. 📖

Titus 3:7 ... so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to *the hope of eternal life*. 📖

Col 1:23 ... if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from *the hope of the gospel* that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation^c under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. 📖

^c Or *to every creature*

The "hope of the gospel" largely refers to the promised happenings involved in and subsequent to Jesus Christ's return.

✦ **Non-believers have no future hope, in contrast to all that believers have to look forward to:**

1Thes 4:13-17 But *we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope*. ¹⁴*For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep*. ¹⁵*For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord,*^d *that we who are alive,*

who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶*For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first*. ¹⁷*Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord*. 📖

^d Or *by the word of the Lord*

Non-believers who have no hope for anything beyond death (v. 13), in contrast to Christians who have hope and belief in: Christ's return, the resurrection and eternal life.

Reasons to have hope in God: God's steadfast love and faithfulness; . . .

See also:

- [God's promises give his people hope](#), p. 883

Lam 3:21-23 But *this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope*: ²²*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;*^e *his mercies never come to an end;* ²³*they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness*. 📖

^e Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off*

Ps 33:18-19, 22 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who *hope in his steadfast love*, ¹⁹that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. 📖 ... ²²*Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you*. 📖

Putting our hope in God's steadfast love (v. 18; cf. [Ps 147:11](#) ↓; [Jonah 2:8](#) ↓) is equivalent to putting our hope in God because of his steadfast love.

Ps 147:11 ... but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who *hope in his steadfast love*. 📖

Ps 130:7 O Israel, *hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption*. 📖

The final phrase suggests that God is willing and able to save (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV). As such it is reflective of his steadfast love.

Rom 5:5-8 ... and *hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*. ⁶*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly*. ⁷*For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a*



good person one would dare even to die—⁸but *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* 

As believers we can be assured that our hope will not disappoint us (v. 5; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) because we have been made keenly aware of the extent of God's love. For it has been manifested in us by the Holy Spirit (v. 5) and superlatively demonstrated in God sending Christ to die for us (vv. 6-8).

Jonah 2:8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake *their hope of steadfast love.* 

Despite the negative context, this verse indicates that God's steadfast love is something that his people can place their hope in.

Ps 146:5-6 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, *whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; ...* 

Note that along with God's faithfulness, this also points to him being the Maker of all creation as being a prime reason to put one's hope in him. As such, like some of the other verses in this subsection, it is also pertinent to the following subsection.

Heb 10:23 Let us *hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* 

Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a servant^f of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²*in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began^g ...* 

^f Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

^g Greek *before times eternal*

One aspect of God's faithfulness is that he does not lie. Thus we have sound reason to hope for the eternal life that he has promised.

... and the deeds of God, our Savior

See also:

- [Lam 3:21-23](#) ; [Ps 130:7](#) ; [Rom 5:5-8](#) ; [Ps 146:5-6](#) 
- [God gives his people hope – especially by what he has done through Jesus Christ](#), p. 882

Note that the verses in this subsection speak both of God having brought salvation from difficulties and of God's spiritual salvation – as well as other things that God has done.

Ps 62:5-6 For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for *my hope is from him. ⁶He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.* 

David's hope was in God as the one who had provided him with salvation and security, and continued to do so.

Ps 65:5-7 *By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; ⁶the one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might; ⁷who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, ...* 

Ps 78:4, 7 *We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.*  ...⁷*so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; ...* 

Note that in addition to his past deeds and power (vv. 4, 7), possibly God's law or commands (cf. v. 5) are also in view in v. 7 as reason to hope in God.

Jer 14:8, 22 *O you hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble, why should you be like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?  ... ²²Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not he, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for you do all these things.* 

2Cor 1:10 *He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.* 

1Tim 4:9-10 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰For to this end we toil and strive,^h because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 

^h Some manuscripts *and suffer reproach*

As well as speaking of God as being "the Savior of all people", note that this verse refers to the fact that he is "the living God" as an additional reason to put our hope in him.

1Pet 1:3, 20-21 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, *he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*  ... ²⁰He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹*who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.* 



For comment on v. 3, see the comment on [1Pet 1:3](#) – under [Further general points on hope](#), p. 1110. Regarding v. 21, two reasons as to why Peter can say that God's raising and glorifying of Jesus Christ gives believers reason to have hope (and faith) in God are that: (a) through it (and Christ's death) God has saved them; and (b) it shows God can likewise raise and glorify them.

Other godly sources of hope

See also:

- [Hope](#) [blessings of God's word], p. 318

Rom 5:3-4 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that *suffering produces endurance*, ⁴*and endurance produces character, and character produces hope*, ...

A person of resolute character, forged and tested by endurance (cf. [Rom 15:4](#) ↓) through suffering, has already experienced God's faithfulness in seeing them through thus far and so has good reason and the inclination to hope in God. Also such spiritual maturity leads to positiveness and clarity in one's perception, fertile ground for a believer's hope.

Rom 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that *through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*.

2Cor 3:5-12 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶*who has made us competentⁱ to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.* ⁷Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸*will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?* ⁹For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, *the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.* ¹⁰*Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it.* ¹¹For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, *much more will what is permanent have glory.* ¹²*Since we have such a hope*, we are very bold, ...

ⁱ Or *sufficient*

The new covenant, with "the ministry of the Spirit" (v. 8), has glory that surpasses that of the first covenant and the ministry associated with it (v. 10). This is particularly evident in view of the fact that it brings righteousness (v. 9) and life

(v. 6), and is everlasting (v. 11). As such it gives great hope to those who adhere to it (v. 12).

Philem 1:22 At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for *I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you*.

Prayer encourages hope in God.

Ps 119:43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for *my hope is in your rules*.

Obeying God's "rules" gives one hope of such things as: the fulfillment of God's promises to his obedient people; and a life free of dangers typically encountered by the wicked and foolish who live contrary to God's rules.

Prov 23:17-18 Let not your heart envy sinners, but *continue in the fear of the LORD all the day*. ¹⁸*Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off*.

Keenly fearing God (v. 17b) – in contrast to envying the ungodly (v. 17a) – gives one reason for a sure, ongoing hope (v. 18). Finding wisdom is presented as a source of hope in a similar fashion below in 24:14.

Prov 24:14 Know that *wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off*.

Further general points on hope

1Pet 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to *a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ...

The believer's hope is called a "living hope" because it is real and existing. This description also reflects the fact that it is dynamic, revitalizing and ongoing. Moreover, the teaching that God "has given us new birth into a living hope" suggests that our new spiritual life is begun in and sustained by this hope, permeated by it and lived within it.

1Cor 13:13 So now *faith, hope, and love abide*, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Hope – along with faith and love – will "abide", i.e. "continue forever" (NCV™, cf. NLT).

Rom 8:24-25 For in this hope we were saved. *Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?* ²⁵*But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience*.

We do not already see or have what we hope for; otherwise it would not be hope. Christian hope is anticipation of future realities.



Eph 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as *you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call*—

All Christians are called to (cf. **Eph 1:18** ↓) and have the same hope – basically that of salvation, with all that it entails.

Heb 6:11 And we desire each one of you to *show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end*, ...

Earnestly following and serving God until the end ensures that we can be fully assured of the soundness of our hope. Note that the salvation for which we hope is secured – not earned – by lives devoted to God.

✦ **Paul's prayer that the Ephesians would know the hope to which God had called them:**

Eph 1:16-18 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸*having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you*, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ...

Quite possibly Paul has the saints' "glorious inheritance" (v. 18b) at least partly in view in speaking of "the hope" (i.e. that for which believers hope).

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) The Importance of Hope

Subsections

- Hope is vital for faith
- Hope helps us remain firm
- Further ways hope is important for living the Christian life
- Note: The depressing plight of a lack of hope

Hope is vital for faith

See also:

- **Heb 3:6** ↓

The hope believers have is not a groundless longing, but a confident assurance. Such hope stimulates and supports ongoing faith, which has as its focus that for which believers hope. This is also reflected in the following subsection.

Rom 4:18 *In hope he believed against hope*, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."

Col 1:4-5a ... since we heard of *your faith in Christ Jesus* and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵*because of the hope laid up for you in heaven*.

Col 1:22-23 ... he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³*if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard*, which has been proclaimed in all creation^j under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

^j Or to every creature

Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a servant^k of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of *the faith of God's elect* and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²*in hope of eternal life*, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began^l ...

^k Or slave; Greek *bondservant*

^l Greek *before times eternal*

The intended relationship here between hope and the duo of faith and knowledge is open to debate. Paul may have in view that faith and knowledge are based on the hope of eternal life (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV) – as per the theme of this subsection – or conversely that faith and knowledge lead to this hope (cf. CEV, NLT). Alternatively, with v. 1 as a whole in view, "in hope of eternal life" could even be being given as part of the reason for Paul's mission.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast *the confession of our hope* without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

The Christian hope is what Christians confess to believe – i.e. Christian belief or faith concerns and is based on this hope.

Heb 11:1 Now *faith is the assurance of things hoped for*, the conviction of things not seen.



Gal 5:5 For through the Spirit, *by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.* 📖

As with the preceding verses, this illustrates that what we hope for – here “righteousness” in particular – is the focus of our faith.

Job 11:18 And *you will feel secure, because there is hope; you will look around and take your rest in security.* 📖

The Hebrew translated as: “you will feel secure”, can also be rendered as: “...you would trust” (NASB), or “...you will have confidence” (NRSV). As such this verse shows that hope generates faith.

Phil 1:20 ... *as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.* 📖

This shows Paul’s faith (“my eager expectation”) and hope working together, appearing to complement each other – and as such reflects the theme of this subsection. This also seems to be the case in the following verses from 1 Peter 1:21 and Psalms 71:5-6, which further associate hope with faith. See also the comment on Romans 8:23-24a below.

1Pet 1:21 ... who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that *your faith and hope are in God.* 📖

Ps 71:5 For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. 📖

This associates hope in God (v. 5a) with trust/faith in God.

✦ Hope is critical for salvation:

Rom 8:23-24a And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For *in this hope we were saved.* 📖

Paul often states the need for faith to be saved. The last statement (v. 24) does not contradict this, but underlines the close relationship between hope and faith, largely inseparable components of our salvation (cf. [Col 1:22-23](#) ↑). Furthermore, note that “wait eagerly” (v. 23b) reflects both hope and faith.

Hope helps us remain firm

See also:

- [By faith we stand firm](#), p. 1095

1Thes 1:3 ... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and *steadfastness of hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ. 📖

The phrase “steadfastness of hope” may well mean that their steadfastness came from hope (cf. NCV, NIV). As such the verse would be relevant here. Alternatively, it may be speaking of their hope itself as being steadfast (cf. CEV, GNT).

1Thes 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and *for a helmet the hope of salvation.* 📖

The “hope of salvation” – along with “faith and love” – gives protection against whatever might harm believers spiritually and/or lead them astray.

Heb 3:6 ... but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And *we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*^m 📖

^mSome manuscripts insert *firm to the end*

By holding onto our hope (and confidence) we remain a part of God’s “house” or “household” (NLT), his people (cf. CEV).

Heb 6:17-20 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to *the hope set before us.* ¹⁹*We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,* ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. 📖

Verses 19b-20 may mean that our hope extends into God’s very presence, where Jesus has entered as a “forerunner” on our behalf – giving us an assured hope that we will be able to follow. (As such our future, ultimate entry into God’s presence would appear to be in view.) Alternatively, or along with the above, the verses may mean that our hope is based on Jesus’ ministry for us in God’s presence, in his role as high priest.

✦ Hope enables us to wait patiently:

Rom 8:25 But *if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.* 📖



Having now the strong hope of the wonderful blessings to come in the afterlife is a great encouragement and enables believers to wait patiently for these blessings.

Further ways hope is important for living the Christian life

Rom 5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith^a into this grace in which we stand, and we^o rejoice^p in hope of the glory of God.

^a Some manuscripts omit *by faith*

^o Or *let us*; also verse 3

^p Or *boast*; also verses 3, 11

The hope of sharing God's glory causes us to rejoice (cf. **Rom 12:12** ↓; **Heb 3:6** ↓).

Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

2Cor 3:12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ...

Col 1:4-5a ... since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

This verse was used earlier in regard to hope's importance for faith. It is included again here as additionally it indicates hope is important for love. Having such a future hope spurs one on in loving others – as in other aspects of the Christian life (cf. **1Tim 4:10** ↓; **1Jn 3:2-3** ↓).

1Tim 4:10 For to this end we toil and strive,^a because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

^a Some manuscripts *and suffer reproach*

This shows that the Christian's hope is a key stimulus for their hard work for God.

Heb 3:6b And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.^r

^r Some manuscripts insert *firm to the end*

The description of our hope as something in which we boast indicates that our hope is something in which we can: take confidence (cf. GNT, NLT); take pride (cf. NRSV) and have a "sense of triumph" (AMP); and rejoice (cf. NKJV).

1Jn 3:2-3 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears^s we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

^s Or *when it appears*

The "hope" of Jesus Christ's return and of being like him (v. 2) leads one to make or keep themselves pure (v. 3). For focusing on such a hope makes anything that it is not pleasing to Christ incompatible with one's own goals and desires. Also one would not want to do anything that would bring Christ's disapproval on his return.

✚ **God watches over those who fear him and put their hope in his love:**

Ps 33:18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ...

Note: The depressing plight of a lack of hope

See also:

▪ *The wicked and ungodly are bereft of hope*, p. 466

The following verses illustrate the depressing plight of a lack of hope.

Job 7:6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and come to their end without hope.

Job 17:13-15 If I hope for Sheol as my house, if I make my bed in darkness,¹⁴ if I say to the pit, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother,' or 'My sister,'¹⁵ where then is my hope? Who will see my hope?

Job is saying that if his only hope is to go to the grave then he has no real hope.

Lam 3:18 ... so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD."

The writer is speaking not only of himself but on behalf of his people. God's judgment on Jerusalem had seemingly taken away any hope of blessings from God, stifling any prospect of endurance. Nevertheless, note that in the subsequent verses the writer could still speak of God's love and faithfulness giving him hope (cf. vv. 21-26).

Ezek 37:11 Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.'

Acts 27:20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

1Thes 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.



Unbelievers without hope can only grieve over death – both over the deaths of loved ones (primarily in view here) and their own certain deaths. Believers still grieve over the deaths of loved ones, but it is not a grief devoid of hope.

✦ **The deferring of hope is sickening:**

Prov 13:12 *Hope deferred makes the heart sick*, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life. 

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. What Not to Do

To live a life of faith, we should ensure that we do not lack faith in God. As such we need to avoid things which hinder faith in God. Notably we should avoid doubt, fear, worry and trusting in other things. Some verses which encourage believers not to be afraid and not to worry are amongst the best-loved verses in the Bible.

a) Do Not Lack Faith

See also:

- *Have strong faith . . .*, p. 1085

Subsections

- Do not be lacking in faith . . .
- . . . Do not doubt
- Do not test or question God
- Lack of faith is associated with not obeying God
- Lack of faith can have other detrimental effects
- Lack of faith can even bring God's punishment

Do not be lacking in faith . . .

Matt 6:28-30 And *why are you anxious about clothing?* Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?* 📖

Matt 16:8-10 But Jesus, aware of this, said, "*O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?*" ⁹Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? 📖

After having twice witnessed Jesus liberally feed thousands of people from just a few loaves of bread, the disciples had no reason to be concerned about having no bread for

themselves. Doing so showed a marked lack of faith (cf. [Mark 4:37-40](#) ↓; [Mark 9:18-19](#) ↓).

Mark 4:37-40 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, "*Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?*" 📖

Mark 9:18-19 And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. *So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.*" ¹⁹*And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me."* 📖

Jesus appears to be rebuking the disciples for their lack of faith revealed in them not being able to drive out the demon.

Mark 6:1-3, 6a He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ²And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? ³*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?*" And they took offense at him. 📖 ... ⁶*And he marveled because of their unbelief.* 📖

John 20:25-27 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "*Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.*" ²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. *Do not disbelieve, but believe.*" 📖

Mark 16:14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and *he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.* 📖



Rom 4:20-21 *No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,* ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Abraham provides an excellent example of one who did not lack in trust/faith.

. . . Do not doubt

Matt 14:28-31 And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰*But when he saw the wind,*^a *he was afraid, and beginning to sink* he cried out, “Lord, save me.” ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*”

^a Some manuscripts *strong wind*

Mark 11:23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and *does not doubt in his heart, but believes* that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

As noted earlier in this chapter, such a “mountain” signifies a seemingly insurmountable difficulty, presumably primarily alluding to ones encountered in advancing God’s kingdom.

James 1:6-8 *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

Verse 8 implies that one who doubts in essence cannot make up his mind (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT), wavering between belief of sorts (as shown in asking) and unbelief (as shown in doubting).

1Ki 18:21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “*How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*” And the people did not answer him a word.

The Israelites had displayed serious doubt or lack of faith in God, wavering between belief in God and belief in the false god Baal.

✦ A request to overcome unbelief:

Mark 9:22-24 And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” ²³And Jesus said to him, “‘If you can!’ All things are possible for one who believes.”

²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out^b and said, “*I believe; help my unbelief!*”

^b Some manuscripts add *with tears*

Do not test or question God

See also:

- *Do not complain against nor contend with God because of hard times*, p. 1949

We should not doubt and question such things as God’s wisdom, his power and his commitment to us. In doing so we in a sense “put God to the test”.

Ex 17:1-2, 7 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore *the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?”* ... ⁷And he called the name of the place Massah^c and Meribah,^d because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because *they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”*

^c *Massah* means *testing*

^d *Meribah* means *quarreling*

By quarreling with Moses (v. 2) – God’s appointed leader – and questioning God’s commitment to them (v. 7), the Israelites were testing God, as they were in a sense challenging God – not to mention testing his patience. Note that although the Israelites tested God a number of times in the journey through the desert, this particular incident was at times singled out (cf. [Deut 6:16](#) ↓; 9:22; 33:8; [Ps 95:8-9](#) ↓).

Deut 6:16 *You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.*

Ps 78:18-22 *They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved. ¹⁹They spoke against God, saying, “Can God spread a table in the wilderness?” ²⁰He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?” ²¹Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel, ²²because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power.*

Ps 95:7b-9 Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸*do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, ⁹when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.*



Despite having seen God's miraculous deeds in Egypt (v. 9b), the Israelites had often doubted God, questioning and quarrelling against him in their desert journey (cf. [Ex 17:1-2, 7 ↑](#); [Ps 78:18-22 ↑](#)). As such, they had tested him, effectively challenging God to prove himself (v. 9).

1Cor 10:9 *We must not put Christ^e to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ...* 

^e Some manuscripts *the Lord*

The reference is to an incident recorded in Numbers 21:4-7, where the people complained against God: "And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." (vv. 4b-5)

Mal 2:17 *You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"* 

Mal 3:13-14 *Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' ¹⁴You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?' *

Isa 45:9-12 *"Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'?" ¹⁰Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in labor?'" ¹¹Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: "Ask me of things to come; *will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?*" ¹²I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.* 

^f A slight emendation yields *will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the work of my hands?*

As the one who formed Israel (vv. 9-11) – indeed the maker of the whole earth, mankind and the heavens (v. 12) – the Israelites had no right to question what God chose to do regarding them (cf. [Rom 9:20-21 ↓](#)). Note that "children" (v. 11) appears to refer to Israel (cf. CEV; v. 10), which may also be the case with "the work of my hands" (v. 11) – although in the light of v. 12 the latter may refer to all creation.

Rom 9:20-21 *But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?* 

With Isaiah 45:9-11 above and Isaiah 29:16 in view, Paul similarly asserts that we have no right to question God as if he were accountable for his actions, or as if there could be any doubts as to the appropriateness of what he does. Such questioning of God is not simply seeking an explanation, but is critical of his wisdom and character.

‡ **One should not presume to test God's willingness or ability to fulfill his promises:**

Matt 4:6-7 ... and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 

Lack of faith is associated with not obeying God

See also:

- [Faith produces obedience to God](#), p. 1096

Lack of faith – not believing or trusting God – inevitably leads to disobedience.

Deut 9:23 And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, 'Go up and take possession of the land that I have given you,' then *you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God and did not believe him or obey his voice.* 

2Ki 17:14-15 *But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. ¹⁵They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them.* 

One can infer from this that the people's lack of belief (v. 14b) led them to be stubborn (v. 14a), disobedient and unfaithful (v. 15).

Ps 106:24-25 Then they despised the pleasant land, *having no faith in his promise.* ²⁵They murmured in their tents, and *did not obey the voice of the LORD.* 



Heb 3:18-19 And to whom did he swear that *they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?*¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. 

This correlates unbelief (v. 19) with disobedience (v. 18).

✚ **A sinful, unbelieving heart leads one to turn away from God:**

Heb 3:12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 

Lack of faith can have other detrimental effects

See also:

- *Note: Being afraid has grave consequences*, p. 1130

Isa 7:5-9 Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, “Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it⁶ for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,”⁷ thus says the Lord GOD: “It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.⁹ And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. *If you^h are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.*” 

⁶ Hebrew *let us split it open*

^h The Hebrew for *you* is plural in verses 9, 13, 14

In v. 9b God warns Ahaz, the king of Judah, that if he did not firmly have faith in God’s promises (vv. 7-8) regarding the threatened invasion (vv. 5-6) failing to eventuate, he would “not last” (NASB; cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NKJV).

Matt 13:57-58 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”⁵⁸ And *he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* 

Jesus’ power was not curtailed by people’s unbelief; rather he exercised it when belief/faith was shown. These verses illustrate that lack of faith can result in forfeiting blessings from Christ’s work in our lives.

Matt 14:28-31 And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”²⁹ He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.³⁰ *But when he saw the wind,ⁱ he was afraid, and beginning to sink* he cried out, “Lord, save me.”³¹ Jesus

immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*” 

ⁱ Some manuscripts *strong wind*

Matt 17:19-20 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “*Why could we not cast it [a demon] out?*”²⁰ He said to them, “*Because of your little faith.* For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”^j 

^j Some manuscripts insert verse 21: *But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting*

Lack of faith can even bring God’s punishment

Note that most of the following verses speak of lack of faith in terms of not believing or not trusting God.

Heb 10:38-39 ... but my righteous one *shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.*³⁹ *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.* 

By speaking of shrinking back, in view of v. 38a and v. 39b presumably the writer has in mind turning from living by faith, in conjunction with turning away from God. This leads to destruction.

Jude 1:5 Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved^k a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward *destroyed those who did not believe.* 

^k Some manuscripts *although you fully knew it, that the Lord who once saved*

Num 14:11-12 And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And *how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? ¹²I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.*” 

Note that later God forgave the people (cf. v. 20) – in response to Moses’ plea (cf. vv. 13-19).

Deut 1:32-36 Yet in spite of this word *you did not believe the LORD your God,*³³ who went before you in the way to seek you out a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night and in the cloud by day, to show you by what way you should go.³⁴ *And the LORD heard your words and was angered, and he swore,*³⁵ *Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers,*³⁶ except Caleb the son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and to his



children I will give the land on which he has trodden, because he has wholly followed the LORD! 

Ps 78:21-22 Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; *a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel,* ²²*because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power.* 

Ps 106:24-27 Then they despised the pleasant land, *having no faith in his promise.* ²⁵*They murmured in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the LORD.* ²⁶*Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them that he would make them fall in the wilderness,* ²⁷*and would make their offspring fall among the nations, scattering them among the lands.* 

Not having faith in God's promises (v. 24) led to the people's disobedience (v. 25), which in turn resulted in punishment (vv. 26-27).

Isa 30:15-17 For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning¹ and rest you shall be saved; *in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.*" *But you were unwilling,* ¹⁶*and you said, "No! We will flee upon horses"; therefore you shall flee away; and, "We will ride upon swift steeds"; therefore your pursuers shall be swift.* ¹⁷*A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.* 

¹ Or repentance

Verse 15 indicates that the people were unwilling to trust God. This led to their punishment, punishment that matched their rebellious intentions (vv. 16-17).

Num 20:12 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "*Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.*" 

✦ **Zechariah's lack of belief resulted in him being made temporarily dumb:**

Luke 1:19-20 And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰*And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.*" 

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions

To limit the number of duplicated verses, the references in this and the following section have been grouped according to what was considered to be the most prominent point in each one. Many also have points that qualify them for one or more of the other subsections as well.

Subsections

- Do not be afraid . . .
- . . . Do not be afraid or dismayed
- Do not be afraid – have faith in God and Jesus Christ, trusting in them
- Do not be afraid – be confident and bold
- Do not be afraid – be strong and courageous . . .
- . . . Look to God and Jesus Christ for your strength
- Do not even be afraid of death

Do not be afraid . . .

See also:

- *Do not fear anyone or anything but God*, p. 1148
- *Note: God's people should not live in fear of his punishment*, p. 1149

Isa 54:4 *Fear not, for you will not be ashamed; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.* 

This promise was made to Jerusalem regarding its time of future renewal.

Lam 3:55-57 I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; ⁵⁶*you heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help!'* ⁵⁷*You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!'* 

Ezek 2:6 And you, son of man, *be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions.*^m *Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.* 

^mOr on scorpion plants

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. *Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.* 



Acts 27:23-24a For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴and he said, *‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar.* 📖

1Pet 3:6b And you are her [Sarah’s] children, if you do good and *do not fear anything that is frightening.* 📖

1Pet 3:14-15 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. *Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,* ¹⁵but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ... 📖

Rev 2:10 *Do not fear what you are about to suffer.* Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 📖

... Do not be afraid or dismayed

See also:

▪ **Isa 54:4** ↑

Being “dismayed” means to be at least somewhat anxious and distressed – i.e. it is akin to being troubled.

Deut 1:21 See, the LORD your God has set the land before you. Go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has told you. *Do not fear or be dismayed.* 📖

1Chr 22:13b *Fear not; do not be dismayed.* 📖

2Chr 20:15, 17 And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, *‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s.* 📖 ... ¹⁷You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ *Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.*” 📖

Isa 51:7 Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; *fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings.* 📖

Isa 7:4 And say to him, ‘Be careful, be quiet, *do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah.* 📖

Despite their “fierce anger”, Judah’s enemies would prove to be little more than “smoldering stubs of firewood” (NIV®), as the subsequent prophecy explained (cf. vv. 7-9).

Jer 51:46 *Let not your heart faint, and be not fearful at the report heard in the land, when a report comes in one year and afterward a report in another year, and violence is in the land, and ruler is against ruler.* 📖

Eph 3:13 So I ask you *not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.* 📖

Paul’s sufferings were instigated by the Jews largely in response to his work in taking the gospel to the Gentiles. So he was suffering because of what he had done for them. The last clause may mean that his sufferings brought them glory, the glory resulting from being in God’s kingdom.

✦ A godly life counteracts fear:

Job 11:13-15, 18-19 [Zophar:] *‘If you prepare your heart, you will stretch out your hands toward him. ¹⁴If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and let not injustice dwell in your tents. ¹⁵Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; you will be secure and will not fear.* 📖 ... ¹⁸*And you will feel secure, because there is hope; you will look around and take your rest in security. ¹⁹You will lie down, and none will make you afraid; many will court your favor.* 📖

Most of this was inappropriately spoken to Job in his predicament, but largely it does have merit as a generalization.

Do not be afraid – have faith in God and Jesus Christ, trusting in them

2Chr 20:17b, 20 *Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.* 📖 ... ²⁰And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! *Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed.*” 📖

Matt 8:24-26 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” ²⁶And he said to them, “*Why are*



you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 

Heb 11:23, 27 *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ... ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.* 

Mark 5:36b *"Do not fear, only believe."* 

Luke 8:49-50 While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." ⁵⁰But Jesus on hearing this answered him, *"Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."* 

Acts 27:23-25 For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴and he said, *'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.'* ²⁵*So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.* 

Ps 56:3-4, 10-11 *When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? ... ¹⁰In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, ¹¹in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?* 

Isa 12:2 *"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GODⁿ is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation."* 

ⁿ Hebrew *for Yah, the LORD*

John 14:1 *Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;° believe also in me.* 

^o Or *You believe in God*

Ps 112:7-8 *He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. ⁸His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.* 

As is also suggested by at least some of the above verses, this and Jeremiah 17:7-8 below clearly indicate that trusting God naturally results in having no fear.

Jer 17:7-8 *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat*

comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit." 

Do not be afraid – be confident and bold

2Chr 32:7-8 *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. ⁸With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles."* And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. 

Ps 27:3, 13 *Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet^p I will be confident. ... ¹³I believe^q that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!* 

^p Or *in this*

^q Other Hebrew manuscripts *Oh! Had I not believed*

Confidence is specifically mentioned in v. 3 and clearly exemplified in v. 13.

Prov 3:25-26 *Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin^r of the wicked, when it comes, ²⁶for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.* 

^r Hebrew *storm*

Heb 13:6 *So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"* 

Prov 28:1 The wicked flee when no one pursues, but *the righteous are bold as a lion.* 

Although this and the following verses do not specifically mention not being afraid, it is implicit in their references to being bold.

2Cor 3:12 *Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ...* 

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw *the boldness of Peter and John*, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 

Ps 138:3 On the day I called, you answered me; *my strength of soul you increased.*^s 

^s Hebrew *you made me bold in my soul with strength*

As suggested by the text note, boldness may well be in view (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV).



‡ **God does not give us a spirit of fear, but one of power:**

2Tim 1:7-8 ... for *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ...

God does not give us a spirit of fear or cowardice, but rather one of power – enabling us to unashamedly and fearlessly testify for Christ (v. 8).

Do not be afraid – be strong and courageous . . .

See also:

- [2Chr 32:7](#) ↑
- [Dan 10:19](#) ↓
- *Be strong and courageous, as God is with those doing his work*, p. 1424
- *Do not be afraid as you do God's work . . .*, p. 1424

Josh 10:25 And Joshua said to them, “*Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous.* For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.”

1Chr 22:13 Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that the LORD commanded Moses for Israel. *Be strong and courageous. Fear not; do not be dismayed.*

Isa 35:3-4 *Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.* ⁴*Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”*

Josh 1:6-7, 9, 18 *Be strong and courageous*, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷*Only be strong and very courageous*, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success^t wherever you go. ... ⁹*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed*, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” ... ¹⁸Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. *Only be strong and courageous.*

^t Or *may act wisely*

Judg 5:21 The torrent Kishon swept them away, the ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. *March on, my soul, with might!*

Deborah speaks here in the context of God’s deliverance, exemplarily urging herself to forge onwards in the face of any difficulties, with strength (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV) or courage (cf. CEV, NLT). Note that Kishon was a stream that at times became a torrent.

2Sam 2:7 Now therefore *let your hands be strong, and be valiant*, for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.

1Ki 2:2 I am about to go the way of all the earth. *Be strong, and show yourself a man*, ...

Prov 24:10 *If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.*

This is in effect an exhortation to be strong amidst trouble.

1Cor 16:13 Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, *act like men, be strong.*

Ps 27:14 Wait for the LORD; *be strong, and let your heart take courage*; wait for the LORD!

Ps 31:24 *Be strong, and let your heart take courage*, all you who wait for the LORD!

Matt 14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “*Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.*”

“Take heart” is akin to: “Take courage!” (NIV®; cf. GNT, NCV).

Acts 23:11 The following night *the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage*, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”

2Cor 5:4-8 For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶*So we are always of good courage.* We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸*Yes, we are of good courage*, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Paul’s faith in God’s purpose for him in the afterlife (vv. 4-5a) was reinforced by the presence of the Holy Spirit, effectively guaranteeing this (v. 5b). All this gave him reason to be “always of good courage” (v. 6; cf. v. 8) in his life of faith (v. 7).



Phil 1:20 ... as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that *with full courage* now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. 

... Look to God and Jesus Christ for your strength

See also:

- *b) God Strengthens His People*, p. 933
- *Ask God for strength*, p. 1960

1Sam 30:6 And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul,^u each for his sons and daughters. But *David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.* 

^u Compare 22:2

1Chr 16:11 *Seek the LORD and his strength*; seek his presence continually! 

Ps 73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but *God is the strength^v of my heart* and my portion forever. 

^v Hebrew *rock*

Ps 84:5, 7 *Blessed are those whose strength is in you*, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.^w  ... ⁷*They go from strength to strength*; each one appears before God in Zion. 

^w Hebrew *lacks to Zion*

Verse 7 speaks of the pilgrims growing stronger as they continue on the journey and draw near to their goal – appearing before God in Jerusalem.

Eph 6:10-11 Finally, *be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.* ¹¹*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand* against the schemes of the devil. 

Note that what “the whole armor of God” entails is expounded in the subsequent verses (cf. vv. 14-18).

2Tim 2:1 You then, my child, *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*, ... 

Most likely this is speaking of believers finding their strength in God’s grace, in their union with Jesus Christ (cf. GNT).

Heb 13:9 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to *be strengthened by grace*, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. 

Look to God’s grace for strength (cf. [2Tim 2:1](#) ↑).

† The angel’s exhortation to be strong and his corresponding strengthening of Daniel:

Dan 10:19 And he said, “O man greatly loved, *fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.*” And as he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.” 

Do not even be afraid of death

See also:

- *God’s people are with Jesus Christ even in death*, p. 808
- *God’s people have peace and rest even in death*, p. 888

Matt 10:28 And *do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.* Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.^x 

^x Greek *Gehenna*

Rev 2:10 *Do not fear what you are about to suffer.* Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. *Be faithful unto death*, and I will give you the crown of life. 

The exhortation to not be afraid coupled with the latter reference to death, points to the fact that we should not be afraid of death.

Phil 1:20 ... as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but *that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.* 

Paul’s courage reflects fearlessness in the face of the prospect of death.

Heb 2:14-15 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, *that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,* ¹⁵*and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.* 

This indicates that – among other things – Jesus Christ has freed us from fear of death (cf. *Jesus Christ saves people from the power of death*, p. 615).

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

^y Or *the valley of deep darkness*

David is probably meaning here that he does not fear being killed because God will protect him from this occurring. But the verse can be applied or extended to the teaching that



when death threatens, God's people should not fear even should it eventuate. Regarding the alternative rendering in the text note, "the valley of deep darkness" is applicable to any dark times.

✦ Death cannot separate us from God's love:

Rom 8:38-39 For *I am sure that neither death* nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, *will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons

Subsections

- God is far more powerful than our enemies
- God is always with his people
- God helps his people
- God saves his people
- God is a refuge for his people, protecting them
- God's promised blessings
- Further reasons to not be afraid
- Note: Being afraid has grave consequences

God is far more powerful than our enemies

See also:

- c) *God Has Power over All Things*, p. 255

2Chr 32:7-8 *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. ⁸With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles." And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.* 📖

Deut 7:17-19, 21 If you say in your heart, "These nations are greater than I. How can I dispossess them?" ¹⁸*you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God*

did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ¹⁹the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So will the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. 📖 ... ²¹*You shall not be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.* 📖

Neh 4:11, 14 And our enemies said, "They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work." 📖 ... ¹⁴And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "*Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.*" 📖

As above in Deuteronomy 7:21, the description of God as "great and awesome" implies that he is far more so than our enemies.

2Ki 19:6-7 Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: *Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. ⁷Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.*'" 📖

The blasphemous "words" (v. 6) were spoken in ch. 18, particularly v. 35 – 'Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?' These words are emphatically refuted by Isaiah's prophecy (v. 7) and its fulfillment (cf. vv. 35-37) – showing that God was indeed far more powerful than the previously all-conquering king of Assyria and his forces.

Ps 56:4, 10-11 In God, whose word I praise, *in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?* 📖 ... ¹⁰In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, ¹¹*in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?* 📖

The term "flesh" (v. 4) points to the limitations of human enemies in contrast to almighty God (cf. [Isa 51:7-8, 12-13](#) ↓).

Isa 51:7-8, 12-13 "Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; *fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. ⁸For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.*" 📖 ... ¹²"I, I am he who comforts you; *who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, ¹³and have forgotten the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets*



himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor?



The final question is implying either that the “wrath of the oppressor” was negligible compared to God’s power or that it had been removed.

2Ki 6:15-17 When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, *an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”* ¹⁶He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” ¹⁷Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” *So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

Verse 17 tells of Elisha’s servant being enabled to see the surrounding, insurmountable heavenly forces – the “horses and chariots of fire”. In conjunction with God’s supreme power over our enemies, the forces of God are far more powerful than our enemies. Thus we should not be afraid of any adversary (v. 16).

✦ **Believers should take heart as Jesus Christ has overcome the world:**

John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But *take heart; I have overcome the world.*

Although the world causes Jesus Christ’s followers trouble, they should take courage because in him – the one who has overcome the world – they have peace amidst the trouble. Note that as Jesus said this in the hours prior to his death, it is quite possibly a reference to his death and subsequent resurrection – by which he triumphed over all that is evil in the world.

God is always with his people

See also:

- **2Chr 32:7-8**
- **Ps 46:1-3** ; **Isa 41:10** ; **2Chr 20:17** ; **Isa 50:8**
- **a) God Is Always with His People**, p. 802

Note that most of the following verses make reference to associated benefits of God’s presence, which further show why God being with his people is reason not to be afraid.

Josh 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. *Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

Deut 31:6-8 *Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.* ⁷Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. ⁸*It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.*”

Verse 8 shows that not only is God always with his people, he also goes ahead of them, effectively preparing their upcoming circumstances before they encounter them. Note that in v. 6 Moses is addressing all the Israelites, before addressing Joshua in particular in vv. 7-8.

Num 14:9 Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and *the LORD is with us; do not fear them.*

Deut 20:1-4 When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, *you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.* ²And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people ³and shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: *let not your heart faint. Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them,* ⁴*for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.*’

1Chr 28:20 Then David said to Solomon his son, “Be strong and courageous and do it. *Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you,* until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.

Ps 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, ²*I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

² Or the valley of deep darkness

Jer 1:7-8, 19 But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸*Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.*” ... ¹⁹*They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you.*”



Zeph 3:14-17 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. *The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.* ¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. ¹⁷The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. 

Note that this passage has an eschatological context.

Hag 2:4-5 Yet now *be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, ⁵according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.* 

Acts 18:9-10 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” 

God helps his people

See also:

- [Deut 20:1-4](#) 
- [Ex 14:13-14](#) 
- [d\) God Helps His People against Enemies](#), p. 915

Ps 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, *a very present^a help in trouble.* ²Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah 

^a Or well proved

Ps 118:6-7 *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? ⁷The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.* 

Isa 41:9-14 ... you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off”; ¹⁰fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ¹¹Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive

against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. ¹²You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all. ¹³For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you.” ¹⁴Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. 

Heb 13:6 So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” 

Deut 1:29-31 Then I said to you, ‘Do not be in dread or afraid of them. ³⁰The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.’ 

God would help the Israelites by fighting for them (vv. 30-31a). As well as previously fighting for them (and delivering them), God had also helped them before by carrying them through the difficult desert journey (v. 31b) which had involved additional difficulties. As such God’s past help gave credence to his promise of future decisive help, giving the Israelites good reason not to be terrified or afraid of their enemies (v. 29).

Josh 8:1 And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. 

Here God promises to help his people, promising to give their enemies into their hands (cf. [Josh 10:8](#) ; [Josh 11:4-8](#) .

Josh 10:8 And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you.” 

Josh 11:4-8 And they came out with all their troops, a great horde, in number like the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. ⁵And all these kings joined their forces and came and encamped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel. ⁶And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” ⁷So Joshua and all his warriors came suddenly against them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them. ⁸And the LORD gave them into the hand of Israel, who struck them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and eastward as far as the Valley of Mizpeh. And they struck them until he left none remaining. 



2Chr 20:15-17 And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s. ¹⁶Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.”

The people were not to be afraid as the battle belonged to God (v. 15b) – it depended on him (cf. GNT) and he, not them, would fight it (cf. CEV; v. 17).

✦ Recognition of God’s help when facing enemies – resulting in confidence and a call to trust him:

Isa 50:6-10 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. ⁷But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. ⁸He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. ⁹Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. ¹⁰Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

Each of vv. 7-9 begins with a statement acknowledging God’s help, which is then followed by resulting expressions of confidence. The phrase “in darkness” (v. 10) is most likely a reference to troubled times, but note that some interpret it to refer to spiritual darkness.

God saves his people

See also:

- [2Chr 20:15-17](#) ↑
- [Ps 27:1](#) ↓; [Ps 91:3](#) ↓
- *I. God’s Saving of His People*, p. 902

Ex 14:13-14 And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

The final clause may well be an exhortation to stay calm – akin to not being afraid (v. 13a).

Ps 27:1a *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*

Isa 35:3-4 *Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”*

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

Jer 30:10-11a “Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the LORD, nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from far away, and your offspring from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid. ¹¹For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end.”

Jer 42:11 Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand.

Isa 12:2 “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD^b is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.”

^b Hebrew for Yah, the LORD

Zeph 3:16-17 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. ¹⁷The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”

Zec 8:13 And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong.

Isa 10:24-25, 27 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: “O my people, who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. ²⁵For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction. ... ²⁷And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken because of the fat.”^c



^c The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

‡ Paul's call to those who sailed with him to take heart, for God would save them:

Acts 27:20-25, 34, 43b-44 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned. ²¹Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. ²²Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.'²⁵So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. ☞ ... ³⁴Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." ☞ ... ⁴³ ... He [the centurion] ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, ⁴⁴and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land. ☞

God is a refuge for his people, protecting them

See also:

- [Gen 15:1](#) ↓

Ps 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, a very present^d help in trouble. ²Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah ☞

^d Or well proved

Ps 3:3-6 But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. ⁴I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah ⁵I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. ☞

God's protection is apparent in not only v. 3a but also in v. 5 (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). As such, David does not fear his thousands of surrounding enemies (v. 6).

Ps 27:1-5 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold^e of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ²When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my

adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. ³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet^f I will be confident. ⁴One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire^g in his temple. ⁵For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. ☞

^e Or refuge

^f Or in this

^g Or meditate

Because God was the stronghold of his life (v. 1b), David found refuge in God's house (vv. 4-5), which signified God's presence.

Ps 91:1-7 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say^h to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." ³For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. ⁵You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. ⁷A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ☞

^h Septuagint He will say

God's promised blessings

Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ☞

Abraham (then called Abram) had no reason to fear because not only would God shield him, he would also greatly reward him (cf. [Gen 26:24](#) ↓).

Gen 26:24 And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake." ☞

Isa 44:2-4 Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen. ³For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. ⁴They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. ☞



This has a number of applications or stages of fulfillment. Probably initially it referred to the exiles returning to the land of Israel from Babylon. Particularly with the reference to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, it pertains to the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and to believers in general. As such it portrays the new life that the Holy Spirit brings to believers. It is often understood to also look ahead to a renewed Israel for its final fulfillment. Such promises of renewal give reason not to fear.

Joel 2:22 *Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield.* 

Although the tense is present, this may be for effect as the then near future is more likely in view (cf. v. 20; NLT). As such this verse was a promise, somewhat poetically made to the animals, readily applicable to the people.

Zec 8:14-15 For thus says the LORD of hosts: “As I purposed to bring disaster to you when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the LORD of hosts, ¹⁵so *again* have I purposed in these days to bring good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; fear not.” 

The giving of these promises of future blessing was to encourage the returned exiles to not be afraid but to complete the rebuilding of the temple (cf. v. 9).

Luke 12:32 *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* 

Although they appeared vulnerable like a “little flock”, the disciples were to inherit the kingdom, with the associated authority. As this was their destiny, there was no need to be afraid of what might be encountered in the meantime.

Further reasons to not be afraid

Ps 49:5-9, 16-17 *Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me, ⁶those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? ⁷Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, ⁸for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, ⁹that he should live on forever and never see the pit.*  ... ¹⁶*Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. ¹⁷For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him.* 

The basic thrust of these verses is that we should not fear if threatened by wicked people with wealth and resources, for in spite of their riches they will die. As such their power and wealth is short lived, counting for nothing in the long-term.

Isa 43:1-5 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.* ²*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.* ³*For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.* ⁴*Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.* ⁵*Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you.* 

The “waters”, “rivers” and “fire” are metaphors for danger – possibly alluding to the crossings of the Red Sea and the Jordan, and the fiery furnace (cf. Dan 3). The giving of nations for their ransom (vv. 3-4) likely refers to God allowing Persia to conquer these nations in return for its good treatment of Israel. There is a number of reasons given or evident here as to why the people should not fear, including some given in the preceding subsections. Further reasons given here are: they are God’s people (v. 1b); they are precious and honored in God’s sight (v. 4a); and God loves them (v. 4a).

Isa 44:8 *Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.* 

God’s proclaiming of the future gives reason not to be afraid, for it reflects the fact that God has ordained what will happen.

Joel 2:21 *Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things!* 

Luke 12:6-7 *Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?^a And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.* 

ⁱ Greek *two assaria*; an *assarion* was a Roman copper coin worth about 1/16 of a *denarius* (which was a day’s wage for a laborer)

✚ **Amidst any crisis, be still and recognize God’s sovereignty:**
Ps 46:10 “*Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*” 

Somewhat similarly Isaiah 41:10a says, “... be not dismayed, for I am your God.”



Note: Being afraid has grave consequences

See also:

- [Lack of faith can have other detrimental effects](#), p. 1118
- [Lack of faith can even bring God's punishment](#), p. 1118

Deut 1:29, 32-35 *Then I said to you, 'Do not be in dread or afraid of them. ... ³²Yet in spite of this word you did not believe the LORD your God, ³³who went before you in the way to seek you out a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night and in the cloud by day, to show you by what way you should go. ³⁴And the LORD heard your words and was angered, and he swore, ³⁵'Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers, ...*

This implies the people continued in their fear instead of believing God (vv. 29, 32) – bringing God's anger and punishment (vv. 34-35).

Prov 29:25 *The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.*

The fear of people is a trap that can bring you trouble (cf. NCV, NLT).

Isa 57:11-13a *Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, did not lay it to heart? Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and you do not fear me? ¹²I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you. ¹³When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! The wind will carry them off, a breath will take them away.*

Fear of others led the Israelites to forget God and be unfaithful, which in turn resulted in God's punishment of them. In v. 12 "righteousness" is used with irony; they either wrongly saw themselves as righteous, or pretended to be so.

Jer 1:17 But you, dress yourself for work;^j arise, and say to them everything that I command you. *Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them.*

^j Hebrew *gird up your loins*

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Do Not Worry**Subsections**

- [Do not worry – trust God with your concerns . . .](#)
- [. . . Ask God to provide for your needs](#)
- [Do not worry about the cares of this life for God will provide; focus instead on things of God](#)
- [The futility and dangers of worrying about the cares of this life](#)

Do not worry – trust God with your concerns . . .

See also:

- [Jer 17:7-8](#)

John 14:1 *Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;^k believe also in me.*

^k Or *You believe in God*

Such belief involves trust (cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Phil 4:5b-7 The Lord is at hand; ⁶*do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In counteracting worry, we should not overlook the role of thanksgiving (v. 6). Being thankful for what we have – particularly all we have in Christ – puts difficult circumstances into perspective. Also remembering and giving thanks for God's help in the past prompts trust in current difficulties.

Ps 55:22 *Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.*

1Pet 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷*casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

. . . Ask God to provide for your needs

In contrast to worrying about our physical needs, we should ask God to provide for them.

Luke 11:2-3 And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. ³*Give us each day our daily bread,* ¹ ...

¹ Or *our bread for tomorrow*



Matt 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread,^m ...

^mOr our bread for tomorrow

Prov 30:8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; *feed me with the food that is needful for me, ...*

Zec 10:1 Ask rain from the LORD in the season of the spring rain, from the LORD who makes the storm clouds, and he will give them showers of rain, to everyone the vegetation in the field.

As alluded to in the latter part of the verse, such a request for rain primarily has in view the need of rain for growing crops. As such it is essentially a prayer for the provision of physical needs.

✦ Those who trust in God are not fearful or anxious:

Jer 17:7-8 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

Do not worry about the cares of this life for God will provide; focus instead on things of God

Matt 6:25-34 Therefore I tell you, *do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?* ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. *Are you not of more value than they?* ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?ⁿ ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

ⁿ Or a single cubit to his stature; a cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

Verse 25b is saying that there are far more important things to life than food and clothing, so to worry about such things indicates a lack of perspective. It also could be implying that as God has given us life and a body, surely he will provide the much lesser things of food and clothing. The clause “for tomorrow will be anxious for itself” (v. 34) may mean that tomorrow “will take care of itself” (CEV) – possibly implying that perceived worries about tomorrow may well not even eventuate. Alternatively it may mean that tomorrow will bring enough worries of its own, so there is no reason to add to them by worrying about other possible troubles beforehand. The final statement has a similar thought – “Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (NCV™, NIV)

Mark 8:14-21 Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” ¹⁶And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. ¹⁷And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” ²⁰“And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” ²¹And he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

^o Some manuscripts the Herodians

The disciples seemingly were too focused on or worried about the problem of not having enough bread, to understand Jesus’ warning against the contaminating disbelief and ungodliness of the Pharisees and Herod (v. 15). Jesus’ rebuke (vv. 17-21) appears to be aimed at their preoccupation with worldly matters, such as a lack of bread, despite witnessing Jesus miraculously providing food for thousands. Such a persisting, worldly focus showed that they still did not comprehend or take to heart things Jesus was showing them – such as his ability to provide for them.

Luke 10:38-42 Now as they went on their way, Jesus^p entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴²but one thing is necessary.^q Mary has



chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her. 

^p Greek *he*

^q Some manuscripts *few things are necessary, or only one*

Martha was overly concerned with providing hospitality, possibly doing more than was necessary. In contrast Mary had chosen to spend time listening to Jesus – rightly a higher priority.

The futility and dangers of worrying about the cares of this life

See also:

- [Matt 6:34](#) 

Luke 12:25-26 *And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?*



^r Or *a single cubit to his stature*; a cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

Ecc 2:22-23 *What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? ²³For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.* 

The phrase “striving of heart” (v. 22) and much of v. 23 point to the worry that so often accompanies people’s work. This is often the case when our work and the goals of our labor become the main focus of our lives. Spending all our days in such toil (v. 23), is a pointless existence – ultimately futile and even harmful.

Matt 13:22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but *the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*



Being worried and preoccupied with the cares of this life can “crowd out” the place of God’s word and his kingdom in our lives, choking the effect of God’s word in our lives.

Luke 21:27, 34 *And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.  ... ³⁴“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.* 

Prov 12:25 *Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.* 

In contrast 14:30 says, “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh ...”

✦ Do not fret over success of the wicked for they will not last – and fretting only leads to evil:

Ps 37:1-2, 7-8 *Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! ²For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.  ... ⁷Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! ⁸Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Do Not Trust in Other Things

Note that many of the verses or passages in this section not only say to not trust in other things, but also contrast the outcomes of trusting in other things with the outcomes of trusting in God.

Subsections

- [Do not trust in other people, but rather trust in God . . .](#)
- [. . . People are not worth trusting in](#)
- [Do not trust in yourself](#)
- [Do not trust in riches](#)
- [Do not trust in worldly power](#)
- [Do not trust in wickedness](#)
- [Do not trust in idols](#)

Do not trust in other people, but rather trust in God . . .

Jer 17:5-8 Thus says the LORD: “*Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength,⁵ whose heart turns away from the LORD. ⁶He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. ⁷“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream,*



and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.” 

^s Hebrew arm

Ps 40:4 *Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!* 

After saying that the one who trusts in God is blessed, the implication of the latter parts of the verse is that in contrast we should not rely on people – in particular the proud and those who follow “a lie”, likely referring to false gods (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Ps 118:8-9 *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. ⁹It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.* 

Isa 10:20 In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob *will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.* 

Israel had relied on the Assyrians who in fact ended up turning on Israel and crushing her.

2Chr 16:7-9 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, *“Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. ⁸Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand. ⁹For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars.”* 

Previously the king of Syria had been allied with Baasha, the king of Israel, who was attacking Asa. But Asa sent gold and silver to the king of Syria to get the king to make a treaty with him instead – thus demonstrating a reliance on the king of Aram. So what Hanani is meaning in v. 7 is that if Asa had have rather relied on God, God would have given over to Asa not only Israel but also her ally at that time, the king of Syria.

... People are not worth trusting in

See also:

- [Isa 10:20](#) 
- [Ps 49:13-14](#) 

Ps 60:11-12 Oh, grant us help against the foe, for *vain is the salvation of man!* ¹²With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes. 

The second clause of v. 11 is basically saying that human help is useless – in contrast to that of God (v. 12).

Ps 146:3-4 *Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. ⁴When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.* 

Isa 2:22 *Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?* 

Here Isaiah calls on the people to: “Stop trusting in man” (NIV®; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

2Ki 18:21 Behold, *you are trusting now in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him.* 

Note that these are actually the words of the Assyrian king, who also denounces Hezekiah’s trust in God (cf. v. 22); but the point he makes here about the undependability of Egypt is valid.

Isa 20:3-6 Then the LORD said, “As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Cush,^t ⁴*so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, the nakedness of Egypt. ⁵Then they shall be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and of Egypt their boast. ⁶And the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, ‘Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?’” *

^t Probably Nubia

Trusting in Cush and Egypt for protection against Assyria would prove futile, even disastrous. Verses 5-6 are speaking of the coastal nations who put their hope and trust in Cush and Egypt, probably the Philistines (cf. NLT, CEV text note), but Judah may also be in view. For it is to Judah that this warning against making such alliances is primarily given.

Isa 30:1-3 “Ah, stubborn children,” declares the LORD, “who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance,¹ but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; ²who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, *to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!* ³*Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.* 



^u Hebrew *who weave a web*

Jer 2:36b-37 *You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria. ³⁷From it too you will come away with your hands on your head, for the LORD has rejected those in whom you trust, and you will not prosper by them.* 📖

John 2:23-25 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴But *Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.* 📖

Jesus did not entrust himself to these people for he knew how fickle people can be, here in particular ones who had a shallow faith based only on miracles.

Prov 25:19 *Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.* 📖

Do not trust in yourself

Prov 3:5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.* 📖

Prov 28:26 *Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.* 📖

Psa 49:13-14 *This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts.^v Selah ¹⁴Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.* 📖

^v Or *and of those after them who approve of their boasts*

In v. 13, “those who have foolish confidence” appear to be people who foolishly “trust in themselves” (GNT, NCV, NIV). In v. 14, “the upright shall rule over them in the morning” probably refers to the triumph of the upright over those who had trusted in themselves, lying in the grave below (cf. CEV, GNT), with “the morning” alluding to the passing of the darkness of the period of their power. But note that some commentators interpret “the morning” to refer to life beyond the grave.

Ezek 16:15 *But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore^w because of your renown and lavished your whorings^x on any passerby; your beauty^y became his.* 📖

^w Or *were unfaithful*; also verses 16, 17, 26, 28

^x Or *unfaithfulness*; also verses 20, 22, 25, 26, 29, 33, 34, 36

^y Hebrew *it*

Jerusalem’s “beauty” was largely in her fame and riches. Her trust in these was manifested in making ungodly alliances with nations, which often included payment for protection and the seal of intermarriage with foreign princesses, who brought idolatry. Note that the consequences of Jerusalem’s actions are given later in Ezekiel 16, particularly in vv. 36-43.

Ezek 33:13 *Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die.* 📖

When such a righteous man esteems his own righteousness and begins trusting in it, he then becomes self-righteous – which leads to evil and the resulting punishment.

Hos 10:13-14 *You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors, ¹⁴therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle; mothers were dashed in pieces with their children.* 📖

2Cor 1:8-10 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers,^z of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. *But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.* ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 📖

^z Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

Do not trust in riches

Prov 11:28 *Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.* 📖

Job 15:29-31 ... he will not be rich, and his wealth will not endure, nor will his possessions spread over the earth;^a ³⁰he will not depart from darkness; the flame will dry up his shoots, and by the breath of his mouth he will depart. ³¹*Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself, for emptiness will be his payment.* 📖



^a Or *nor will his produce bend down to the earth*

The reference to riches and wealth not enduring in v. 29, make it likely that in v. 31 trusting in “empty riches” (NLT) is in view.

Job 31:24, 28 *If I have made gold my trust or called fine gold my confidence, ...²⁸this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above.*

Ps 49:5-6, 10 Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me, ⁶*those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches?* ... ¹⁰*For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others.*

In the final analysis there is no point trusting in riches – or fearing those who do – for in the end all people die and then whatever wealth they may have is useless to them.

Ps 52:5-7 *But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living.* Selah ⁶*The righteous shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, “See the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches and sought refuge in his own destruction!”*^b

^b Or *in his work of destruction*

Note that there are a number of interpretations of “his own destruction” (v. 7), including that given in the alternative rendering in the text note and the possibility that it also refers to riches (cf. NRSV) as that which was at the root of his destruction.

Jer 49:4-5 Why do you boast of your valleys,^c *O faithless daughter, who trusted in her treasures, saying, ‘Who will come against me?’* ⁵*Behold, I will bring terror upon you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts, from all who are around you, and you shall be driven out, every man straight before him, with none to gather the fugitives.*

^c Hebrew *boast of your valleys, your valley flows*

1Tim 6:17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, *nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.*

Putting one’s hope in riches is akin to trusting in them – and likewise should be avoided.

✦ **It is very hard for one who trusts in riches to enter God’s kingdom:**

Mark 10:24-25 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, *how difficult it is^d to enter the kingdom of God!* ²⁵*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.*”

^d Some manuscripts add *for those who trust in riches*

Note that the text note expressly refers to trusting in riches, which would appear to be in view (cf. AMP, CEV, NKJV, NLT).

Do not trust in worldly power

Isa 31:1 *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!*

As reflected here, the earlier references to powerful Egypt in . . . *People are not worth trusting in*, also illustrate misplaced trust in worldly power. Note that such reliance on horses and chariots (cf. **Ps 20:7-8** ↓) might also be in view in Deuteronomy 17:16, with the directive that any Israelite king “... must not acquire many horses for himself ...”

Ps 20:7-8 *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.* ⁸*They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.*

Ps 44:6-7 *For not in my bow do I trust, nor can my sword save me.* ⁷*But you have saved us from our foes and have put to shame those who hate us.*

Verse 7 implies that the psalmist trusted in God, rather than weapons (v. 6).

Ezek 33:26 *You rely on the sword, you commit abominations, and each of you defiles his neighbor’s wife; shall you then possess the land?*

Hos 10:13-14 You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. *Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors, ¹⁴therefore the tumult of war shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be destroyed, as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle; mothers were dashed in pieces with their children.*



Jer 5:17 They shall eat up your harvest and your food; they shall eat up your sons and your daughters; they shall eat up your flocks and your herds; they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; *your fortified cities in which you trust they shall beat down with the sword.* 

✦ **Do not trust in your own deeds:**

Jer 48:7 For, *because you trusted in your works and your treasures, you also shall be taken;* and Chemosh shall go into exile with his priests and his officials. 

Here “works” could be referring to Moab’s materialistic “achievements” (NASB) or to its “power” (CEV, cf. GNT). As such, from this verse it can be construed that we should not trust in what we have accomplished – nor in the power (or wisdom) we have shown in achieving these accomplishments.

Do not trust in wickedness

Ps 62:10 *Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery;* if riches increase, set not your heart on them. 

Isa 28:15-17 Because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for *we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter*”; ¹⁶therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am the one who has laid^e as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’ ¹⁷And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and *hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter.*” 

^e Dead Sea Scroll *I am laying*

The references in v. 15 to making lies and falsehood a “refuge” and a “shelter” respectively, signify trust in them (cf. [Isa 59:4 ↓](#); [Jer 7:4, 8 ↓](#)).

Isa 59:4 No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law honestly; *they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.* 

This suggests a reliance on false, hollow arguments.

Isa 47:9-11 These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; *the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.* ¹⁰*You felt secure in your wickedness, you said, “No one sees me”;* your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your

heart, “I am, and there is no one besides me.” ¹¹*But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing.* 

“You felt secure in your wickedness” (v. 10a) indicates that Babylon “trusted in ... wickedness” (AMP, NIV, NKJV). Note that v. 10 shows that Babylon’s reliance on its wisdom and knowledge was also a contributing factor to its downfall.

Job 8:13-15 Such are the paths of all who forget God; *the hope of the godless shall perish.* ¹⁴*His confidence is severed, and his trust is a spider’s web.*^f ¹⁵*He leans against his house, but it does not stand; he lays hold of it, but it does not endure.* 

^f Hebrew *house*

Just what the “web” (v. 14) or “house” (v. 14 text note, v. 15) represents – as the object of the godless person’s trust – is not actually stated. Whatever it may represent, the point is clear: the godless or wicked (cf. NCV) have nothing worth trusting in.

✦ **God’s house is not to be trusted in as a safe-haven for wickedness:**

Jer 7:4, 8-11, 14 *Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’*  ... ⁸*Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail.* ⁹*Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known,* ¹⁰*and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations?* ¹¹*Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD.*  ... ¹⁴*therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.* 

The temple – or access to it – was not in itself something that could be depended upon (v. 14) to render approval and safety before God (v. 10), while one committed great sin (v. 9). Deceptive words propagating this belief likewise were not to be trusted (vv. 4, 8).

Do not trust in idols

Ps 135:15-18 *The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands.* ¹⁶*They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see;* ¹⁷*they have ears, but do not*



hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. ¹⁸Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them! 📖

Isa 42:17 *They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, "You are our gods."* 📖

Jer 13:24-25 *I will scatter you^g like chaff driven by the wind from the desert. ²⁵This is your lot, the portion I have measured out to you, declares the LORD, because you have forgotten me and trusted in lies.* 📖

^g Hebrew *them*

Here "lies" appears to allude to false gods (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Jer 48:13 *Then Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.* 📖

Moab would learn that putting their trust or confidence in its god Chemosh would prove as futile as the Israelites' trust in their two golden calves (alluded to here by the reference to Bethel, the location of one of the calves).

Hab 2:18 *What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols!* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

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I. Loving and Fearing God

Love and fear are two emotions or attitudes that we should have towards God, and arguably they stand alone as such. The Bible states that loving God is of the utmost importance. Fearing God is also shown to be critical. Like loving God, understanding and having the fear of God that the Bible teaches helps and benefits us in many ways.

Note that both love and fear of God are closely associated with obeying him (the theme of the second half of this chapter). They are very strong, compelling emotions and provide the primary emotional stimuli for obeying God (cf. Deut 10:12-13) – supplementing intellectual stimuli arising out of such things as faith. Moreover, the Bible indicates that our love and fear of God are actually expressed primarily in obeying him.

a) Love God

Subsections

- Love God . . .
- . . . Love Jesus Christ
- Love and treasure God's word
- Love for God and Jesus Christ is shown by obeying them
- Love for them is linked with loving and caring for other Christians

Love God . . .

Deut 6:5 *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* 

Josh 23:11 *Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God.* 

Ps 18:1 *I love you, O LORD, my strength.* 

Ps 31:23a *Love the LORD, all you his saints!* 

Ps 116:1 *I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.* 

Luke 11:42 But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect *justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done*, without neglecting the others.



Here "the love of God" appears to refer to love for God (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Deut 13:1-3 If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ²and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' ³you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you *love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.* 

Ps 26:8 *O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells.* 

David loved God's temple primarily because of its correlation with God's presence.

. . . Love Jesus Christ

Eph 6:24 Grace be with all who *love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.* 

1Pet 1:8 *Though you have not seen him, you love him.* Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ... 

This is speaking of love for Jesus Christ.

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, "*If God were your Father, you would love me*, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. 

John 21:16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, *do you love me?*" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 

Luke 7:44-47 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "*Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.* ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but *from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.* ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for *she loved much.* But he who is forgiven little, loves little." 



✦ We must love Jesus Christ even more than we love those closest to us:

Matt 10:37 *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* 

Love and treasure God's word

Ps 119:46-47, 72, 97, 103, 127, 140, 159, 165, 167 I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, ⁴⁷for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.  ... ⁷²The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.  ... ⁹⁷Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.  ... ¹⁰³How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!  ... ¹²⁷Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.  ... ¹⁴⁰Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it.  ... ¹⁵⁹Consider how I love your precepts! Give me life according to your steadfast love.  ... ¹⁶⁵Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.  ... ¹⁶⁷My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly. 

Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food. 

Ps 119:136 *My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law.* 

The psalmist's pain over God's law not being obeyed evidences his love for it.

Prov 7:1-2 My son, keep my words and *treasure up my commandments with you*; ²keep my commandments and live; *keep my teaching as the apple of your eye*; ... 

Keeping the teachings of God's word as "the apple of your eye", shows that one does treasure it (cf. AMP, CEV, NLT).

✦ The psalmist's great longing for God's laws:

Ps 119:20, 40, 131 *My soul is consumed with longing for your rules^a at all times.*  ... ⁴⁰Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!  ... ¹³¹I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments. 

^a Or your just decrees; also verses 30, 39, 43, 52, 75, 102, 108, 137, 156, 175

Love for God and Jesus Christ is shown by obeying them

See also:

▪ **Ps 119:167** ; **Job 23:12** 

1Jn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 

1Ki 3:3 *Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places.* 

The "statutes of David his father" were either God's laws that David had followed or godly instructions given by David, based on God's laws.

John 14:15, 21, 23-24 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.  ... ²¹Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."  ... ²³Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me." 

Deut 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who *love him and keep his commandments*, to a thousand generations, ... 

As with a number of the following references, this is not specifically saying that those who love God will accordingly obey him. However it does appear to imply this by associating love for God with obedience to him.

Deut 10:12-13 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, *to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul*, ¹³and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? 

Deut 11:1, 22 You shall therefore *love the LORD your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always.*  ... ²²For if you will be careful to *do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the LORD your God, walking in all his ways*, and holding fast to him, ... 



Deut 30:19b-20 Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰*loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice* and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. 

Jer 2:2 Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, “I remember *the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.*” 

John 14:31a ... but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. 

Just as we show love for God and Jesus Christ by obeying them, Jesus showed his love for God by obeying him.

John 15:14-15 You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵*No longer do I call you servants,*^b for the servant^c does not know what his master is doing; but *I have called you friends*, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. 

^b Greek *bondservants*

^c Greek *bondservant*; also verse 20

Being his friends, as opposed to mere servants (v. 15a), Jesus Christ’s followers obey him because they love him and want to please him rather than merely because they have to do so.

1Thes 1:3 ... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and *labor of love* and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 

It is debatable as to whether “love” is referring to love for God (or Christ), or to love for other people; either is applicable. If the former is the case, this illustrates that love for God produces labor or service to God – in conjunction with obedience to him.

Ps 97:10 *O you who love the LORD, hate evil!* He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked. 

Along with obeying God, those who love him should hate evil. Likewise, as 1 John 2:15 below teaches, they should not love the world or the things in the world.

1Jn 2:15 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* 

The phrase “love of the Father” appears to refer to – or at least encompass – “love for the Father” (AMP, NIV; cf. CEV, GNT).

✦ **God’s love is perfected in those who obey him:**

1Jn 2:5a ... but *whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.* 

The phrase translated here as “the love of God” could be referring to a believer’s love for God (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). However note that the love God has for his people may instead be in view (cf. NCV).

Love for them is linked with loving and caring for other Christians

See also:

- *Loving other Christians is indicative of being of God and Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 1314
- *. . . Not loving other Christians has negative implications*, p. 1314

1Jn 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and *everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.* 

This verse makes the assertion that everyone who loves God will naturally love his children as well.

1Jn 4:20-21 *If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot^d love God whom he has not seen.* ²¹And this commandment we have from him: *whoever loves God must also love his brother.* 

^d Some manuscripts *how can he*

For comment, see the comment on 1Jn 4:20-21 – under . . . *Not loving other Christians has negative implications*, p. 1314.

Heb 6:10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and *the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints*, as you still do. 

John 21:15-17 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, *do you love me more than these?*” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “*Feed my lambs.*” ¹⁶He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, *do you love me?*” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “*Tend my sheep.*” ¹⁷He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; *you know that I love you.*” Jesus said to him, “*Feed my sheep.*” 

As three times Jesus follows Peter’s declaration of love for him with an instruction to take care of or feed his sheep,



presumably he was implying a correlation between loving him and caring for his people. Note that in v. 15a Jesus appears to be asking Peter if he loved him more than the others did (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NlrV), although possibly he meant more than Peter loved other things (cf. CEV text note).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Importance of Loving God

Subsections

- Loving God is of the utmost importance
- God and Jesus Christ love those who love them
- God cares for those who love him
- Various spiritual blessings from loving God and Jesus Christ
- Blessings in the afterlife from loving God

Loving God is of the utmost importance

See also:

- *The supremacy of love*, p. 1538

Matt 22:35-40 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Mark 12:33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Loving God is of “much more” worth and importance than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

‡ **Condemnation of loving other things rather than God:**

2Tim 3:1-5 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ²For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to

their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, *not loving good*, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*, ⁵having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. *Avoid such people.*

God and Jesus Christ love those who love them

Ex 20:5-6 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but *showing steadfast love to thousands^e of those who love me* and keep my commandments.

^e Or to the thousandth generation

Note that v. 5 speaks of the dreadful ramifications of hating God, the opposite of loving him.

Neh 1:5 And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome *God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him* and keep his commandments, ...

John 14:21, 23 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And *he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him* and manifest myself to him.”
 ... ²³Jesus answered him, “*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*”

John 16:27 ... for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.^f

^f Some manuscripts from the Father

‡ Those whose lives are based on love come to know Christ’s love:

Eph 3:17-19 ... so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, *being rooted and grounded in love*, ¹⁸*may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth*, ¹⁹*and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge*, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In 17b, “love” is probably primarily referring to love for others. However it could instead refer to or involve the love of God (cf. NLT) or Christ (cf. CEV) for us, or our love for them – the topic of this subsection. In v. 18, “the breadth and length and height and depth” is often interpreted to be speaking of Christ’s love (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV) or God’s love (cf. NLT).



God cares for those who love him

See also:

- [Neh 1:5](#) ↑
- [Rom 8:28](#) ↓

Deut 11:13-15 And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to *love the LORD your God*, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹⁴*he^g will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil.* ¹⁵*And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full.* 📖

^g Samaritan, Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew *I*; also verse 15

Deut 30:6 And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will *love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.* 📖

Here “live” would primarily have God’s provision of ongoing physical life in view, but may also imply a “fullness” of life, a life that is blessed.

Josh 23:10-11 One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since *it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you.* ¹¹*Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God.* 📖

Ps 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and *spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.* 📖

The implication here is that God protects those who love him, leading them to exult in him.

Ps 91:14-16 “*Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.* ¹⁵*When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.* ¹⁶*With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.*” 📖

“I will protect him” (v. 14) and the subsequent blessings (vv. 15-16) apply to those who hold fast to God in love (v. 14a), who know God (v. 14b).

Ps 119:132 *Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name.* 📖

Ps 145:20 *The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.* 📖

Various spiritual blessings from loving God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- [1Cor 2:9](#) ↓
- [God and Jesus Christ love those who love them](#), p. 1143

John 14:15-17 *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.* ¹⁶*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,^h to be with you forever,* ¹⁷*even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.* 📖

^h Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7

John 14:21, 23 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And *he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.* 📖 ... ²³Jesus answered him, “*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*” 📖

In conjunction with loving those who love them, God and Jesus Christ reveal themselves to (v. 21b) and begin an intimate relationship with those who love them (v. 23b; cf. [1Cor 8:3](#) ↓).

1Cor 8:3 *But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.*ⁱ 📖

ⁱ Greek *him*

God of course knows everything about all people, but he knows his own people in a unique way in that he has a personal, intimate relationship with them – which may be what Paul has in mind here. A related interpretation is that “known by God” refers to being recognized by God as one of his own.

Rom 8:28 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^j for those who are called according to his purpose.* 📖

^j Some manuscripts *God works all things together for good, or God works in all things for the good*

Eph 6:24 *Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.* 📖

This suggests that those who love Jesus Christ experience his and/or God’s grace.

Prov 16:6 *By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.* 📖

Probably “steadfast love and faithfulness” is primarily referring to – or at least inclusive of – love for and faithfulness



to God (cf. CEV), in line with the subsequent reference to fear of God. In saying that they lead to atonement for sin, the writer may have in mind that they involve doing what God wants and so are associated with his forgiveness and the withdrawal of his judgment. See also the comment on Luke 7:44-50 below.

Luke 7:47-50 Therefore I tell you, *her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much.* But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”⁴⁸And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among^k themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”⁵⁰And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

^k Or *to*

Jesus was not meaning that the woman’s love was the reason for why her sins were forgiven; it was her faith that had saved her (v. 50). Jesus is saying that her great love for him (vv. 44-46) showed or was proof that her many sins had been forgiven. Love of God and Jesus Christ is indicative of being forgiven of our sins.

Isa 56:6-7 “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, *to love the name of the LORD*, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—⁷*these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*”

This appears to be primarily eschatological, to be consummately fulfilled in a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (perhaps a figurative one) of all peoples at the end of the age. Even so it is applicable to all people who love God being able to worship him and pray to him.

Ps 119:165 *Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.*

In conjunction with loving God, loving his commands brings great blessing.

Blessings in the afterlife from loving God

Luke 10:25-28 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, *what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*”²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”²⁷And he answered, “You shall *love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind*, and your neighbor

as yourself.”²⁸And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; *do this, and you will live.*”

1Cor 2:9 But, as it is written, “*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him*”—

This is probably referring to – or at least is applicable to – both blessings of the present life and blessings of the afterlife.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive *the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*

The “the crown of life” is an allusion to eternal life – “life forever” (NCV™).

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of *the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?*

‡ **Paul’s reference to a curse on those who do not love the Lord:**

1Cor 16:22 *If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed.* Our Lord, come!!

¹ Greek *Maranatha* (a transliteration of Aramaic)

Here Paul appears to allude to God’s wrath and judgment. In contrast to the above blessings for those who love God and Jesus Christ, those who do not love them face God’s wrath and judgment, notably in the afterlife.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Fear God

Fearing God is more than just having reverence for him. A sound appreciation of God’s holiness and wrath, along with his supreme power, produces a genuine fear of incurring his displeasure. But this does not involve anxiety or terror for those who seek to please him and who understand his grace (cf. *Note: God’s people should not live in fear of his punishment*, p. 1149).

Clearly, fearing God moves us to obey him. It also evokes and supplements such things as worship and service, and even trust (cf. BKC). When we grasp the concepts involved and



willingly do fear God, we learn to gladly do so, even treasuring verses that call on us to fear God.

Subsections

- Fear and be in awe of God
- Fear God to the extent that you tremble before him . . .
- . . . and tremble at God's word
- Do not fear anyone or anything but God
- Further examples of people fearing God
- Note: God's people should not live in fear of his punishment

Fear and be in awe of God

Josh 24:14 Now therefore *fear the LORD* and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

2Chr 19:7 Now then, *let the fear of the LORD be upon you*. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.

Ps 22:23 You who *fear the LORD*, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and *stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!*

Ps 33:8 *Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!*

Prov 23:17 Let not your heart envy sinners, but *continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.*

Ps 76:7a *But you, you are to be feared!*

Eccl 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*^m

^mOr *the duty of all mankind*

Note that the final phrase can also be rendered: "this applies to every person" (NASB).

1Pet 1:17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, *conduct yourselves with fear* throughout the time of your exile, ...

1Pet 2:17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. *Fear God.* Honor the emperor.

Rev 19:5 And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who *fear him, small and great.*"

1Ki 18:12b *I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth.*

Neh 1:11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of *your servants who delight to fear your name*, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Ps 5:7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. *I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.*

Ps 86:11 Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; *unite my heart to fear your name.*

Prov 31:30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but *a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

Mal 2:5 My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. *It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name.*

Lev 19:30 You shall keep my Sabbaths and *revere my sanctuary*: I am the LORD.

The Israelites were to have reverence for the place where God was worshiped, as it signified his presence.

✦ **A promise that God would facilitate fear of him in his people:**

Jer 32:39-40 *I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever*, for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. *And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.*

This may be speaking primarily of God's spiritually renewing Israel in the end times. Even so it would appear to have an application in all eras – in some respects at least.



Fear God to the extent that you tremble before him . . .

Jer 5:22 *Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.* 

Phil 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. 

Ps 2:11 *Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* 

Initially rejoicing and trembling may seem incompatible, but a true understanding of God inspires both, even simultaneously. For example God's infinite power is something that his people can rejoice in and also tremble because of. Rejoicing that is accompanied by trembling is not at all superficial; it is deep-seated and long lasting.

Ps 119:120 *My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments.* 

Acts 7:30-32 Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord: ³²'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And *Moses trembled* and did not dare to look. 

Ps 96:9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; *tremble before him, all the earth!* 

ⁿ Or *in holy attire*

Ps 99:1 *The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!* 

God reigns with absolute sovereignty, in awesome majesty – to which the only appropriate response is to “tremble” and “quake”. Note that the last clause may figuratively be primarily referring to the earth physically quaking, i.e. to earthquakes.

Ps 114:7-8 *Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,* ⁸who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water. 

Hos 11:10-11 They shall go after the LORD; he will roar like a lion; *when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west;* ¹¹*they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria,* and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD. 

Return to the future renewed Israel may be in view here.

. . . and tremble at God's word

See also:

- [Ps 119:120](#) 
- [God's word helps people learn to fear God](#), p. 313

Ezra 9:4 Then all who *trembled at the words of the God of Israel*, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice. 

The “words” of God in view here may well be in particular his warnings regarding unfaithfulness (cf. CEV, GNT; [Ezra 10:3](#) ), reiterated shortly afterwards in vv. 11-12.

Ezra 10:3 Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord^o and of those who *tremble at the commandment of our God*, and let it be done according to the Law. 

^o Or *of the Lord*

Some of the Jews had been guilty of intermarriage with foreign women, breaking God's law. In repentance they sent away these women and their children. This sounds terribly severe, but it illustrates the uncompromising obedience to God's law that is required by God and inspired by trembling from fear of him and his commands.

Isa 66:2, 5 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But *this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.*  ... ⁵Hear the word of the LORD, you who *tremble at his word*: “Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy’; but it is they who shall be put to shame. 

‡ Continually have regard for and stand in awe of God's words:

Ps 119:117, 161 Hold me up, that I may be safe and *have regard for your statutes continually!*  ... ¹⁶¹Princes persecute me without cause, but *my heart stands in awe of your words.* 



Do not fear anyone or anything but God

See also:

- *b) Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions*, p. 1119
- *c) Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons*, p. 1124

If a person truly fears God, they are practically unable to fear anyone or anything else. Focussing on God's characteristics, what he has done and what he will do (cf. *d) Why God Should Be Feared*, p. 1149) engenders a deep fear of God that gives us a clear perspective and makes any threat seem hardly significant.

Matt 10:28 *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*^p 

^p Greek *Gehenna*

2Ki 17:35-36 The LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them, "*You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them,*³⁶*but you shall fear the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice.*" 

Psa 76:11 Make your vows to the LORD your God and perform them; let all around him bring gifts to *him who is to be feared*, ... 

This implies that God is the only one who is to be feared.

Eccl 5:7 For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity;⁹ but *God is the one you must fear.* 

⁹ Or *For when dreams and vanities increase, words also grow many*

Isa 8:11-13 For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: ¹²"Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and *do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.* ¹³*But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.*" 

Isa 57:11-13a *Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, did not lay it to heart?* Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, *and you do not fear me?* ¹²I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you. ¹³When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! 

This condemnation of fearing other things and not fearing God, also shows what can follow such ill-conceived fear – i.e.

lying, forgetting God and not fearing him (v. 11). In turn such things lead to the manifestation of God's displeasure (vv. 12-13a).

Jer 10:5-7 Their idols^r are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. *Do not be afraid of them*, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good." ⁶There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. ⁷*Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you.* 

^r Hebrew *They*

Jer 10:2 Thus says the LORD: "Learn not the way of the nations, *nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them,* ... 

The "signs of the heavens" appears to refer to unusual occurrences such as eclipses and comets, although some think that astrological signs are in view (cf. NLT). God's people ought not to follow the ways of others in being afraid of such things (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) and what they might mean.

‡ **The Israelite midwives feared God, rather than do what the king of Egypt ordered:**

Ex 1:17 *But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.* 

Further examples of people fearing God

Gen 22:11-12 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "*Abraham, Abraham!*" And he said, "Here am I." ¹²He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now *I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.*" 

Abraham feared God to the extent that he was prepared to obey a direction from God that would have been as difficult for him to do as any other.

Gen 31:42a If the God of my father, *the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac*, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. 

The title "the Fear of Isaac" indicates that God was the one Isaac feared.

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was *Job*, and that man was blameless and upright, one *who feared God* and turned away from evil. 



Neh 7:2 *I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.* 📖

Acts 9:31 *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.* 📖

Acts 10:1-2 *At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ²a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.* 📖

Heb 11:7 *By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.* 📖

⚡ The Messiah would fear God:

Isa 11:2-3 *And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ...* 📖

The Messiah would not only fear the LORD, he would delight in doing so.

Note: God's people should not live in fear of his punishment

Fear of God's punishment does lead God's people to spurn sin and to not turn away from him. But being under God's grace and knowing his love (cf. [1Jn 4:16-18](#) ↓), believers need not – and indeed should not – live in anxious fear of God's punishment.

Rom 8:15 *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"* 📖

Paul is contrasting being a slave with being a son – having "the spirit of slavery" in contrast to having "the spirit of adoption as sons". Believers do not relate to and respond to God out of fear of punishment for wrongdoing as would slaves, but rather as loving, appreciative children who are eager to please their father.

1Jn 4:16-18 *So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* 📖

In v. 18 "love" appears to be referring to the love of God that is manifested in the Christian – the love that God has for them and they in turn show to others (v. 16), revealing themselves to be like God (v. 17b). Knowing and expressing such love drives out anxious fear of punishment from God (v. 18) – particularly as one who "abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (v. 16b). Knowledge of such love cannot coexist with anxious fear of God's punishment; they are incompatible, both logically and experientially. As such, "we may have confidence for the day of judgment" (v. 17).

⚡ Two types of "fear":

Ex 20:20 *Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin."* 📖

This verse illustrates that the Bible speaks of two types of fear – one of anxiety and even terror, which is detrimental, and one that comes from an appreciation of all that God is, which is very beneficial.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Why God Should Be Feared

Subsections

- God's surpassing greatness and sovereignty
- God's great deeds . . .
- . . . including God's creative work and control over nature
- God's anger and judgment . . .
- . . . Ominous commands to be silent before God in the face of his judgment
- God's holiness
- God's love and forgiveness



God's surpassing greatness and sovereignty

Ps 96:4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.

Jer 10:6-7 There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. ⁷Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you.

Note that God's great might or power (v. 6) is shown to be a reason to fear him in this subsection and in most of the following ones.

Job 25:2 Dominion and fear are with God;^s he makes peace in his high heaven.

^s Hebrew *him*

God is sovereign, his dominion even encompassing "high heaven". As such he is owed fear; it belongs to him (cf. NASB, NKJV).

Job 37:22-24 Out of the north comes golden splendor; God is clothed with awesome majesty. ²³The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate. ²⁴Therefore men fear him; he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit.^t

^t Hebrew *in heart*

The portrayal of God in v. 22 shows his greatness – as does v. 23, particularly the references to him being the "Almighty" and "great in power". God's "justice and abundant righteousness" (v. 23) – aspects of his sovereign rule – are also given as reasons to fear God.

Ps 89:6-7 For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings^u is like the LORD, ⁷a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?

^u Hebrew *the sons of God, or the sons of might*

The heavenly beings fear God because he is incomparable (v. 6) – "more awesome than all" (v. 7).

Ps 99:1 The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

Dan 6:26-27 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. ²⁷He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on

earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

Mal 1:14 Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

Ps 76:11-12 Make your vows to the LORD your God and perform them; let all around him bring gifts to *him who is to be feared*, ¹²*who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.*

This highlights God's sovereignty, being sovereign even over other rulers.

† God's glory is a reason to fear God:

Ps 102:15 Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and *all the kings of the earth will fear your glory.*

God's glory is also alluded to in some of the above references, notably Job 37:22.

God's great deeds . . .

See also:

- [Dan 6:26-27](#) ↑

1Sam 12:24 Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.

2Ki 17:36 ... but you shall fear the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice.

Ps 65:8 ... so that *those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs.* You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.

God's "signs" are the wonderful things he has done (cf. GNT) – including his "miracles" (NCV™). Fearing them is in effect fearing God as the one who performs such wonders.

Ecc1 3:14 I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.

Isa 29:23 For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.



A deliverance by God and/or a renewal of Israel is in view – possibly a still future renewal at the end of the age. When the people see their many children (cf. NLT) and how great God has made their nation (cf. CEV), they will stand in awe of God – which is akin to fearing him.

Jer 33:9 And this city^v shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before *all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.* 

^v Hebrew *And it*

Mic 7:15-17 As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, *I will show them^w marvelous things.* ¹⁶The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; *they shall lay their hands on their mouths; their ears shall be deaf; ¹⁷they shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth; they shall come trembling out of their strongholds; they shall turn in dread to the LORD our God, and they shall be in fear of you.* 

^w Hebrew *him*

In v. 16, “they shall lay their hands on their mouths” appears to indicate “awe” (NLT) of God and “dismay” (GNT, cf. AMP). As a result of God’s wonderful acts (v. 15), the nations will understand and be ashamed (v. 16a). Realizing their relative powerlessness (v. 16a), they will be in awe and humbled (v. 16b-17a) and turn in fear to God (v. 17b).

Hab 3:2a O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and *your work, O LORD, do I fear.* 

Ps 40:1-3 I waited patiently for the LORD; *he inclined to me and heard my cry. ²He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. ³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.* 

Ps 64:8-9 *They are brought to ruin, with their own tongues turned against them; all who see them will wag their heads. ⁹Then all mankind fears; they tell what God has brought about and ponder what he has done.* 

... including God’s creative work and control over nature

Ps 33:8-9 *Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! ⁹For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.* 

Verse 9 is referring to God’s creation of the world.

Ps 96:4-5 *For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.* 

Jer 5:22 *Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.* 

Jonah 1:9 And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and *I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.*” 

Ex 14:26-27, 31 Then *the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw^x the Egyptians into the midst of the sea.*  ... ³¹*Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.* 

^x Hebrew *shook off*

Josh 4:23-24 *For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, ²⁴so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.”^y* 

^y Or *all the days*

1Sam 12:18 So Samuel *called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.* 

Jonah 1:15-16 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and *the sea ceased from its raging.* ¹⁶*Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.* 

Jonah had indicated that the storm had been brought by God due to him running away from God (cf. vv. 8-10). Jonah had then told the men that by throwing him into the sea it would become calm (vv. 11-12). Thus when this proved true the men realized that God had power over storms and the sea – and consequently greatly feared him.



Nah 1:4-5 *He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither; the bloom of Lebanon withers. ⁵The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it.* 📖

Verse 5b speaks of the world and its people shuddering in fear before God, due to his power over nature (v. 4).

Jer 5:24 They do not say in their hearts, *'Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.'* 📖

Deut 14:22-23 *You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. ²³And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.* 📖

This formal, pronounced acknowledgment of God's provision for them through his control of nature (cf. [Jer 5:24 ↑](#)), would foster fear for God in his people (v. 23b).

God's anger and judgment . . .

Deut 9:19 *For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me that time also.* 📖

Ps 90:11 *Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?* 📖

Ps 76:7-9 *But you, you are to be feared! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused? ⁸From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, ⁹when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. Selah* 📖

Prov 24:21-22 *My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, ²²for disaster will arise suddenly from them, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?* 📖

Isa 25:2-3 *For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the foreigners' palace is a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. ³Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you.* 📖

Isa 59:18-19 *According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment. ¹⁹So they shall fear the name of the*

LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream,² which the wind of the LORD drives. 📖

² Hebrew *a narrow river*

This may have a still future judgment ultimately in view.

Amos 3:8 *The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?* 📖

God's announcing of coming judgment (cf. vv. 2, 11-15) is here likened to a roar of a lion, rousing fear.

Luke 12:4-5 *I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell.^a Yes, I tell you, fear him!* 📖

^a Greek *Gehenna*

Acts 5:8-11 *And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you^b sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." ⁹But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? *Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.*" ¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.* 📖

^b The Greek for *you* is plural here

Rom 11:20-21 *That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.* 📖

1Pet 1:17 *And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ...* 📖

Rev 14:6-7 *Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."* 📖

2Cor 5:10-11 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. ¹¹Therefore,*



knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. 

This appears to speak of fear of Christ (v. 11a) being produced by the certainty of his judgment and repayments (v. 10).

Rev 15:4 *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.* 

God's "righteous acts" – here likely primarily judgments – are shown indirectly to be reason to fear God.

. . . Ominous commands to be silent before God in the face of his judgment

The following commands to be silent allude to awe and fear of God, in view of his imminent judgment.

Isa 41:1 *Listen to me in silence, O coastlands; let the peoples renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us together draw near for judgment.* 

Hab 2:20 *But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.* 

Some commentators see this as speaking of God being set to call the nations to account; hence the exhortation to be silent as they ready themselves for his judgment.

Zeph 1:7 *Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.* 

Zec 2:13 *Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.* 

Saying that God "has roused himself" implies that he will soon be "springing into action" (NLT) – which here likely involves bringing down judgment on his people's enemies.

God's holiness

God's holiness involves his separateness from and intolerance of that which is morally impure, with the latter leading to his judgment. Thus God's holiness – awesome in itself – and its grave implications give good reason to fear him.

Rev 15:4 *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.* 

Isa 8:13 *But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* 

This may well be implying that we should fear God because of his holiness, along with him being "the LORD of hosts".

Isa 29:23 *For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.* 

This appears to be speaking of the people's awe of God being inspired in part by their recognition of God's holiness in light of his work on their behalf – as well as by the work itself.

God's love and forgiveness

The verses below that speak of God's love do not actually explicitly state that God's love is a reason as to why we should fear him. But they do correlate fearing God and acknowledging or having one's hope in God's love. As such arguably they suggest that fear of God is in part stimulated by his love.

Ps 33:18-19 *Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ¹⁹that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.* 

Ps 147:11 *... but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.* 

Ps 118:4 *Let those who fear the LORD say, "His steadfast love endures forever."* 

Ps 130:4 *But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.* 

Without God's forgiveness the fear of God that the Bible commands would not be possible – it being a fear which encompasses (among other things) worship, service and even longing for God. In place of it there would only be terror.

1Ki 8:38-40 *... whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house, ³⁹then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind), ⁴⁰that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.* 



This speaks of God's forgiveness and his just dealings with people – including his actions on behalf of those who repent – as leading them to fear him.

✦ **God's confirmation of his promises to his people gives reason to fear him:**

Ps 119:38 *Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared.* 

"Confirm" may here have the sense "fulfill" (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV). As such this would indicate that God's fulfillment of his wonderful promises to his people leads one to understand that he is the almighty God – inducing awe and fear.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) The Importance of Fearing God (I): Godly Living

Subsections

- Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him
- Fear of God is associated with righteous living
- Fearing God compels one to avoid sin and evil
- Fearing God and Jesus Christ ensures we deal rightly with others
- Not fearing God is linked with ungodliness – and the consequences

Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him

See also:

- . . . *Instead, fear God and serve him faithfully*, p. 1425

Fear of God and obedience of God are often spoken of in conjunction with each other, to the point where it would appear they are inseparable in practice. A key reason for this close relationship is that fear of God, with an appreciation of his power and wrath, is a great stimulus to obeying him (and likewise is a very strong deterrent against disobeying him). This reason is alluded to or implied in at least most of the following verses.

Deut 5:29 *Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants^c forever!* 

^c Or sons

Deut 6:1-2 *Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules^d that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, ²that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.* 

^d Or just decrees; also verse 20

Just as fearing God leads us to obey him, we also fear God by obeying him. Our fear of him is manifested in obedience to him.

Deut 8:6 *So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.* 

1Sam 12:14 *If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well.* 

Ps 103:17-18 *But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.* 

Ps 111:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!* 

In view of other translations, practicing the fear of God – "practice it" – can be correlated with obeying God (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT).

Eccl 12:13 *The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.^e* 

^e Or the duty of all mankind

Isa 50:10 *Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.* 

Hag 1:12 *Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.* 



Eph 6:5 Slaves,^f *obey your earthly masters^g with fear and trembling*, with a sincere heart, *as you would Christ*, ...

^f Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

^g Or *your masters according to the flesh*

This implies that we should obey Christ “with fear and trembling”, along with sincerity.

Gen 22:1-2, 9-12 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ²*He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”* ... ⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and *bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.* ¹⁰*Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.* ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ¹²He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for *now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.*”

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being *warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.* By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

In “reverent fear” of God, Noah built an ark in obedience to God’s command (cf. Gen 6:14-16). Note that the phrase “in reverent fear” has been rendered: “He obeyed God” (GNT, NCV, NLT, cf. CEV) – pointing to the association here of fear and obedience.

Ps 19:9 ... *the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules^h of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.*

^h Or *just decrees*

This correlates fear of God with his law (cf. NIV), using “fear” in reference to the law – as is implied by the context and indicated by a number of commentators. As such it implies that fear of God is linked with obeying God’s law.

✦ People learn to fear God through hearing his word:

Deut 31:12-13 Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, *that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law,* ¹³*and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.*

As well as suggesting that fearing God leads one to obey God’s commands – as do the above verses – this also makes the converse point: learning God’s law leads one to fear God (cf. *God’s word helps people learn to fear God*, p. 313).

Fear of God is associated with righteous living

See also:

▪ **Job 1:1**

Prov 14:2 *Whoever walks in uprightness fears the LORD*, but he who is devious in his ways despises him.

Acts 10:35 ... but in every nation *anyone who fears him and does what is right* is acceptable to him.

2Sam 23:3 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: *When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ...*

2Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, *let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of bodyⁱ and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*

ⁱ Greek *flesh*

Fearing God compels one to avoid sin and evil

Ex 20:20 Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, *that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.*”

Prov 16:6 By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and *by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.*

Prov 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes; *fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and *that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.*

Prov 8:13 *The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.* Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

Neh 5:9 So I said, “*The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies?*”



Living in the fear of God enables us to avoid the taunts of our enemies, as it compels us to stop doing that which is not right and so give them nothing for which to condemn us.

✦ Fearing God guards against turning away from him:

Jer 32:40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And *I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.* 

Fearing God and Jesus Christ ensures we deal rightly with others

In conjunction with it being a catalyst for obeying God and living righteously, fearing God leads us to deal justly and properly with others.

Ex 18:21 Moreover, look for able men from all the people, *men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.* 

This implies that people who fear God are trustworthy. So capable people who fear God can be trusted to justly exercise authority over others.

Lev 19:14, 32 *You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.*  ... ³²*You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.* 

Lev 25:17, 36, 43 *You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the LORD your God.*  ... ³⁶*Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you.*  ... ⁴³*You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God.* 

Note that vv. 36, 43 refer to fellow Israelites who had become poor and, in the latter case, had sold themselves as slaves.

2Sam 23:3-4 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: *When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ⁴he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain^j that makes grass to sprout from the earth.* 

^j Hebrew *from rain*

A righteous ruler who rules over others in the fear of God brings great blessing to those subject to him.

1Ki 18:3-4 And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (*Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, ⁴and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.*) 

2Chr 19:7-9 Now then, *let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.* ⁸Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, *to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases.* They had their seat at Jerusalem. ⁹*And he charged them: "Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: ...* 

In v. 7 Jehoshaphat urges his judges to fear the LORD so that they will be compelled to judge carefully and without any injustice. Most likely this thought is also behind his exhortation in v. 9.

Neh 5:15 The former governors who were before me *laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration^k forty shekels^l of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.* 

^k Compare Vulgate; Hebrew *took from them with food and wine afterward*

^l A shekel was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

Neh 7:2 *I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.* 

Nehemiah put Hananiah in charge over Jerusalem because of his fear of God, which would ensure that he governed justly.

Job 31:16-23 *If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, ¹⁷or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it ¹⁸(for from my youth the fatherless^m grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother's womb I guided the widowⁿ), ¹⁹if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering, ²⁰if his body has not blessed me,^o and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, ²¹if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, ²²then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket. ²³For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty.* 

^m Hebrew *he*



ⁿ Hebrew *her*

^o Hebrew *if his loins have not blessed me*

Eph 5:20-21 ... giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹*submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Such “reverence for Christ” is akin to “fear of Christ” (NASB).

Col 3:22 *Slaves,^p obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,^q not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.*

^p Or *Servants*; Greek *Bondservants*

^q Or *your masters according to the flesh*

Titus 2:3 *Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ...*

Presumably the instruction to “be reverent in behavior” involves reverence towards God. It fosters avoidance of such things as slandering others.

Deut 25:18 ... *how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God.*

Ill treatment of others reflects a lack of fear of God (cf. **Mal 3:5** ↓).

Mal 3:5 Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, *against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me*, says the LORD of hosts.

This refers to the Messiah coming to judge.

✦ **Fearing Jesus Christ leads us to try to persuade others to respond to him:**

2Cor 5:11 *Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.* But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

Not fearing God is linked with ungodliness – and the consequences

See also:

- **Deut 25:18** ↑; **Mal 3:5** ↑

Ps 36:1 *Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart;^r there is no fear of God before his eyes.*

^r Some Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, Jerome (compare Septuagint); most Hebrew manuscripts *in my heart*

Jer 3:8 She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet *her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.*

Having no fear of God, Judah was unfaithful to him.

Deut 28:58-59 *If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, ⁵⁹then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting.*

This gives some of the curses for not obeying God’s law – and so not fearing him (v. 58) – under the first covenant.

Ps 55:19 *God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, Selah because they do not change and do not fear God.*

Prov 1:29-31 *Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, ³⁰would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, ³¹therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.*

This speaks of spurning godly wisdom along with not fearing God (vv. 29-30), and the inherent consequences (v. 31).

Ecc 8:13 *But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.*

Isa 5:12-13 They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but *they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands.* ¹³*Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge;^s their honored men go hungry,^t and their multitude is parched with thirst.*

^s Or *without their knowledge*

^t Or *die of hunger*

Lack of regard and respect for God’s deeds (v. 12) – essentially a lack of fear or reverence of God himself – produced a “lack of understanding” (v. 13) of God and his ways, with the consequences (v. 13).

Jer 2:19 *Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts.*



Jer 44:10-11 They have not humbled themselves even to this day, nor have they feared, nor walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your fathers. ¹¹“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah. 

Hos 10:1-3 Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, *the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars.* ²*Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The LORD^u will break down their altars and destroy their pillars.* ³*For now they will say: “We have no king, for we do not fear the LORD; and a king—what could he do for us?”* 

^u Hebrew *He*

This seems to be foretelling the situation in Israel following the Assyrian invasion – through which God would destroy the various elements of their false and pagan worship (v. 2). Israel would be leaderless and without hope, because of their unfaithfulness, not fearing the LORD (v. 3).

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) The Importance of Fearing God (II): Blessings

Subsections

- God delivers and protects those who fear him
- Fear of God leads to life . . .
- . . . along with physical and material blessings
- Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge
- Further present-day blessings of fearing God
- Future blessings for those who fear God

God delivers and protects those who fear him

See also:

- [Prov 19:23](#) ; [Mal 2:5](#) 

2Ki 17:39 ... but you shall *fear the LORD your God, and he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.* 

Ps 33:18-19 Behold, *the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,* ¹⁹*that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.* 

Ps 34:7 *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.* 

Some think the term “angel of the LORD” may be an indirect reference to the LORD – as elsewhere it appears to be identified with him – or possibly even denotes the preincarnate Jesus Christ. It is at least speaking of an angel of some significance, with a very close association with God.

Ps 85:9 *Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.* 

Ps 145:19 He fulfills the desire of *those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.* 

Note that particularly in view of the latter part of the verse, “desires” may primarily be speaking of “needs” (GNT, NIRV).

Ps 31:19-20 *Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!* ²⁰*In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.* 

Ps 60:4 *You have set up a banner for those who fear you, that they may flee to it from the bow.*^v Selah 

^v Or *that it may be displayed because of truth*

The meaning of this is not altogether clear, but a number of commentators take it to be a reference to God providing a rallying point or place of defense against enemies.

Ps 115:11 *You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.* 

Prov 14:26 *In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.* 

Isa 8:13-14 But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. *Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* ¹⁴*And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* 

Verse 14 appears to speak of God being a sanctuary for those who fear him in contrast to the unfaithful houses of Israel (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NLT).



Isa 33:6 ... and *he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion's^w treasure.*

^w Hebrew *his*

This suggests that the fear of God brings the aforementioned blessings (cf. NIV, NLT).

Fear of God leads to life . . .

See also:

- **Deut 6:24** ; **Prov 22:4**

The usages of “life” in this subsection appear to have in view either life as opposed to premature death (cf. **Prov 14:27** ; **Ecc 8:13**) – even longevity (cf. **Prov 10:27**) – or a fullness of life. Possibly some have both in view.

Prov 19:23 *The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.*

Prov 10:27 *The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.*

Prov 14:27 *The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.*

Mal 2:5 *My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name.*

This appears to be referring to the covenant made with the priest Phinehas (cf. Num 25:10-13). Phinehas feared God and God gave him life and peace.

Ecc 8:13 *But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.*

. . . along with physical and material blessings

The physical and material blessings spoken of here reflect those of the first covenant. As such, mostly they have a limited application under the second covenant.

Deut 6:24 And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, *to fear the LORD our God, for our good always*, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day.

Ps 25:12a, 13 *Who is the man who fears the LORD?* ... ¹³*His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land.*

The phrase “shall inherit the land” (v. 13) firstly refers to Canaan, the Promised Land. But arguably the verse has a more far-reaching application – to all believers and all the earth (cf. Matt 5:5).

Ps 34:9 Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for *those who fear him have no lack!*

Probably a lack of material needs is in view here, although this certainly has a spiritual application.

Ps 111:5 *He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.*

Ps 112:1-3 ^x*Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! ²His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. ³Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.*

^x This psalm is an acrostic poem, each line beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet

Here “mighty” (v. 2) refers to being “successful” (NLT) or “powerful” (GNT, NCV; cf. CEV).

Ps 128:1-4 *Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! ²You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. ³Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. ⁴Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.*

Prov 3:7-8 Be not wise in your own eyes; *fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. ⁸It will be healing to your flesh^y and refreshment^z to your bones.*

^y Hebrew *navel*

^z Or *medicine*

Prov 22:4 *The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.*^a

^a Or *The reward for humility is the fear of the LORD, riches and honor and life*

Ex 1:21 *And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.*

In fear of God, the Israelite midwives did not carry out the Egyptian king's order to kill the Hebrew baby boys – and so God blessed them accordingly.

✦ **It is better to have a little with the fear of God, than great wealth with trouble:**

Prov 15:16 *Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.*



Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge

Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom as it moves one to base one's thinking and life on God and his teachings – which are the source of true, godly wisdom.

Ps 111:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!*

Prov 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*

Prov 1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Prov 15:33 *The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.*

Prov 31:26, 30 *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ...³⁰Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

A woman who fears the LORD (v. 30) speaks with wisdom (v. 26).

Isa 33:6 ...and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, *wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion's^b treasure.*

^b Hebrew *his*

As noted earlier, this suggests that the fear of God brings the aforementioned blessings.

Job 28:28 And he said to man, '*Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.*'

Prov 2:5-6 ... then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶*For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; ...*

Note that the preceding verses speak of obeying godly instruction (cf. v. 1) and seeking wisdom (cf. vv. 2-4) as leading to this fear and knowledge of God (v. 5). These two verses here in turn point to the fear of God as being vital to gaining God's "wisdom, ...knowledge and understanding" (v. 6).

Mic 6:9 The voice of the LORD cries to the city— and *it is sound wisdom to fear your name: "Hear of the rod and of him who appointed it!"*^c

^c The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

Ps 2:10-11 Now therefore, O kings, *be wise*; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹*Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*

This associates serving God in fear (v. 11) with being wise (v. 10).

✦ **Spurning godly knowledge is linked with not fearing God:**

Prov 1:29 Because *they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, ...*

Further present-day blessings of fearing God

Acts 10:34-35 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that *God shows no partiality,*³⁵*but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.*

Ps 147:11 ... but *the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.*

Ps 31:19 *Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!*

Ps 103:11, 13-14, 17-18 For *as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;* ... ¹³*As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.* ¹⁴*For he knows our frame;*^d *he remembers that we are dust.* ... ¹⁷*But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children,* ¹⁸*to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.*

^d Or *knows how we are formed*

Luke 1:50 And *his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.*

Ps 25:12, 14 *Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.* ... ¹⁴*The friendship^e of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.*

^e Or *The secret counsel*

The second half of v. 14 appears to say that God tells such a person about his covenant with his people. But the thrust of it may well be either that God: "affirms his covenant with them" (GNT); makes a covenant with them (cf. CEV); or draws them into his covenant with his people.



Ps 61:5 For you, O God, have heard my vows; *you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.*

Commentators differ as to what “heritage” may refer. Quite possibly it refers primarily to the covenant blessings. It can also be applied to all that God promises to his people.

Ps 145:19 *He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.*

Jer 32:39-40 I will give them one heart and one way, *that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.* ⁴⁰I will make with them an everlasting covenant, *that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.*

As noted earlier, this speaks primarily of Israel in the end times, with God spiritual renewing Israel and greatly blessing it.

Prov 28:14 *Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*

Ps 115:13 *... he will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great.*

Eccl 7:16-18 Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? ¹⁷Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? ¹⁸It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, *for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.*

The phrase “overly righteous” (v. 16) is usually understood to denote legalism or self-righteousness. The phrase “too wise” (v. 16) may be referring to considering oneself wise, or a preoccupation with wisdom itself with an over reliance on it rather than on God. Presumably the exhortation to “not be overly wicked” (v. 17) is not implying that it is alright to be somewhat wicked; more likely it means that we should not capitulate to sin. The one who fears God will avoid all such extremes (v. 18).

Future blessings for those who fear God

See also:

- [Ps 103:17](#) ; [Luke 1:50](#)

Prov 23:17-18 Let not your heart envy sinners, but *continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.* ¹⁸*Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.*

Such “a future” and “hope” would involve experiencing God’s goodness.

Eccl 8:12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet *I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him.*

Mal 3:16-17 Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and *a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.* ¹⁷*“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.*

This has the day of God’s final judgment in view (cf. [Mal 4:2-3](#) ; [Rev 1:18](#)).

Mal 4:2-3 *But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.* ³*And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.*

The setting is the day of the Lord – “the day when I do these things” (v. 3; cf. v. 1). As such it is applicable to the day of Jesus Christ’s return and/or God’s final judgment. In v. 2a righteousness is likened to the sun, bringing “healing like the sun’s rays” (GNT, cf. CEV, NCV). The thought is that those who fear God will experience the manifestation of his righteousness (cf. [Ps 103:17](#)), bringing restoration.

Rev 11:18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, and *the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants,^f the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.*

^f Greek *bondservants*

The day of God’s final judgment is in view, when his people who fear him will be rewarded.

Heb 4:1 Therefore, while *the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*

This speaks of the fear of God as being vital to securing entry into God’s eternal rest.

† One who fears the LORD can laugh at the days to come:

Prov 31:25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, and *she laughs at the time to come.*

This speaks of “an excellent wife” (v. 10), “who fears the LORD” (v. 30).



Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Obeying God

See also:

- a) *The Need to Obey God*, p. 1062

The concept of obeying God permeates the whole Bible – the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. It is fundamental to a functional and healthy relationship with God. A related concept is that of following Jesus Christ, which likewise is relevant to all aspects of the Christian's life.

Note the section cross-referenced above, which has been placed in 21. *Being Right with God*, in the second half of the chapter which is entitled *Staying Right with God*. It is obviously also very pertinent to this topic, *Obeying God*.

a) Obey God

Subsections

- Keep God's commands
- Do all that God commands
- Obey God always – forever
- Do God's will . . .
- . . . Do what pleases God
- Obey Jesus Christ
- We should obey God because he is our God . . .
- . . . It is no good expressing commitment to God and Jesus Christ without obeying them
- We should obey God and Jesus Christ because of the great things they have done for us
- Note: Implications of not obeying God

Keep God's commands

See also:

- *Do what you learn of God's and Jesus Christ's word . . .*, p. 1177
- . . . *Do not just listen to God's word*, p. 1177

Deut 4:13 And he declared to you his covenant, which *he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments*,^a and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. 

^a Hebrew words

Deut 6:17 You shall *diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you.* 

Deut 13:4 You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and *keep his commandments and obey his voice*, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. 

Eccl 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. *Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*^b 

^b Or *the duty of all mankind*

1Jn 3:21-22 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and whatever we ask we receive from him, because *we keep his commandments* and do what pleases him. 

Ps 119:57, 59, 101 The LORD is my portion; *I promise to keep your words.*  ... ⁵⁹*When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies;*  ... ¹⁰¹*I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.* 

In v. 59, "testimonies" (cf. **vv. 129, 167-168 ↓**) denotes God's written laws.

2Sam 22:22 For *I have kept the ways of the LORD* and have not wickedly departed from my God. 

To keep "the ways of the LORD" is to live the way God wants one to (cf. Nlrv) – essentially to obey God's commands.

Num 9:23 *At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out. They kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by Moses.* 

1Ki 12:24 "Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up or fight against your relatives the people of Israel. Every man return to his home, for this thing is from me." *So they listened to the word of the LORD and went home again, according to the word of the LORD.* 

↳ Reasons to keep God's commands:

Ps 119:129, 167-168 *Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.*  ... ¹⁶⁷*My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly.* ¹⁶⁸*I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you.* 

The psalmist kept God's commands because: they are wonderful (v. 129); he loved them (v. 167); and he knew that God was aware of all he did (v. 168).



Do all that God commands

Note that most of the following verses speak of obeying all of the Mosaic Law, which was what God's covenant with Israel was based on. Under the new covenant instituted by Jesus Christ, believers are still to obey all the law's commands that remain pertinent under the new covenant. These commands are basically those pertaining to believers' spiritual relationship with God and their relationships with other people. The elements of the law that have been annulled by what Jesus Christ has accomplished and the new covenant include commands governing: the role of the priests; ritual worship; sacrifices for sin; and ceremonial cleanness.

Ex 24:3, 7 Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules.^c And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." ...⁷Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

^c Or all the just decrees

Lev 19:37 And you shall observe all my statutes and all my rules, and do them: I am the LORD.

Josh 1:7-8 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success^d wherever you go. ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

^d Or may act wisely

"Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left" (cf. 23:6) is an exhortation to not diverge from God's instructions in any way – to follow them in every detail.

Deut 8:1 The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers.

Deut 15:5 ... if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today.

Deut 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

The "secret things" primarily refers to the "words of this law", that he has revealed (cf. GNT, CEV).

2Ki 17:13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets."

2Ki 21:8 And I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander anymore out of the land that I gave to their fathers, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the Law that my servant Moses commanded them.

Gen 6:22 Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Josh 11:15 Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

2Sam 22:23 For all his rules were before me, and from his statutes I did not turn aside.

Luke 17:10 So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants;^e we have only done what was our duty.'

^e Greek bondservants

✦ The importance of obeying even the least of God's commands:

Matt 5:19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Obey God always – forever

Deut 11:1 You shall therefore love the LORD your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always.

2Ki 17:37a And the statutes and the rules and the law and the commandment that he wrote for you, you shall always be careful to do.



1Chr 28:7 I will establish his kingdom forever if *he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules, as he is today.* 

Ps 119:44, 112 *I will keep your law continually, forever and ever,*  ... ¹¹²*I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.*^f 

^f Or *statutes; the reward is eternal*

Deut 12:1 *These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth.* 

1Ki 15:5 ... because David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and *did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.* 

Job 23:11-12 *My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and have not turned aside. ¹²I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.* 

Acts 23:1 And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, *I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.*” 

Phil 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as *you have always obeyed,* so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ... 

Here and in 1 Timothy 6:13-14 below Paul speaks of obedience to his commands, which ultimately were commands of God passed on by Paul.

1Tim 6:13-14 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before^g Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴*to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...* 

^g Or *in the time of*

Mic 4:5 For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but *we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.* 

To “walk in the name of the LORD” involves following God (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT) and his will, confessing his name, and trusting in him.

✦ **Do not delay to obey God’s commands:**

Ps 119:60 *I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.* 

Do God’s will . . .

See also:

- [Heb 13:20-21](#) ↓
- [Do the work assigned to you . . .](#), p. 1409
- [. . . Carry out God’s will](#), p. 1410

Ezra 10:11a Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and *do his will.* 

Ps 40:8 *I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.* 

Acts 13:22 And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, *‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’* 

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may *stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.* 

In the last clause, Paul appears to be speaking of conformity or obedience to God’s will (cf. CEV, GNT) and/or being fully assured of what it involves (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT, NRSV).

1Pet 4:1-2 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,^h arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ²so as to *live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions* but for the will of God. 

^h Some manuscripts add *for us; some for you*

1Thes 4:3 For *this is the will of God, your sanctification:*ⁱ *that you abstain from sexual immorality; ...* 

ⁱ Or *your holiness*

The implication is that we are to act in accordance with God’s will (cf. 1Thes 5:16-18 ↓).

1Thes 5:16-18 *Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* 



... Do what pleases God

1Thes 4:1 Finally, then, brothers,^j we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to *please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.* 

^j Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 10, 13

1Jn 3:21-22 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and *do what pleases him.* 

John 8:29 And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I *always do the things that are pleasing to him.* 

Note that earlier at Jesus' baptism, God had testified that Jesus had pleased him – '... and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."' (Matt 3:17)

1Tim 5:4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for *this is pleasing in the sight of God.* 

Heb 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹*equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us^k that which is pleasing in his sight,* through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. 

^k Some manuscripts *you*

An implication of this prayer is that we should do God's will and be or do what is pleasing to him.

Isa 56:4-5 For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who *choose the things that please me* and hold fast my covenant, ⁵I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 

To "choose the things that please me" is essentially to "choose to do what pleases me" (NirV®, NLT; cf. GNT).

Deut 6:18 And *you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD,* that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers ... 

✦ We should live for God:

1Cor 8:6 ... yet for us there is one *God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist,* and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. 

Obey Jesus Christ

Matt 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^l the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to *observe all that I have commanded you.* And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. 

^l Or *into*

John 15:10 If you *keep my commandments,* you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 

Eph 6:5 Slaves,^m *obey your earthly mastersⁿ with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ...* 

^m Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

ⁿ Or *your masters according to the flesh*

1Pet 1:2 ...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, *for obedience to Jesus Christ* and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 

Isa 50:10a Who among you fears the LORD and *obeys the voice of his servant?* 

This speaks of the messianic servant – Jesus Christ – whom we should obey.

Acts 26:19 Therefore, O King Agrippa, *I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ...* 

Paul is referring to his vision of Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus in which Christ appointed him as a witness to Jews and Gentiles (cf. vv. 15-18).

2Cor 10:5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and *take every thought captive to obey Christ, ...* 

This reflects that we should bring "every thought" of our own into obedience to Christ.

John 2:5-9 His mother said to the servants, "*Do whatever he tells you.*"⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.⁷ *Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water."*



And they filled them up to the brim.⁸ And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ...

^o Greek *two or three measures (metrētas)*; a *metrētēs* was about 10 gallons or 35 liters

The servants at the wedding banquet presumably were not obeying as followers of Jesus. Nevertheless their prompt obedience on this occasion provides a good example of obedience to him.

Rev 2:26 The one who conquers and *who keeps my works until the end*, to him I will give authority over the nations, ...



The phrase "keeps my works" likely refers to doing what Jesus Christ wants them to do.

✦ Submit to Christ:

Eph 5:22-24 Wives, *submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*.²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.²⁴ Now as *the church submits to Christ*, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

We should obey God because he is our God . . .

See also:

- . . . *If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God*, p. 333
- *He is our God, who has done great things for us* [reasons to serve God], p. 1396

Ezek 20:19 *I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules, ...*

Ex 20:1-2 And God spoke all these words, saying, ²*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

God's statement in v. 2 introduces the Ten Commandments; the Israelites were to obey the LORD'S commandments as he was their God, who had redeemed them.

Deut 26:17 *You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice.*

Lev 18:4 *You shall follow my rules^p and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God.*

^p Or *my just decrees*; also verse 5

1Ki 18:21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? *If the LORD is God, follow him*; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word.

Ps 40:8 *I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*

Ps 44:4 *You are my King, O God*; ordain salvation for Jacob!

In conjunction with being our God, God is also our king. This of course further underlines the need to obey him. Other examples of God being spoken of as both God and king are: "Your procession is seen, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary—" (68:24); and "Yet God my King is from of old ..." (74:12a).

. . . It is no good expressing commitment to God and Jesus Christ without obeying them

See also:

- *d) Righteousness and Making Offerings*, p. 1379

1Sam 15:22-23 And Samuel said, "*Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.*"²³ For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. *Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.*

Saul had spoken of sacrificing to God (cf. v. 21), but had earlier not carried out God's word (cf. vv. 1-11). Samuel pointed out that such expressions of supposed devotion or commitment were secondary to obedience to God's word – in effect pointless without it.

Ps 50:16-17 But *to the wicked God says: "What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you.*

Ezek 33:31 And they come to you as people come, and *they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain.*



Many of the people would willingly listen to Ezekiel's messages from God as being God's people. But doing this was pointless as they did not follow God's ways.

Matt 7:21-23 *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'* 

Note that if such people as referred to in v. 22 perform deeds that are in fact supernatural, the deeds may be of satanic origin. Alternatively these people may simply be self-deceived, fooling themselves into thinking they can or have performed such acts. Whatever the case, the bottom line is: they do not do God's will.

Luke 6:46 *Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?* 

Matt 15:3-9 He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' ⁵But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God," ⁶he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word^r of God. ⁷You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" 

^q Or is an offering

^r Some manuscripts law

By what they said, the Jewish leaders expressed commitment to God (v. 8a). But in practice they disobeyed God's word, giving priority to their own traditions (v. 6). Such action is hypocritical and pointless.

1Cor 7:19 *For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.* 

Being circumcised is the sign of commitment to the first covenant, including God's commands therein. The implication is that such an expression of commitment is by itself pointless, for it is the actual keeping of God's commands that counts.

Titus 1:16 *They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.* 

✦ **Obey God because of how awesome he is:**

Deut 4:10-14 ... how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.' ¹¹And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. ¹²Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. ¹³And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments,^s and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. ¹⁴And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess. 

^s Hebrew words

Moses here exhorts the people to remember God's awesome revelation of himself (v. 11), with his subsequent declaration of his commands for them to obey (v. 13). Moses did this largely to motivate the people to be committed to obeying God's commands.

We should obey God and Jesus Christ because of the great things they have done for us

See also:

- *He is our God, who has done great things for us* [reasons to serve God], p. 1396
- *Parents should teach their children about God and his deeds, inspiring them to obey God's laws . . .*, p. 1708
- *We should be holy and pleasing to God because of the things he has done for us*, p. 1873

A number of the following passages speak of God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and his later wonderful blessings for the Israelites as reasons why they should obey God. What is said of Israel is applicable to God's people today. We should likewise keep God's commands because of what God has done for us, particularly in delivering us from sin through Jesus Christ and granting us the associated blessings. We should obey in gratitude to God and also because enjoying such blessings depends on our continued obedience.

Lev 19:36-37 You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin:^t *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. ³⁷And you shall observe all my statutes and all my rules, and do them: I am the LORD.* 



^t An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters; a *hin* was about 4 quarts or 3.5 liters

This and Deuteronomy 6:20-24 immediately below do not explicitly say that Israel should obey God because of what God had done for them. But the references to obeying God immediately following statements of what God had done for them, clearly imply this.

Deut 6:20-24 *When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?' ²¹then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²²And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. ²³And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. ²⁴And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day.* ☞

Ps 78:4-7 *We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. ⁵He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; ...* ☞

This speaks of parents telling their children of God's deeds and power (v. 4) and subsequently of his commands (vv. 5-6). Verse 7 then concludes that in light of God's wonderful deeds for them – and his awesome power – the children should set their hope on God and obey his commands.

Ps 105:43-45 *So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. ⁴⁴And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, ⁴⁵that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD!* ☞

We should obey God because of all that he has done for us and moreover because our obedience is in fact one of the chief objectives of all his deeds for us (v. 45a).

Ps 25:4-5 *Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.* ☞

David was intent on obeying or living according to God's ways, because God was his Savior. To act otherwise would be

to act against the one who helped him, his Savior – putting such help at risk.

Jer 3:19b *And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me.* ☞

The rebellious Israelites should have obeyed God as he was their "Father", quite possibly a reference to him bringing them into being as a nation. Likewise believers should obey God because he is their spiritual Father who has given them spiritual birth.

Matt 20:30, 34 *And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord,^u have mercy on us, Son of David!" ☞ ... ³⁴And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.* ☞

^u Some manuscripts omit *Lord*

2Cor 5:14-15 *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.* ☞

Christ's love of us shown in dying for us should in effect control us, compelling us to live for him. Note that the phrase "therefore all have died" (v. 14) appears to refer primarily to his followers dying to their old lives (cf. NLT), in which sin held sway.

‡ **Obey God because of his discipline of his people, along with his care and blessings:**

Deut 11:1-2, 5-9 *You shall therefore love the LORD your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always. ²And consider today (since I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen it), consider the discipline^v of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm, ☞ ... ⁵and what he did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place, ⁶and what he did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel. ⁷For your eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD that he did. ⁸"You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess, ⁹and that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their offspring, a land flowing with milk and honey.* ☞

^v Or *instruction*



We should obey God because of all the great things he does, not only in caring for his people but also in disciplining his people (vv. 2-7). Additionally, we should obey God so as to experience and continue in his blessings (vv. 8-9), as spoken of in the above passages. Note that Dathan and Abiram (v. 6) were punished for their rebellion against God and Moses (cf. Num 16:1-35).

Note: Implications of not obeying God

See also:

- *Not obeying God ultimately ends in eternal destruction*, p. 1066
- *Note: Ill consequences of not obeying God*, p. 1187
- *... God does not listen to those who do evil rather than good*, p. 1230

Num 14:21-23 But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, ²²*none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, ²³shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers.* And none of those who despised me shall see it.

In not obeying God we in a sense test him (v. 22; cf. **Ps 78:40-41, 56 ↓**), testing his patience and response. This passage also shows a further implication of not obeying God, illustrating that by persisting in disobeying God we forfeit the blessings he has promised us (v. 23).

2Ki 18:11-12 *The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, ¹²because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened nor obeyed.*

This illustrates that disobeying God's word has consequences, even punishment from God.

Ps 78:40-41, 56 *How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert! ⁴¹They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel. ... ⁵⁶Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep his testimonies, ...*

Prov 28:9 *If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.*

Rom 2:23-24 *You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."*

When God's people disobey him they dishonor him, even causing his name to be vilified by non-believers.

1Thes 4:7-8 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸*Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.*

In v. 8 Paul is saying that disregarding his instructions (cf. vv. 3-6) that are in accordance with God's call or command to live a holy life (v. 7) amounts to disregarding God. This is applicable to disregarding (and thus not obeying) any of God's commands.

Titus 1:16 *They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.*

One can infer from this that those who are disobedient do not know God (cf. **1Jn 1:6 ↓**; **1Jn 2:4 ↓**), their actions effectively denying God and any personal knowledge of him.

1Jn 1:6 *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*

No one who lives contrary to God's commands can have fellowship with him. To claim otherwise would be a lie (cf. **1Jn 2:4 ↓**).

1Jn 2:4 *Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ...*

‡ **Satan works in those who disobey God:**

Eph 2:1-2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—*

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Learn God's Commands – and All His Word

See also:

- *Do what you learn of God's and Jesus Christ's word . . .*, p. 1177
- *. . . Do not just listen to God's word*, p. 1177
- *b) Remember God and His Word*, p. 1787

In order to obey God we need to learn his commands. Moreover, we should learn all aspects of God's word.

Subsections

- Learn God's commands
- Ask God to teach you his ways and commands
- Persistently read and study God's commands – and all of God's word
- Listen carefully and pay attention to God's word and commands
- Listen carefully to Jesus' teaching
- Pay attention to all Christian teaching
- Receive and believe God's word
- Note: Not listening to God and his word has ill consequences

Learn God's commands

See also:

- *Remember God's word and commands*, p. 1789

Deut 5:1 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. 

Ps 119:7 I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.^w 

^w Or your just and righteous decrees; also verses 62, 106, 160, 164

Ps 119:71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. 

Matt 9:13 Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. 

In learning what God's commands say, ensure you also learn what they mean.

Rom 7:1 Or do you not know, brothers^x—for I am speaking to those who *know the law*—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? 

^x Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 4

We can construe from this that just as those who Paul is addressing here knew the law, we should likewise know it and so ensure that we learn it.

1Chr 28:8 Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, observe and *seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God*, that you may possess this good land and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever. 

We need to "seek out" or find out all God's commands, so as "to be familiar with" (AMP) them.

↳ Learn from Jesus Christ and his ways:

Matt 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 

Ask God to teach you his ways and commands

See also:

- *Ask God to help you follow his ways and commands*, p. 1178

Ps 25:4-5 Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. 

Ps 27:11 Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. 

Ps 86:11 Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. 

Ps 119:26-27, 73, 125 When I told of my ways, you answered me; *teach me your statutes!* ²⁷*Make me understand the way of your precepts*, and I will meditate on your wondrous works.  ... ⁷³Your hands have made and fashioned me; *give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.*  ... ¹²⁵I am your servant; *give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies!* 

In conjunction with asking God to teach him God's commands, the psalmist asks God to help him understand God's commands.



‡ Ask God to open your eyes to spiritual truths in his law:

Ps 119:18 *Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.* 

Persistently read and study God's commands – and all of God's word

See also:

- *Persistently meditate on God's word and commands . . .*, p. 1790
- *. . . Keep God's word and commands in your heart and thoughts*, p. 1790

Deut 17:18-20 And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, *he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by^y the Levitical priests.* ¹⁹*And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life,* that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ²⁰that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel. 

^y Hebrew *from before*

Neh 9:3 And they stood up in their place and *read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day;* for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God. 

Ezra 7:10 For *Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD,* and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. 

Neh 8:13 On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to *study the words of the Law.* 

John 5:39 You *search the Scriptures* because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ... 

Like the Jewish leaders we should “search *and investigate and pore over the Scriptures diligently*” (AMP) – but with a mind open to God's teachings.

Acts 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, *examining the Scriptures daily* to see if these things were so. 

Just as the Bereans examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true, so we ought to examine the Scriptures every day to learn more of God's truth.

Acts 18:24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, *competent in the Scriptures.* 

Having “a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures” (GNT, NIV), Apollos is a good example of one who would have persistently read and studied all of God's word.

James 1:25 But the one who *looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres,* being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. 

Here “perseveres” appears to refer or be inclusive of perseverance in looking into the Scriptures (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT), although James may possibly have in view perseverance in obeying it (cf. NASB).

‡ Long for God's word:

1Pet 2:2 Like newborn infants, *long for the pure spiritual milk,* that by it you may grow up into salvation— 

Longing for “the pure milk of the word” (NKJV) compliments persistence in reading and studying God's word.

Listen carefully and pay attention to God's word and commands

See also:

- *Do what you learn of God's and Jesus Christ's word . . .*, p. 1177
- *. . . Do not just listen to God's word*, p. 1177

Ex 15:26 ... saying, “If you will *diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments* and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer.” 

Ex 23:13, 20-21 *Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips.*  ... ²⁰Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. ²¹*Pay careful attention to him and obey*



his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. 

1Sam 3:10 And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And *Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.”* 

1Ki 11:38 And if you will *listen to all that I command you*, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. 

Neh 8:3 And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. *And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.* 

Isa 48:18a *Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments!* 

Isa 50:4-5 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; *he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.* ⁵*The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.* 

This description of the messianic servant portrays him as listening carefully and being responsive to God’s word – an example all should follow.

Isa 51:4 *Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law^z will go out from me*, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples. 

^z Or *for teaching*; also verse 7

Isa 55:3 *Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live*; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. 

Jer 11:4b *Listen to my voice*, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, ... 

Jer 13:15 *Hear and give ear*; be not proud, for the LORD has spoken. 

Jer 23:18 For *who among them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?* 

Ezek 2:8 “But you, son of man, *hear what I say to you*. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.” 

Ezek 44:5a And the LORD said to me, “Son of man, *mark well, see with your eyes, and hear with your ears all that I shall tell you concerning all the statutes of the temple of the LORD and all its laws.* 

Hos 5:1 *Hear this, O priests! Pay attention, O house of Israel! Give ear, O house of the king!* For the judgment is for you; for you have been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread upon Tabor. 

John 8:47a *Whoever is of God hears the words of God.* 

† **Everyone who listens to God and learns from him is drawn to Jesus Christ:**

John 6:45 It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ *Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—* 

Listen carefully to Jesus’ teaching

Matt 17:5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son,^a with whom I am well pleased; *listen to him.*” 

^a Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

Mark 4:3, 9, 24 “*Listen!* A sower went out to sow.  ...⁹And he said, “*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*”  ...²⁴And he said to them, “*Pay attention to what you hear*: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. 

Mark 7:14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, “*Hear me, all of you, and understand*: ... 

Note that the parallel verse in Matthew 15:10 similarly but more concisely says, “Hear and understand.”

Luke 8:18 *Take care then how you hear*, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away. 

Luke 10:39 And she had a sister called *Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching.* 

John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice*, and I know them, and they follow me. 



John 18:37 Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. *Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.*”

Acts 3:22 Moses said, “The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall *listen to him in whatever he tells you.*”

Rev 2:7 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

The first statement is a refrain used a total of seven times in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation (cf. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). It is indicative of the Holy Spirit, in conjunction with Jesus Christ, being the source of the teaching and exhortations given by Christ in these chapters to various churches.

✦ **Those who hear and understand Jesus’ teaching are blessed:**

Matt 13:16 *But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.*

Those who hear and understand Jesus’ teaching are blessed.

Pay attention to all Christian teaching

See also:

- *Hold to Christian teaching, abiding in it . . .*, p. 1794
- *. . . Continue to live by Christian teaching*, p. 1795

Prov 2:1-2 My son, if you *receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you,* ²*making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding;* ...

Often in Proverbs the teaching is presented as that of a wise father instructing his son (cf. **Prov 4:1, 20 ↓**; **Prov 5:1 ↓**; **Prov 8:32 ↓**). Just as the son is exhorted to do, we should listen and pay attention to what is taught.

Prov 4:1, 20 *Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive,* that you may gain^b insight, ... ²⁰*My son, be attentive to my words;* incline your ear to my sayings.

^b Hebrew know

Prov 5:1 *My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding,* ...

Prov 8:32-34 And now, O sons, *listen to me:* blessed are those who keep my ways. ³³*Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.* ³⁴*Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.*

Here the teacher speaks as Wisdom personified.

Isa 42:23 *Who among you will give ear to this, will attend and listen for the time to come?*

Here the prophet Isaiah himself is speaking.

Acts 2:14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, *let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.*”

Acts 10:33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God *to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.*

Cornelius is speaking of hearing all that Peter had been commanded to say by the Lord.

Jude 1:17 But you must *remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Heb 2:1 Therefore *we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard,* lest we drift away from it.

Heb 13:22 I appeal to you, brothers,^c *bear with my word of exhortation,* for I have written to you briefly.

^c Or *brothers and sisters*

The writer asks his audience to “listen patiently” (AMP, GNT, NCV) to what he has to say.

2Pet 1:19 And *we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,* ...

The latter part of the verse is understood to be speaking of the coming of the day of the return of Jesus Christ – “the morning star”.

Luke 2:46 After three days they found him [Jesus] in the temple, *sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.*

✦ **Gain and hold to knowledge of the truth:**

2Pet 1:5, 12 For this very reason, *make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,^d and virtue with knowledge,* ... ¹²Therefore I intend always to remind you



of these qualities, though you know them and are *established in the truth that you have*. 📖

^d Or *excellence*; twice in this verse

Verse 5 indicates that believers are to make every effort to increase their “knowledge” of Christian truth. Verse 12 indicates that believers should hold firmly to Christian truth, becoming entrenched in it.

Receive and believe God’s word

See also:

- *Have faith that God will fulfill what he promises*, p. 1091

We must receive (i.e. accept) and believe God and Jesus Christ’s word – both their commands and other truths of the faith.

Job 22:22 *Receive instruction from his mouth, and lay up his words in your heart.* 📖

Ps 119:66 *Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.* 📖

This appears to speak of believing in the validity of God’s commands – in their truth and wisdom – and accordingly trusting in them (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV).

Jer 9:20 *Hear, O women, the word of the LORD, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth; teach to your daughters a lament, and each to her neighbor a dirge.* 📖

Jer 15:16 *Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.* 📖

In saying that he “ate” God’s words, Jeremiah indicates that he accepted and absorbed them.

Ezek 3:10 *Moreover, he said to me, “Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears.”* 📖

Mark 4:20 *But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.* 📖

This refers to God’s word, primarily Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God. Accepting God’s word produces great spiritual results.

John 2:22 *When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.* 📖

John 5:46-47 *For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?* 📖

Jesus rebuked the Jews for their failure to comprehend and believe what Moses had written about him.

John 17:8 *For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.* 📖

Acts 24:14 *But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, ...* 📖

James 1:21 *Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.* 📖

✦ **Those who receive spiritual truth will be given more – in contrast to others:**

Matt 13:11-12 *And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹²For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”* 📖

Note: Not listening to God and his word has ill consequences

2Ki 18:11-12 *The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, ¹²because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened nor obeyed.* 📖

2Chr 36:15-16 *The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.* 📖

Neh 9:34, 37 *Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them. ... ³⁷And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over*



us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress. 📖

Isa 30:9-13 For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; ¹⁰who say to the seers, “Do not see,” and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, ¹¹leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.” ¹²Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, “Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, ¹³therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; ... 📖

Isa 42:20-22 He [Israel] sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear. ²¹The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious. ²²But this is a people plundered and looted; they are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become plunder with none to rescue, spoil with none to say, “Restore!” 📖

Presumably the people's circumstances (v. 22) were a result of their failure to pay attention and listen to God (v. 20).

Isa 65:12 I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter, because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my eyes and chose what I did not delight in. 📖

Jer 6:10, 17, 19 To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it. 📖 ... ¹⁷I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!’ But they said, ‘We will not pay attention.’ 📖 ... ¹⁹Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it. 📖

The trumpet (v. 17) refers to warning of war and approaching judgment (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Jer 26:4-6 You shall say to them, “Thus says the LORD: *If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you, ⁵and to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not listened, ⁶then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.*’ 📖

Heb 12:25 See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. 📖

We must ensure we do not “refuse to hear him” (GNT, cf. NCV).

Mark 4:24-25 And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. ²⁵For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” 📖

This appears to indicate that those who do not carefully consider Jesus' teaching and so gain spiritual understanding, even the little they have will be taken from them (cf. [Matt 13:11-12](#) ↑). However note that some scholars interpret v. 24b at least as referring to measures we use in our treatment of others (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Acts 3:22-23 Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. *You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.* ²³*And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.*’ 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) How to Obey God

See also:

- [Faith produces obedience to God](#), p. 1096
- [Love for God and Jesus Christ is shown by obeying them](#), p. 1141
- [Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him](#), p. 1154
- [II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy](#), p. 1854

The previous section largely looked at learning God's words and commands, which is necessary in order to know what God wants us to do in obeying him. This section discusses how, on learning God's commands, we should set about obeying him.

Note also the supplementary teachings in the above cross references, which indicate that obedience to God is produced by such things as love of God, fear of God and faith in God.



Subsections

- Do what you learn of God's and Jesus Christ's word . . .
- . . . Do not just listen to God's word
- Ask God to help you follow his ways and commands
- Submit yourself to God
- Obey God wholeheartedly
- Delight in God's commands
- Be careful to obey God
- Note: God's and Jesus Christ's commands are not too difficult or burdensome

Do what you learn of God's and Jesus Christ's word . . .

See also:

- Heb 5:13-14 ↴

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. 

Matt 7:24 Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 

Luke 8:21 But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who *hear the word of God and do it.*" 

Luke 11:28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who *hear the word of God and keep it!*" 

John 17:6 I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and *they have kept your word.* 

Rom 2:13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 

Rev 3:3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. 

Phil 4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—*practice these things*, and the God of peace will be with you. 

Rev 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those *who hear, and who keep what is written in it*, for the time is near. 

Matt 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 

This associates taking on the "yoke" of living according to Jesus' teaching (cf. NCV) with learning from him. True learning involves putting teaching into practice.

Deut 33:9b For they observed your word and kept your covenant. 

. . . Do not just listen to God's word

Matt 7:26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 

James 1:22-25 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. 

The comparison with a man looking at himself in the mirror is used to illustrate how pointless and foolish it is to simply listen to God's word without obeying it.

Ezek 33:30-32 As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, 'Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.' ³¹And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and *they hear what you say but they will not do it*; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain. ³²And behold, *you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays^e well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it.* 

^e Hebrew *like the singing of lustful songs with a beautiful voice and one who plays*

Ps 50:16-19 But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? ¹⁷For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. ¹⁸If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company



with adulterers. ¹⁹*You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit.* 📖

Further to listening to God's word or laws, the wicked may even recite them (v. 16), but this is pointless as in practice they discard them (v. 17), acting contrary to them (vv. 18-19).

Heb 5:13-14 ... for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴*But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.* 📖

In describing those still feeding on the basics of the faith as "unskilled" with the teaching about righteousness, the writer may be meaning that they are inexperienced and unskilled in applying such teaching based on God's word to what they do, implying that they merely listen to it. In contrast there are those who have trained their "senses and mental faculties" (AMP) – presumably through putting into practice such teaching – to distinguish good from evil, right from wrong.

‡ **As a whole, the Jews who had been given the Mosaic Law had not obeyed it:**

Acts 7:52-53 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³*you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.* 📖

Ask God to help you follow his ways and commands

See also:

- *Ask God for help to avoid sin . . .*, p. 1855
- *. . . For God and Jesus Christ are willing and able to help us withstand temptation*, p. 1855

Ps 25:5 *Lead me in your truth* and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. 📖

"Lead me in your truth" appears to be a request from David for God to guide him to live according to God's truth (cf. GNT).

Ps 27:11 Teach me your way, O LORD, and *lead me on a level path* because of my enemies. 📖

A "level path" probably means a path that is smooth, so as not to cause David to stumble into sin – a "right path" (CEV; cf. NCV, NLT). However, especially in view of David's reference to his "enemies", it could instead be meaning a "safe path" (GNT). (The same can be said of "level ground" below in 143:10.)

Ps 86:11 Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; *unite my heart to fear your name.* 📖

The second half of the verse is in effect a request by David for God to enable him to walk in God's ways, as reflected in the first half of the verse.

Ps 119:10, 33-36, 80 With my whole heart I seek you; *let me not wander from your commandments!* 📖 ... ³³*Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.*^f ³⁴*Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.* ³⁵*Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.* ³⁶*Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!* 📖 ... ⁸⁰*May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!* 📖

^f Or *keep it as my reward*

Ps 143:10 *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!* 📖

1Ki 8:57-58 The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, ⁵⁸*that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers.* 📖

‡ David's expressed desire for God to give Solomon wisdom to keep God's law:

1Chr 22:12 *Only, may the LORD grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD your God.* 📖

Submit yourself to God

To persistently obey God, we need to first submit to him.

James 4:7 *Submit yourselves therefore to God.* Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 📖

Eph 5:22-24 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as *Christ is the head of the church*, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as *the church submits to Christ*, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 📖

Heb 12:9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. *Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits* and live? 📖

Being "subject to" God – including to such things as his discipline (cf. vv. 3-11) – means that we submit to him.



2Chr 30:8 *Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you.* 

Job 22:21-22 *Agree with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. ²²Receive instruction from his mouth, and lay up his words in your heart.* 

Psa 81:11 *But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.* 

Matt 26:38-39, 42 Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch^g with me.”
³⁹And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”  ... ⁴²Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” 

^g Or *keep awake*; also verses 40, 41

Submitting to God involves submitting to his will – as Jesus does here, in order to obey and serve God. Such submission is further illustrated below by Mary (Luke 1:35, 38), and Laban and Bethuel (Gen 24:48-51). Other examples of submitting to and accepting God’s will can be found in: *Note: Accept God’s discipline for sin*, p. 1846; and *Accept hard times from God*, p. 1948. Also note Acts 21:14 – ‘And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done.”’

Luke 1:35, 38 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^h will be called holy—the Son of God.  ... ³⁸And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servantⁱ of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. 

^h Some manuscripts add *of you*

ⁱ Greek *bondservant*; also verse 48

Gen 24:48-51 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way^j to take the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son. ⁴⁹Now then, if you are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.” ⁵⁰Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The thing has come from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good. ⁵¹Behold, Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has spoken.” 

^j Or *faithfully*

Laban and Bethuel understood that what Abraham’s servant proposed was God’s will and so rightly felt that there was nothing they could say to query or qualify it (v. 50). Instead they submitted to it (v. 51).

✦ **The mind controlled by the sinful nature does not submit to God’s commands:**

Rom 8:7 *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.* 

Our minds need to be controlled by the Holy Spirit rather than the sinful nature (cf. vv. 1-9), so that we can submit to God and his commands.

Obey God wholeheartedly

See also:

- *Serve God with all your heart*, p. 1422

Deut 26:16 This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. *You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.* 

1Ki 8:23 ... and said, “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, ... 

1Ki 14:7-8 Go, tell Jeroboam, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: “Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over my people Israel ⁸and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, and yet you have not been like my servant David, *who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart, doing only that which was right in my eyes,* ... 

2Ki 23:3, 25 And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and *to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul*, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.  ... ²⁵Before him [Josiah] there was no king like him, *who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses*, nor did any like him arise after him. 

Psa 119:69, 106, 112, 167 The insolent smear me with lies, but *with my whole heart I keep your precepts;*  ... ¹⁰⁶*I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules.*  ... ¹¹²*I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever,* to



the end.^k ... ¹⁶⁷*My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly.*

^k Or *statutes; the reward is eternal*

The psalmist's wholeheartedness in obeying God's laws (vv. 69, 112) is reflected by: him taking an oath to do so (v. 106; cf. [Neh 10:29](#) ↓); his inward desire to keep them (v. 167a); and by his love for them (v. 167b).

Rom 6:17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become *obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed*, ...

The phrase "the standard of teaching" refers to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles, inclusive of the OT law as interpreted by Christ.

Eph 6:5-6 Slaves,^l obey your earthly masters^m with fear and trembling, *with a sincere heart, as you would Christ*, ⁶*not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servantsⁿ of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*, ...

^l Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

^m Or *your masters according to the flesh*

ⁿ Or *slaves*; Greek *bondservants*

Num 32:11-12 'Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because *they have not wholly followed me*, ¹²*none except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.*'

Note Caleb's later reminder to Joshua of what he had done – "I wholly followed the LORD my God" (Josh 14:8b).

Deut 5:27 Go near and hear all that the LORD our God will say and *speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.*

Such willingness to obey God is associated with wholehearted obedience.

Neh 10:29 ... join with their brothers, their nobles, and *enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes.*

Acts 22:12 And one Ananias, *a devout man according to the law*, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ...

Ananias was "a devout observer of the law" (NIV®) – indicative of wholehearted devotion to observe it.

2Chr 25:2 *And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not with a whole heart.*

Amaziah is an example of half-hearted obedience (cf. [Num 32:11](#) ↑).

Delight in God's commands

See also:

- *Note: God's and Jesus Christ's commands are not too difficult or burdensome*, p. 1181
- *God's word . . .* [reasons to exalt God], p. 1278
- *Take comfort in God's word and delight in it* [in hard times], p. 1945

Ps 1:1-2 Blessed is the man^o who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²*but his delight is in the law^p of the LORD*, and on his law he meditates day and night.

^o The singular Hebrew word for man (ish) is used here to portray a representative example of a godly person; see preface

^p Or *instruction*

Ps 112:1 ¹ Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who *greatly delights in his commandments!*

¹ This psalm is an acrostic poem, each line beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet

Ps 119:14, 16, 24, 35, 47, 111 *In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.* ... ¹⁶*I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.* ... ²⁴*Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.* ... ³⁵*Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.* ... ⁴⁷*for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.* ... ¹¹¹*Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.*

Jer 15:16 *Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart*, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.

God's words that "were found" may here refer to God's law, or to the message/s that Jeremiah was to proclaim to the people which included commands of God.

Rom 7:22 *For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,* ...

Ps 40:8 *I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*



✦ Rejoice in God's word:

Ps 119:162 *I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.* 

Be careful to obey God

See also:

- *Take care not to sin*, p. 1854
- ... *Watch and guard yourself against sinning*, p. 1928

Deut 5:32 *You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.* 

Deut 7:11 *You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.* 

Deut 12:32 ^r *“Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.* 
^r Ch 13:1 in Hebrew

Deut 28:1 *And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.* 

Josh 22:5 *Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.* 

Judg 2:22 ... in order to test Israel by them, whether they will *take care to walk in the way of the LORD* as their fathers did, or not.” 

2Ki 17:37a *And the statutes and the rules and the law and the commandment that he wrote for you, you shall always be careful to do.* 

Ps 119:4 *You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently.* 

Zec 6:15 *“And those who are far off shall come and help to build the temple of the LORD. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And this shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”* 

1Ki 8:25 Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons *pay close attention to their way, to walk before me* as you have walked before me.’ 

✦ Not being careful to obey God leads to sin:

2Ki 10:31 *But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel to sin.* 

Jehu is an example of careless, half-hearted obedience.

Note: God's and Jesus Christ's commands are not too difficult or burdensome

Deut 30:11-14 *For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.* ¹²It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹³Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴*But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.* 

By saying that God's commands were not “far off” (v. 11), Moses is indicating that God's commands are very accessible, as illustrated in the subsequent two verses. Verse 14 reinforces this concept. “It is in your mouth and in your heart” suggests that the people could verbalize it and that they understood it – and as such they could obey it. God's commands are not too difficult to know or to follow.

1Jn 5:3-4 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And *his commandments are not burdensome.* ⁴*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.* And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 

Those born of God overcome all that is in the world – by faith – things which would otherwise entangle them and make his commands burdensome to obey.

Matt 11:28-30 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* 

The “yoke” referred to was probably that which lay across the necks of oxen. In saying that the “yoke” and “burden” of following him is “easy” and “light” (v. 30), Jesus may be alluding to the fact that as he is “gentle and lowly in heart”



(v. 29) he will not require anything that is beyond us. Also, in contrast to the requirements of the religious leaders, his demands are not burdensome. Far from being tiresome, his “yoke” of discipleship is the way of life that best fits us – the most comfortable and suitable “yoke” – and it benefits us in many ways. Rather than weighing us down, it is actually uplifting.

✦ **God’s laws are in fact wonderful:**

Ps 119:129 *Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Blessings of Obeying God

See also:

- *e) Functions of God’s Word (II): Blessings*, p. 315
- *... If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God*, p. 333
- *... God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe and obey him*, p. 832
- *a) The Need to Obey God*, p. 1062
- *Knowing God and Jesus Christ is linked to obeying their commands*, p. 1210
- *God answers those who obey and please him . . .*, p. 1230
- *Note: Obedience to God and other aspects of the faith are essential for love*, p. 1320
- *Obeying God’s commands brings wisdom . . .*, p. 1638

Subsections

- General promises of blessing
- God’s and Jesus Christ’s love
- God’s help
- The realization of God’s promises
- Peace and rest
- Other present-day spiritual blessings
- Future blessings
- Note: Ill consequences of not obeying God

General promises of blessing

Luke 11:28 But he said, *“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”* 📖

John 13:17 *If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.* 📖

Ps 119:1-2 ^s *Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! ²Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, ...* 📖

^s This psalm is an acrostic poem of twenty-two stanzas, following the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; within a stanza, each verse begins with the same Hebrew letter

Prov 8:32 And now, O sons, listen to me: *blessed are those who keep my ways.* 📖

Prov 13:13 Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but *he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.* 📖

Prov 29:18 Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,^t but *blessed is he who keeps the law.* 📖

^t Or *the people are discouraged*

Ps 1:1-3 *Blessed is the man^u who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²but his delight is in the law^v of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.* 📖

^u The singular Hebrew word for man (ish) is used here to portray a representative example of a godly person; see preface

^v Or *instruction*

Obedience to God’s word is implied in vv. 1-2, resulting in the blessings of v. 3.

Ps 19:11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; *in keeping them there is great reward.* 📖

Ps 112:1-2 ^w *Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! ²His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.* 📖

^w This psalm is an acrostic poem, each line beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet

Deut 5:29, 33 Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and *to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants^x forever!* 📖 ...



³³You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess. 

^x Or sons

The material prosperity of the old covenant is referred to in v. 33, and alluded to elsewhere in this subsection (cf. *By obeying, the Israelites would have life and prosperity in the promised land*, p. 337; and the introductory comment on *If the Israelites disobeyed the law and broke the covenant, there would be dreadful consequences . . .*, p. 338).

Deut 10:12-13 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? 

Deut 15:4-5 But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess— ⁵if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today. 

Josh 1:7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success^y wherever you go. 

^y Or may act wisely

Rev 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. 

✦ Keeping God's commands is a blessing:

Ps 119:56 This blessing has fallen to me, that I have kept your precepts. 

God's and Jesus Christ's love

Deut 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ... 

Ps 103:17-18 But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments. 

Ps 25:10 All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. 

John 14:23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 

John 15:10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 

Jesus underlines the correlation between obeying him and remaining in his love by drawing a comparison to him obeying God and so remaining in God's love. God's love for him because of his obedience is further illustrated immediately below in 10:17, where Jesus speaks of his obedience to God to the point of laying down his life.

John 10:17-18 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. 

The last statement is generally understood to indicate that Jesus had been commanded to lay down his life by God – which he obediently was willing to do (vv. 17-18a). (It may also allude to the fact that God had given him the aforementioned authority to do this.) As such, these verses speak of God loving Jesus because he was obedient.

1Jn 2:5a ... but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. 

The second clause is referring to either God's love for a believer, or a believer's love for God. If the former is intended, then the verse appears to mean either that obedience leads to a deep realization of God's love for us, or that obedience is evidence of this love being a reality.

God's help

Ex 23:22 But if you carefully obey his [an angel's] voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 

1Ki 8:59-61 Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and



night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires,⁶⁰ that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.⁶¹ *Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.* 

Ps 81:13-16 Oh, that my people would listen to me, *that Israel would walk in my ways!* ¹⁴*I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes.* ¹⁵Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. ¹⁶*But he would feed you^z with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.* 

^z That is, Israel; Hebrew *him*

Prov 16:7 *When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.* 

Here “he” could refer to the LORD or to the man whose “ways are pleasing to the LORD”. Either way it asserts that living in line with God’s will, obeying him, is a positive factor in our relationships with others. Note that some commentators rightly make the point that like many proverbs this is a generalization, to which there are exceptions (cf. *Following God and Jesus Christ results in persecution . . .*, p. 1982; . . . *It brings all kinds of hardships and suffering*, p. 1983).

Isa 64:5a *You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways.* 

This is often understood as saying that God comes to the help of those who do what is right and remember God’s ways for his people to live (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Ezra 7:9-10 For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and *on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him.* ¹⁰*For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.* 

Lev 25:18-22 Therefore you shall *do my statutes and keep my rules and perform them, and then you will dwell in the land securely.* ¹⁹*The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and dwell in it securely.* ²⁰And if you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?’ ²¹*I will command my blessing on you in the sixth year, so that it will produce a crop sufficient for three years.* ²²*When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating some of the old crop; you shall eat the old until the ninth year, when its crop arrives.* 

God protects and provides for those who obey his commands – including commands that may initially appear

to be to one’s detriment (vv. 20-22), the reference being to allowing the land to lay fallow for one year or possibly two.

✚ **God shows mercy and compassion to those who obey him:**

Deut 13:17-18 None of the devoted things shall stick to your hand, that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger and *show you mercy and have compassion on you and multiply you, as he swore to your fathers,* ¹⁸*if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all his commandments that I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.* 

Note that the first clause in v. 17 is speaking of not hanging on to or keeping any such “devoted” things.

The realization of God’s promises

Gen 18:19 For I have chosen^a him, that he may command his children and his household after him *to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.* 

^a Hebrew *known*

Deut 6:18 *And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers ...* 

Deut 28:9 *The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.* 

1Ki 2:1-4 When David’s time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, ²‘I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man,’ ³and *keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses,* that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, ⁴*that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack^b a man on the throne of Israel.’* 

^b Hebrew *there shall not be cut off for you*

1Ki 6:12 Concerning this house that you are building, *if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father.* 



The promise referred to – “my word” – appears to be that spoken of by David in 2:4 above. However with the reference to the temple, God’s presence with his people (cf. v. 13) may be in view – in conjunction with or instead of the aforementioned promise.

2Cor 7:1 *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body^c and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*

^c Greek *flesh*

This implies that for the promises (cf. 6:16-18) to be fulfilled, we must purify ourselves and be holy – which obviously involves obedience to God.

Eph 6:2-3 *“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),³“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”*

Heb 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that *when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*

✦ **Parallel to his promises for obedience, God threatens judgment on those who do not obey him:**

Josh 23:15-16 *But just as all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land that the LORD your God has given you, ¹⁶if you transgress the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land that he has given to you.*

Peace and rest

Isa 48:18 *Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; ...*

Gal 6:16 *And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*

By “this rule” Paul may be referring to living in accordance with “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14), or living as a “new creation” (v. 15). Both interpretations involve living according to “this rule” and so are indicative of obedience to God – by which one receives God’s peace, and mercy.

Jer 6:16 Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, and *ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.* But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’

The “good way” or “godly way” (NLT) corresponds with God’s way.

Matt 11:28-30 *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Here Jesus effectively promises rest to those who live according to his teaching.

Other present-day spiritual blessings

Note also the cross references listed at the beginning of this section.

Luke 8:21 *But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”*

Those who obey God’s word are like Jesus Christ, who was exemplary in doing this. As such they are in a sense his kin, part of the family of God.

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

In v. 32 Jesus is referring to freedom from sin (cf. v. 34).

John 15:7 *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

Being in Jesus Christ involves knowing, believing and obeying his words. This produces prayer that is consistent with Jesus Christ’s purpose and will – prayer that will be answered.

John 15:10-11 *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

Acts 16:4-5 *As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.*



One can infer from this that obedience to godly instruction – which is ultimately instruction based on God’s word – strengthens people in the faith.

Deut 11:8 *You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess, ...* 

This promise of military strength to the Israelites if they were obedient can be applied to spiritual strength that believers have or gain in being obedient.

John 7:17 *If anyone’s will is to do God’s^d will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.* 

^d Greek *his*

Doing what one knows of God’s will, leads to the realization that Jesus’ teaching does come from God. Obedience leads to spiritual discernment.

John 11:8-10 The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? *If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.* ¹⁰But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” 

In v. 9 Jesus appears to be meaning that those who work or act in the light of God’s will – as he intended doing, despite apparent danger (v. 8) – will not stumble. This is in contrast to those who do not act in the light of God’s will (v. 10).

Future blessings

See also:

- *Obedience and doing God’s will are critical for salvation*, p. 1065
- *Obedience and doing God’s will lead to eternal life*, p. 1066

Matt 5:19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but *whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* 

The future form of God’s kingdom may be referred to here, hence the verse’s inclusion in this subsection.

Matt 7:24-25 *Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.* ²⁵*And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.* 

If a person obeys Jesus Christ’s words, they will withstand the storms of life. They will also survive God’s final judgment, which may be primarily in view (cf. vv. 21-23), the reason for the verse’s inclusion here.

Rev 2:26-28 *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸And I will give him the morning star.* 

Verses 26-27 may well be speaking of the reign of believers with Jesus Christ (cf. *God’s people will reign with Jesus Christ*, p. 724). The “morning star” (v. 28) may refer to the dawning of the resurrection age – and possibly also the accompanying glory – following the night of this life (cf. CEV text note). The term could also allude to the return of Jesus Christ, who is called “the bright morning star” (22:16).

Isa 56:4-7 For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, *who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant,* ⁵*I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.* ⁶*And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— ⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” *

These promises appear to be primarily eschatological. Verse 5b may well be alluding to eternal life. Verse 7 speaks of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem of all peoples at the end of the age, perhaps a depiction of the afterlife.

Rev 22:7 “And behold, I am coming soon. *Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.*” 

This speaks of holding to God’s words of prophecy in Revelation, believing them and acting in accordance with them – which involves obedience (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). In view of the first statement, the blessedness referred to in the second would appear to primarily at least encompass blessings following Christ’s return.



Note: Ill consequences of not obeying God

See also:

- *Note: Rejecting and not keeping God's word brings his judgment*, p. 319
- *Not obeying God ultimately ends in eternal destruction*, p. 1066
- *Note: Implications of not obeying God*, p. 1170
- a) *Consequences of Sin for God's People*, p. 1830

Num 14:41 But Moses said, *"Why now are you transgressing the command of the LORD, when that will not succeed?"* 

Disobeying God's commands will typically end in failure of some form. Ultimately it ends in eternal destruction.

Num 32:23 But *if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.* 

The final clause is implying that sin brings its consequences – it "catches up with you".

2Ki 22:13b For *great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.* 

Ps 119:118 *You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain.* 

Ps 119:155 *Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes.* 

Those who do not obey God will not receive salvation.

Jer 32:23 And they entered and took possession of it. But *they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do. Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them.* 

Hos 9:17 *My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations.* 

Hos 14:9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but *transgressors stumble in them.* 

Transgressors "stumble" by not following God's ways.

Matt 5:19 Therefore *whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* 

This may have in view the time of the consummation of the kingdom and its reign that will envelope all creation. If this is the case, being "called least in the kingdom of heaven" may refer to such people being deemed as the least of all people – in effect condemned. However note that the phrase "in the kingdom of heaven" suggests that such people may still be accepted into the kingdom rather than being shut out and in hell. Another interpretation is that with "these commandments" probably referring to the OT law, Jesus may be speaking of these commands being incorrectly downplayed by some teachers under the new covenant, in the present form of God's kingdom that he introduced.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Epilogue: Follow Jesus Christ

See also:

- *We are called to serve God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1384

To follow Jesus Christ involves not just simply following his commands, but also following him and his example. In doing so, we follow Christ not only as our leader, but also in companionship with him. This concept is an important aspect of discipleship.

Subsections

- [Follow Jesus Christ . . .](#)
- [. . . Be a disciple of Jesus Christ](#)
- [Follow Jesus Christ's example](#)
- [Follow Jesus Christ's example of love and service of others](#)
- [Further aspects of Jesus Christ's example to follow](#)
- [Make Jesus Christ your Lord . . .](#)
- [. . . Live for Jesus Christ, pleasing him](#)
- [Be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus Christ](#)
- [Blessings of following Jesus Christ](#)



- Note: Follow God and his commands . . .
- . . . and imitate God, as children of God

Follow Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- Luke 14:27 ↓

Matt 4:18-22 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. 📖

Matt 9:9 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him. 📖

Mark 8:34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 📖

To “deny” ourselves involves setting aside our own desires, no longer having ourselves as the focus of our life. For a person to “take up his cross” implies a willingness to bear any cost – even to give up his/her life – in order to follow Christ as his disciple.

Luke 9:59-62 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰And Jesus^e said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” ⁶²Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” 📖

^e Greek he

The man in v. 59 may well have been meaning that he wanted to wait until after his father had died. In saying, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead”, Jesus was indicating that such tasks as burying the physically dead could be left to the spiritually dead; proclaiming the kingdom was more important. Verses 61-62 appear to be emphasizing the need to be fully focused on doing the work of the kingdom; nothing should be allowed to obstruct the work.

John 10:3-5, 27 To him the gatekeeper opens. *The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.* ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and *the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.* ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” 📖 ... ²⁷*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* 📖

Jesus illustrates the intimate relationship between him and his followers by drawing a parallel with the close relationship between a shepherd and his sheep. His disciples and other followers listened to him and followed him and his teachings. Likewise today believers follow him – his example, his teaching and even his promptings through the Holy Spirit – discerning between teaching and leading that is of him and that which is not.

John 12:26 *If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also.* If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. 📖

The context (cf. vv. 24-25) suggests that Jesus’ challenge to follow him and be with him had in view his example of sacrificial living, to the point of death (cf. **John 21:19b, 22b** ↓).

John 21:19b, 22b And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” 📖 ... ²² ... *You follow me!*” 📖

Note that in both of these verses Jesus is speaking to Peter.

Rom 15:5 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to *live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ...* 📖

This is effectively speaking of following Christ (cf. CEV, GNT, NIV), possibly in particular of acting according to Jesus Christ’s example (cf. GNT).

. . . Be a disciple of Jesus Christ

A disciple is a learner; one who seeks to learn and follow the teachings of another, even to the extent of becoming like the teacher (as reflected in the following subsections).

Matt 21:6 *The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.* 📖

This illustrates that being a disciple of Jesus Christ requires one to follow his instructions (cf. **Matt 28:19-20** ↓; **John 8:31** ↓).

Matt 27:57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named *Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus.* 📖



Matt 28:19-20 Go therefore and *make disciples of all nations*, baptizing them in^f the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

^f Or *into*

Jesus' command to "make disciples of all nations" (v. 19) reflects the fact that we should all be his disciples, obeying all his commands (v. 20).

John 8:31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ...*

John 15:8 By this my Father is glorified, that you *bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

The term "fruit" probably denotes either personal spiritual characteristics (cf. Gal 5:22-23) or wider spiritual outcomes of quality work for God's kingdom. Arguably the latter is more likely (cf. v. 16). By bearing such good "fruit" we bring glory to God, showing ourselves to be disciples of the One sent by him.

Luke 14:26-27 *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

This speaks of the great cost involved in being a disciple of Jesus Christ. In v. 26 Jesus is speaking of the need to love him more than anyone or anything else, including our own lives (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) – in order to be his disciple.

Matt 11:29 *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

This verse indicates that learning Jesus' ways – as a disciple or follower of his – is to a large extent a practical experience. We learn from him by accepting his teachings (cf. NCV) and putting them into practice (i.e. taking his yoke upon us).

✦ Disciples are called "Christians":

Acts 11:26b *And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*

The term "Christian" (cf. Acts 26:28; 1Pet 4:16) implies that one is a follower of – or belongs to – Jesus Christ.

Follow Jesus Christ's example

See also:

- *Love each other as Jesus Christ loved us, even laying down his life*, p. 1317
- *Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering . . .*, p. 2008

John 13:15 *For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.*

1Cor 11:1 *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

1Thes 1:6 *And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ...*

1Jn 2:6 ... whoever says he abides in him ought to *walk in the same way in which he walked.*

Luke 6:40 *A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.*

As referred to earlier, a major goal of being a disciple of a teacher is to become like them. Here Jesus speaks of his disciples becoming like him (cf. [Matt 10:25a](#) ↓).

Matt 10:24-25 *A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant^g above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign^h those of his household.*

^g Greek *bondservant*; also verse 25

^h Greek lacks *will they malign*

Verses 24-25a reflect that Christians should desire to be like Jesus Christ and/or be "satisfied" (GNT, NCV) with this. But given the context (cf. vv. 16-31), it may more specifically be alluding to Jesus' followers sharing his fate in being persecuted (cf. NLT).

Rom 13:14 *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

The expression "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" quite possibly is referring to immersing oneself in one's union with Christ – surrounding oneself with Christ, acting in line with his purposes and for his glory, and in reliance on him. However, it has also been interpreted as a call to take on or adopt his character and example – an interpretation which would make the verse pertinent to this subsection.

Eph 4:21 ... assuming that you have heard about him and were *taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ...*



The “truth ... in Jesus” most likely refers to teaching based on Jesus’ life and words. As such this speaks in part of being taught to act in accordance with Jesus’ example.

Follow Jesus Christ’s example of love and service of others

See also:

- [Phil 2:5-8](#) ↴

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: *just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

Eph 5:2, 25 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ... ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ...

1Jn 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

Matt 20:26-28 It shall not be so among you. But *whoever would be great among you must be your servant,ⁱ ²⁷and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,^j ²⁸even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

ⁱ Greek *diakonos*

^j Greek *bondservant (doulos)*

John 13:14 *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.*

Generally this is understood as Jesus urging his disciples to follow his example by humbly serving each other (cf. [Matt 20:26-28](#) ↑), rather than introducing foot washing as a practice for believers.

Rom 15:1-3 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and *not to please ourselves.* ²*Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.* ³*For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”*

We should please others, as opposed to ourselves, just as Christ did not please himself. In the quotation from Psalms 69:9 (v. 3), the psalmist speaks of pleasing God rather than himself by faithfully suffering the insults that his association with God brought. It is used here to illustrate the point that Christ – who is paralleled with the psalmist – did not please himself, but put God’s will first despite the suffering involved. In view of v. 2, Paul may also be implying that Christ did this for the good of others – effectively in service of them.

2Cor 8:7, 9 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you^k—*see that you excel in this act of grace also.* ... ⁹*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

^k Some manuscripts *in your love for us*

Paul later refers to “this act of grace” in meeting the needs of fellow believers as a “service” (cf. 9:12-13). Like Jesus Christ (v. 9), we should be prepared to give of ourselves and our resources in the service of others.

Further aspects of Jesus Christ’s example to follow

John 15:10 If you *keep my commandments*, you will abide in my love, *just as I have kept my Father’s commandments* and abide in his love.

Col 3:13 ... bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; *as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

Phil 2:5-8 *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,¹ ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant,^m being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

¹ Or *which was also in Christ Jesus*

^m Greek *bondservant*

As made more obvious by the alternative rendering in the text note on v. 5, Paul implies here that we should follow Jesus Christ’s example of service, humility and obedience.

Phil 3:10 ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, *becoming like him in his death,* ...

The final clause possibly means that Paul wanted to become like Christ as exemplified in his death, perfectly submissive and obedient to God. A somewhat different interpretation is that, following on from the preceding clauses, Paul is indicating that he was prepared to suffer for Christ’s cause even to the point of dying like he did (cf. CEV).

1Pet 2:20-21, 23 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if *when you do good and suffer for it you endure*, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in*



his steps.  ... ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 

Heb 12:3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 

Consider Jesus Christ's example of endurance so as to follow his example.

1Jn 3:3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. 

It is debatable as to whether "he" refers to Jesus Christ or God. Often it is taken to be speaking of Christ (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT). As such, one implication is that believers ought to be pure just as Jesus Christ is pure.

✦ Identify with Jesus Christ in not being of this world:

John 17:16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 

Make Jesus Christ your Lord . . .

See also:

- . . . and God made Jesus Christ Lord of all, p. 686

We are to make Christ our Lord, sovereign in every aspect of our lives. As such we are to be fully obedient to him – living according to his will and for his purposes.

John 13:13-14 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 

John 20:28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 

1Cor 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ... 

Jude 1:4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 

Rom 10:9 ... because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 

Note that the confession "Jesus is Lord" is primarily an acknowledgement of Jesus' lordship over all creation. In accordance with this we should make him the Lord of our own life.

Col 2:6-7 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 

Some modern translations interpret Paul as speaking of receiving or accepting Christ as one's Lord (cf. CEV, GNT, NIV, NLT), as per the theme of this subsection.

1Pet 3:15 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ... 

Other modern translations render the phrase "honor Christ the Lord as holy" with the sense "sanctify Christ as Lord" (NASB, NRSV; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT), making the verse more pertinent to this subsection.

. . . Live for Jesus Christ, pleasing him

See also:

- Give up your life to live for God and Jesus Christ . . . , p. 1393

Rom 14:6-8 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. 

Speaking in regard to contentious issues, in v. 6 Paul says what we do should be done to honor Christ – for we are to live for him (v. 8a). The comment that "if we die, we die to the Lord" appears to mean that even on the other side of death, Christ is still our Lord (cf. v. 9) – and so even then we should be trying to please him. In v. 8 Paul correlates living for Jesus Christ with belonging to him. As we belong to Jesus Christ, we should live for him.



2Cor 5:14-15 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that *those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.* 

As well as living for Jesus Christ because he is our Lord, we should also live for him because he died for us.

Phil 1:21 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* 

Here Paul is probably meaning more than just that he lived for Christ. Christ was the essence of his life, permeating throughout it and controlling it. This involved Paul fellowshipping with Christ, working for his purpose and glory, and depending on him.

2Cor 5:9-10 *So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.* ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 

Eph 5:10 ... and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 

Col 1:10 ... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. 

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 

1Cor 7:32 I want you to be free from anxieties. *The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.* 

✦ It is pointless to call Jesus Christ "Lord" if you do not do what he says:

Luke 6:46 *Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?* 

Be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus Christ

See also:

- *The great cost of participating in the kingdom of God*, p. 680
- *Be willing to give up everything – even life's most basic and dearest things*, p. 1395

Mark 10:21, 28-30 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and

come, follow me."  ... ²⁸Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." ²⁹Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. 

Jesus command to "sell all that you have" (v. 21) is given here to "the rich young ruler" whose main spiritual problem was that he loved his riches. However, arguably it is applicable to all Christians – to some degree at least – particularly in the light of Peter's claim (v. 28) and the references below. In v. 29 Jesus mentions some things that his followers may be required to forego. The promised resultant blessings of this present time (v. 30) are primarily fulfilled through the new relationships in the family of God's people, to which Jesus' followers belong.

Luke 5:10-11, 27-28 ... and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." ¹¹And when they had brought their boats to land, *they left everything and followed him.*  ... ²⁷After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁸And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. 

Luke 9:57-58 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 

Here Jesus warns that to follow him means that like him one will have "no place to rest his head" (NCV™) or no "place to call his own" (CEV). It involves foregoing not only the comforts of life, but at times at least even things generally considered as basic to one's well being.

Luke 14:28-33 For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. 



Someone wanting to build a tower should first estimate the cost (vv. 28-30) and a king going to war should first consider whether he is able to oppose his adversary (vv. 31-32a). Similarly one who is thinking of following Jesus Christ should first count or weigh up the substantial cost in order to decide whether they are willing and able to do so. For to follow Jesus Christ one must give up their hold and claim on everything they have.

✦ Paul discarded all things for Christ:

Phil 3:7-9 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

In v. 7 Paul refers to things (cf. vv. 5-6) that he had valued and done for his own benefit – in the context, particularly in regard to achieving righteousness (v. 9). In retrospect Paul considered them “worthless” (CEV, NLT), even detrimental, for the sake of Christ – and all that one has in him (v. 9; cf. vv. 10-11). In v. 8 Paul says that in fact he viewed all things of this world as such.

Blessings of following Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Mark 10:28-30](#) ↑

Matt 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matt 20:26-28 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,ⁿ ²⁷and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,^o ²⁸even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

ⁿ Greek *diakonos*

^o Greek *bondservant (doulos)*

Following Jesus Christ’s example of servanthood leads to greatness in God’s kingdom.

Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

The more we follow Jesus Christ, the more we will become like him.

John 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. *Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*”

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

As noted earlier in this chapter, in v. 32 Jesus is referring to freedom from sin (cf. v. 34).

John 15:8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

This indicates that being a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ will lead to one bearing such “fruit”.

1Jn 2:5-6 ... but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. *By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

Those who follow Jesus’ exemplary way of life, live in union with God.

Note: Follow God and his commands . . .

Along with following Jesus Christ and his example, we should follow God and imitate him. Following God involves following his commandments in the Bible and his directing of our lives.

Josh 14:8-9 But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet *I wholly followed the LORD my God.* ⁹And Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because *you have wholly followed the LORD my God.*’

1Ki 18:21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? *If the LORD is God, follow him;* but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.

2Ki 18:6 For he held fast to the LORD. *He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses.*

Jer 2:2 Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how *you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.*”



2Chr 34:31, 33 And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, *to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.* ¶ ... ³³And Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel and made all who were present in Israel serve the LORD their God. All his days *they did not turn away from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.* ¶

Deut 13:4 *You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.* ¶

Job 23:11 *My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and have not turned aside.* ¶

In speaking of holding to God's "steps", Job is referring to following "God's paths" (NLT), "the road he chooses" (GNT) for his people.

... and imitate God, as children of God

See also:

- *Be holy because God is holy*, p. 1868

Imitating God is essential for believers, being children of God. For as God is our spiritual Father we ought to grow to be more like him, with our character and actions reflecting his.

Eph 5:1 Therefore *be imitators of God, as beloved children.* ¶

Matt 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons^P of God.* ¶

^P Greek *huioi*; see Preface

The "peacemakers" (v. 9) are people who "work for peace" (GNT, NLT, cf. NCV) – probably inclusive of reconciling people with God and making peace between people. They will be deemed children of God because they demonstrate that they partake of his nature, with their actions reflecting God's.

Matt 5:44-45 But I say to you, *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ⁴⁵*so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.* ¶

Luke 6:36 *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.* ¶

1Pet 1:14-16 *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,* ¹⁵*but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,* ¹⁶*since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."* ¶

1Jn 1:5, 7 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* ¶ ... ⁷*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.* ¶

In v. 5, as reflected in v. 7, "light" is used as "a symbol of God's goodness or truth" (NCV™ text note).

Phil 2:15 ... that you may *be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish* in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ... ¶

This and 1 John 3:10 immediately below do not specifically speak of imitating God, But they both speak of displaying godly characteristics and actions as children of God and so point to the theme of this subsection – that we should imitate God as his children.

1Jn 3:10 *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.* ¶

Children of God, like God, practice righteousness and show love – particularly for their brothers and sisters.

‡ Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God:

Rom 8:14 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons^Q of God.* ¶

^Q See discussion on "sons" in the Preface

Acting in accordance with God's Spirit is indicative of an intimate relationship with God and that one in fact is a child of God. For further comment see *Living by the Spirit brings life – in contrast to living by the sinful nature and to the law*, p. 1075.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Connecting with God

I. Being Close to God

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I. Being Close to God

Being or growing close to God involves consciously seeking God and focusing on him. Additionally, we can actually meet with God and also should live throughout each day in awareness of his presence. In growing close to God, we come to know him – the importance of which is emphatically stated by the Bible.

a) Seek God

See also:

- *God wants us to earnestly seek him – and so find him*, p. 1027
- *Now is the time to seek God and to respond to him*, p. 1031
- *Seek God in hard times*, p. 1943

The Bible tells all people to seek God in order to find him and become one of his people – as spoken of in the first two of the above cross references. But it also shows that God's people are to continue seeking him – the focus of this section. "Seeking" typically entails intense effort, which is very much applicable to seeking God and fellowship with him. Seeking God also requires prayer, worship and obedience – along with persistently focusing on God, as per the following section, *Focus on God*.

Subsections

- Seek God – with all your heart
- Seek God wholeheartedly and you will find him
- Seeking God should be accompanied by obedience to him
- Seek God and his help through prayer and fasting
- Blessings of seeking God
- Not seeking God has detrimental results
- Note: Desire God and things of God

Seek God – with all your heart

Ps 105:4 *Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!* 

1Chr 22:19a *Now set your mind and heart to seek the LORD your God.* 

2Chr 19:3 Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asherahs out of the land, and have *set your heart to seek God.* 

2Chr 22:9b They buried him, for they said, "He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who *sought the LORD with all his heart.*" And the house of Ahaziah had no one able to rule the kingdom. 

2Chr 30:18-20 For a majority of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than as prescribed. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD pardon everyone ¹⁹*who sets his heart to seek God*, the LORD, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness."^a
²⁰And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people. 

^a Hebrew *not according to the cleanness of holiness*

The fact that the people were earnestly seeking God took precedence over their failure to carry out the purification rituals (cf. NSB).

2Chr 34:3 For in the eighth year of his reign, *while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father*, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images. 

Ps 63:1 O God, you are my God; *earnestly I seek you*; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 

Ps 119:2, 10 *Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,*  ... ¹⁰*With my whole heart I seek you*; let me not wander from your commandments! 

Isa 26:9 My soul yearns for you in the night; *my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.* For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. 

Dan 9:3 Then *I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy* with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. 

‡ David resolved to seek to dwell in God's presence:

Ps 27:4 One thing have I asked of the LORD, *that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire^b in his temple.* 

^b Or meditate



David sought to have access to God's house (later the temple) and so to God's presence, for worship. God's "beauty" appears to refer to his "goodness" (GNT) and/or wonder (cf. CEV).

Seek God wholeheartedly and you will find him

See also:

- [God wants us to earnestly seek him – and so find him](#), p. 1027

Deut 4:27-29 And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. ²⁸And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. ²⁹But *from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.* 📖

Jer 29:12-14 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³*You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.* ¹⁴*I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.* 📖

1Chr 28:9 And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. *If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.* 📖

2Chr 15:2-4, 12, 15 ... and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: *The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.* ³For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law, ⁴but when in their distress *they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them.* 📖 ... ¹²*And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul,* 📖 ... ¹⁵*And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.* 📖

Isa 45:19 I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; *I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.'* ^c I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right. 📖

^c Hebrew *in emptiness*

This implies that God does not tell us to seek him for nothing (cf. AMP); i.e. he would not tell us to do so if he could not be found.

Matt 7:7-8 Ask, and it will be given to you; *seek, and you will find*; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and *the one who seeks finds*, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 📖

These verses concern persistence in prayer, but the promise "seek, and you will find" is applicable to persistently seeking God, with all one's heart.

Prov 8:17 I love those who love me, and *those who seek me diligently find me.* 📖

The speaker is Wisdom personified. As with seeking God, those who sincerely seek godly wisdom will find it.

✦ **Seek God's kingdom and righteousness before other things:**

Matt 6:33 But *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and all these things will be added to you. 📖

In this context, God's "righteousness" involves "doing what God wants" (NCV™, cf. CEV, GNT), i.e. doing what is right in God's eyes. So to seek it means to seek to do what God wants. See also [Pursue righteousness . . .](#), p. 1865.

Seeking God should be accompanied by obedience to him

See also:

- [Matt 6:33](#) ↑
- [Prepare yourself to come before God, as shown in the OT practice of consecration](#), p. 1204

2Chr 14:3-4 He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim ⁴*and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment.* 📖

2Chr 17:3-4 The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, ⁴*but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments*, and not according to the practices of Israel. 📖

Ps 119:2-3 Blessed are *those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart*, ³*who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!* 📖



Zeph 2:3 *Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands;^d seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.* 📖

^d Or *who carry out his judgment*

2Chr 31:21 *And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.* 📖

This may mean that in all Hezekiah did in service and obedience to God, he in effect sought God or aspired to seek him. Alternatively it may mean that Hezekiah sought God and God's will in regard to what he did. The first possibility would be the one most pertinent to this subsection.

Ps 24:3-4, 6 *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. ... ⁶Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.^e* Selah 📖

^e Septuagint, Syriac, and two Hebrew manuscripts; Masoretic Text *Jacob, who seek your face*

To seek God and fellowship with him (vv. 3, 6) one's life must reflect such aspects of obedience as purity and faithfulness (v. 4) – and righteousness (*Isa 51:1* ↓).

Isa 51:1 *Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.* 📖

Hos 10:12 *Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.* 📖

Righteous living and faithful love are portrayed here as preparatory to seeking the LORD (although "steadfast love" could instead be referring to God's love). Repentance may also be in view here, with the expression "break up your fallow ground" possibly speaking of preparing oneself (primarily by repentance) to be productive and/or for blessing.

Isa 58:1-3 *Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. ²Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. ³'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold,*

in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,^f and oppress all your workers. 📖

^f Or *pursue your own business*

This passage and Hosea 5:5-6 below show that seeking God should be accompanied by obedience to him by indicating that it is futile while persisting in sin. Because of their sins (vv. 1, 3b), the people's efforts to seek God (v. 2) had been fruitless (v. 3a).

Hos 5:5-6 *The pride of Israel testifies to his face;^g Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt; Judah also shall stumble with them. ⁶With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them.* 📖

^g Or *in his presence*

Seek God and his help through prayer and fasting

2Chr 7:14 ... if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and *pray and seek my face* and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 📖

Isa 26:16 *O LORD, in distress they sought you; they poured out a whispered prayer* when your discipline was upon them. 📖

Dan 9:3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, *seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting* and sackcloth and ashes. 📖

2Sam 12:16 *David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.* 📖

2Chr 20:2-4 Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,^h from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi). ³Then *Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.* 📖

^h One Hebrew manuscript; most Hebrew manuscripts *Aram* (Syria)

Ezra 8:21, 23 Then *I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. ... ²³So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.* 📖



Blessings of seeking God

2Chr 14:7 And he said to Judah, “Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. *The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God. We have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side.*” So they built and prospered. 

2Chr 26:5 He [Uzziah] set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God, and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper. 

Ezra 8:22 For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, “*The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.*” 

Ps 24:4-6 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. ⁵*He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.* ⁶*Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.*¹ Selah 

ⁱ Septuagint, Syriac, and two Hebrew manuscripts; Masoretic Text *Jacob, who seek your face*

To seek God’s “face” has been equated with seeking God’s favor, but usually it probably primarily refers to seeking his “presence” or fellowship – from which would follow his favor.

Ps 27:4-6 One thing have I asked of the LORD, *that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquireⁱ in his temple.* ⁵*For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.* ⁶*And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.* 

ⁱ Or meditate

Ps 34:4, 10 *I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.*  ... ¹⁰*The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.* 

The reference in v. 4 and possibly also in v. 10 is to seeking God and his help in times of need.

Ps 40:16 But *may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is the LORD!”* 

Likewise Psalms 105:3 says, “... let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!” The suggestion in both verses is that seeking God leads to rejoicing in him (cf. Ps 27:6 ).

Ps 69:32 When the humble see it they will be glad; *you who seek God, let your hearts revive.* 

God’s answering of the psalmist’s prayer for salvation (cf. v. 19) is in view. Answered prayer – particularly prayer regarding deliverance of God’s people – brings encouragement not just to those concerned, but to all who seek God.

Ps 119:2 *Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, ...* 

Prov 28:5 Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand it completely. 

Lam 3:25 *The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.* 

Hos 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. 

Hosea indicates that seeking God would result in God making his presence known, showering “righteousness” on his people. This “righteousness” may refer to God, in faithfulness to his promises, righteously either saving his people (cf. CEV) or showering blessings on them (cf. GNT). Alternatively it may indicate that God would make them righteous.

Amos 5:4-6 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: “*Seek me and live; ⁵but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing.*” ⁶*Seek the LORD and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel, ...* 

Israel is called upon to seek God in repentance so as to live, rather than face the consequences of continuing in its rebelliousness.

Matt 6:33 But *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* 

In conjunction with seeking God, we should persistently seek his kingdom, seeking it before anything else. This would appear to encompass both seeking to enter it ourselves and seeking its advancement throughout the world. The phrase



“all these things” refers to life’s needs – in particular food, drink and clothing (cf. vv. 25-32).

‡ **God has never forsaken those who seek him:**

Ps 9:10 And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Not seeking God has detrimental results

2Chr 12:14 And he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.

Isa 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!

Hos 7:9-10 Strangers devour his strength, and he knows it not; gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knows it not. ¹⁰The pride of Israel testifies to his face;^k yet they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him, for all this.

^k Or in his presence

Verse 10b implies that if Israel did seek God – searching for him and returning to him – then it would not suffer the problems mentioned in v. 9. It also suggests that the problems were a result of not seeking God and departing from him in the first place.

Zeph 1:4, 6 “I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests, ... ⁶those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him.”

Zeph 3:1-2 Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! ²She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God.

‡ **Salvation is far from those who do not seek out God’s decrees:**

Ps 119:155 Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes.

Note: Desire God and things of God

See also:

- *Look forward to what is to come in the afterlife . . .*, p. 1202
- *. . . Consequent longing for God amidst suffering*, p. 1956

Ps 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And *there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*

Isa 26:8-9 In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; *your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul. ⁹My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.*

Verse 8b is speaking of desiring or longing for either God (cf. GNT, NASB, NCV, NKJV) or his honor (cf. CEV, NLT) – or possibly both.

Ex 33:18 Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”

Moses desired to see God’s glory.

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

1Cor 14:1, 39 Pursue love, and *earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.* ... ³⁹So, my brothers, *earnestly desire to prophesy*, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.

Similarly 1 Corinthians 12:31a says, “But earnestly desire the higher gifts.”

Phil 3:8-11 Indeed, *I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

In v. 10a, Paul speaks of wanting to know Christ and to experience the power of Christ’s resurrection in his own life and the fellowship with Christ produced by sharing in the sufferings incurred by furthering his cause. In v. 10b, “becoming like him in his death” is usually interpreted as referring to either: identification with Christ in his death, in our death to sin; or being willing to obey God to the point of death, as Christ did (cf. CEV).



1Pet 2:2 Like newborn infants, *long for the pure spiritual milk*, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 

The term “pure spiritual milk” probably denotes God’s word or truth, which God’s people are to desire to the point of craving.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Focus on God

See also:

- *Remember God’s word and commands*, p. 1789
- *Persistently meditate on God’s word and commands . . .*, p. 1790
- . . . *Keep God’s word and commands in your heart and thoughts*, p. 1790

Subsections

- Keep thinking about God and his love
- Keep thinking about what God has done
- Think about Jesus Christ – and his example
- Look forward to what is to come in the afterlife . . .
- . . . Do not dwell on the past
- Further godly things to focus on

Keep thinking about God and his love

Ps 16:8 *I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.* 

As reflected in the second clause, with the first clause David indicates that he continually kept himself aware of God’s presence (cf. GNT).

Ps 63:5-7 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, ⁶when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; ⁷for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. 

Ps 119:55 *I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law.* 

Ps 27:4 One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: *that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD* and to inquire¹ in his temple. 

¹ Or meditate

David desired to persistently dwell in God’s presence, focusing on God’s “beauty” – which appears to refer to his “goodness” (GNT) or wonder (cf. CEV).

Ps 26:3 *For your steadfast love is before my eyes*, and I walk in your faithfulness. 

Here David probably means that he intentionally kept God’s love in view. Alternatively David may mean that he was constantly aware of God’s love being shown to him.

Ps 48:9 *We have thought on your steadfast love, O God*, in the midst of your temple. 

Ps 107:43 Whoever is wise, *let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.* 

The phrase “attend to these things” refers to giving attention or heed (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) to God’s deeds for his people, which demonstrated his “steadfast love”.

Ps 145:5 *On the glorious splendor of your majesty*, and on your wondrous works, *I will meditate.* 

‡ God gives peace to those who focus on him:

Isa 26:3 *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.* 

Keep thinking about what God has done

See also:

- [Ps 63:5-7](#) ↑; [Ps 107:43](#) ↑; [Ps 145:5](#) ↑

Ps 77:11-12 *I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old.* ¹²*I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.* 

Ps 105:5 *Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles*, and the judgments he uttered, . . . 

Ps 119:27 Make me understand the way of your precepts, and *I will meditate on your wondrous works.* 



Ps 143:5 I remember the days of old; *I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.* 📖

Job 37:14 Hear this, O Job; *stop and consider the wondrous works of God.* 📖

Ps 111:2 *Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.* 📖

✦ **Consider what great things God has done for you:**

1Sam 12:24 Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For *consider what great things he has done for you.* 📖

Think about Jesus Christ – and his example

See also:

- [Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering . . .](#), p. 2008

In saying to think about Jesus, the following references appear to primarily have in view Jesus' example (Heb 3:2a; 12:2b-3).

Heb 3:1-2 Therefore, holy brothers,^m you who share in a heavenly calling, *consider Jesus*, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ²*who was faithful to him who appointed him*, just as Moses also was faithful in all God'sⁿ house. 📖

^mOr *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

ⁿ Greek *his*; also verses 5, 6

We should "thoughtfully and attentively" (AMP) consider Jesus and his example.

Heb 12:1-3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²*looking to Jesus*, the founder and perfecter of our faith, *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame*, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³*Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.* 📖

Look forward to what is to come in the afterlife . . .

See also:

- [Phil 3:13-14](#) ↓
- [Await Jesus Christ's return – and for all that will follow](#), p. 1804



Note that Colossians 3:1-3 below in [Further godly things to focus on](#), p. 1203, also pertains to this subsection.

Rom 8:23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as *we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* 📖

2Cor 4:17-18 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us *an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*, ¹⁸*as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* 📖

The phrase "eternal weight" (v. 17b) appears to be in contrast to the phrase "light momentary" (v. 17a). In v. 18, "the things that are unseen" primarily has in view the "eternal weight of glory" (v. 17b) to come.

2Cor 5:2-4, 8 For in this tent *we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling*, ³if indeed by putting it on^o we may not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but *that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.* 📖 ... ⁸Yes, we are of good courage, and *we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.* 📖

^o Some manuscripts *putting it off*

The "heavenly dwelling" (v. 2) appears to refer to the believer's resurrection body. Paul longingly looked forward to being "clothed" with such a dwelling, when he would be "at home with the Lord" (v. 8).

Heb 11:10, 13-14, 16 For *he [Abraham] was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.* 📖 ... ¹³These all died in faith, *not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar*, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that *they are seeking a homeland.* 📖 ... ¹⁶But as it is, *they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.* Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for *he has prepared for them a city.* 📖

The "city" (vv. 10, 16b; cf. [Heb 13:14](#) ↓) – in association with the "homeland" (v. 14) and the "country" (v. 14) – can be linked with "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Rev 21:2).

Heb 11:26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for *he was looking to the reward.* 📖

Heb 13:14 For here we have no lasting city, but *we seek the city that is to come.* 📖

2Pet 3:11-13 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²*waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God*, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³*But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* 📖

For comment on the phrase “hastening the coming” (v. 12a), see the comment on **2Pet 3:11-12** – under *Await Jesus Christ’s return – and for all that will follow*, p. 1804.

Job 19:26-27 *And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in^p my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!* 📖

^p Or *without*

The final statement appears to be expressing a yearning or longing (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NIV, NKJV) for the aforementioned things to eventuate.

... Do not dwell on the past

Isa 43:18-19 *Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.* 📖

The first statement (v. 18) may be speaking of Israel’s former sins and/or circumstances, meaning that they should forget these things. Instead they were to focus on God’s new work (v. 19).

Luke 9:61-62 Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” ⁶²Jesus said to him, “*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.*” 📖

We must not look back to things that took precedence in the past, focussing on them to the detriment of our work for God. Even things that are genuinely important – which appear to be in view here (v. 61) – need to be made a secondary consideration if they conflict with the work of the kingdom. Note that Jesus did not advocate the shirking of family responsibilities (cf. Mark 7:9-13).

Phil 3:13-14 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But *one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* 📖

Heb 11:15 *If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.* 📖

Abraham in particular is probably in view here, as an example to all believers. If he had been thinking longingly of the country he had left at God’s command he would have found a way to return. Instead he looked forward to that which God had called him (cf. v. 16).

Gen 19:17, 26 And as they brought them out, one said, “Escape for your life. *Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.*” 📖 ... ²⁶*But Lot’s wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.* 📖

Lot’s wife failed to heed the warning to not look back at the sinful city that they had left behind. Her action arguably suggests a longing for or desire to hold on to that which was to be left behind.

Further godly things to focus on

Ps 101:2a *I will ponder the way that is blameless.* 📖

Rom 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit *set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* 📖

Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers, *whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* 📖

Col 3:1-4 If then you have been raised with Christ, *seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your^a life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* 📖

^a Some manuscripts *our*

Believers are to seek things above (v. 1), setting their minds on them (v. 2). They are to focus on both the present reality – including Christ’s authority (v. 1) – and on sharing in these things in the future (v. 4). Such a heaven and Christ centered focus leads believers to act in a way that is consistent with: heavenly priorities and goals; a life in Christ (vv. 3-4); and a future share in his glory (v. 4).

Matt 16:21-23 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be



killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord!^r This shall never happen to you.” ²³But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance^s to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” 

^r Or “[May God be] merciful to you, Lord!”

^s Greek *stumbling block*

Obviously the implication here is that we should set our minds or focus on “the things of God”, as opposed to “the things of man” (i.e. earthly or worldly considerations).

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Meet with God and Live before Him

We are to come before God – in the sense of coming into his presence, i.e. intentionally being aware of his presence – to meet with him. Christians typically set aside some time everyday to do this, focussing fully on God. Generally this involves reading the Bible, prayer and even meditation.

Additionally, we are to constantly live before God in the sense of living in awareness of his presence, companionship, help and discernment of our lives. As such we should think, speak and act accordingly.

Subsections

- Prepare yourself to come before God, as shown in the OT practice of consecration
- Approach God . . .
- . . . Draw near to God
- Come before God, meeting with him
- Continue to live before God, in his presence . . .
- . . . “Walk” with God
- Act before God – in awareness of his presence and scrutiny

Prepare yourself to come before God, as shown in the OT practice of consecration

See also:

- *Seeking God should be accompanied by obedience to him*, p. 1197
- *Consecrate yourself to serve God . . .*, p. 1387
- *The godly, blameless and pure are accepted by God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1874

To “consecrate” oneself means to set oneself apart for God or to dedicate oneself as sacred to him (cf. *Consecrate yourself to serve God . . .*, p. 1387; . . . *Be holy and set apart*, p. 1388). It is also spoken of in the OT in regard to cleansing oneself before approaching God or entering his temple. In both cases it signifies ridding oneself of all that is sinful. As such, a parallel can be drawn between the OT practice of consecration and the need for believers to rid themselves of sinful practices in order to approach God.

Ex 19:22 Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them. 

1Sam 16:5 And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. 

One needed to be consecrated in order to offer a sacrifice before God.

2Chr 5:11 And when the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had consecrated themselves, without regard to their divisions, . . . 

The “Holy Place” and the temple (cf. **2Chr 23:6 ↓**) were places where the priests and – in the case of the temple – the people could come before God. Thus there was the need for one to be consecrated before entering them.

2Chr 23:6 Let no one enter the house of the LORD except the priests and ministering Levites. They may enter, for they are holy, but all the people shall keep the charge of the LORD. 

Note that this refers to a particular situation where only the priests and Levites on duty would have been “consecrated” (GNT, NIV) at that time.

Ex 19:10-11 . . . the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 



Here and in Joshua 3:5 below it is God coming to meet with the people, as opposed to them coming before him. But as this would also require the people to be in God's presence, they were likewise required to consecrate themselves.

Josh 3:5 Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." 

Approach God . . .

See also:

- [Jesus Christ's death and priesthood have opened the way into God's presence for God's people](#), p. 796
- [God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit](#), p. 797
- [Approach God with confidence](#), p. 1217

Ezek 45:4 It shall be the holy portion of the land. It shall be for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and *approach the LORD* to minister to him, and it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary. 

Just as the priests approached God to "minister to" him, believers should also approach him. One reason they should do so is that they also have priestly roles, such as interceding with God on behalf of others.

Ps 24:3-4 Who shall *ascend the hill of the LORD*? And who shall *stand in his holy place*? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. 

The "hill of the LORD" (v. 3) refers to Mount Zion, the place of God's holy sanctuary, which signified his presence amongst his people in the OT. This sanctuary was firstly the tabernacle and later the temple. These verses suggest that not only may God's righteous people approach him, but it is desirable and appropriate that we do so.

Ps 132:7 "Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!" 

According to some commentators "his footstool" refers to the ark of the covenant, but it may more generally be referring to the temple – which contained the ark – as the place of earthly worship of him. The temple was the primary place for one to approach God, as reflected by most of the verses in this subsection.

Jer 26:2 Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that *come to worship in the house of the LORD* all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word. 

Luke 18:10 Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 

Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.^t 

^t That is, 3 P.M.

Eph 3:11-12 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in *Christ Jesus our Lord*, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. 

This speaks of "access" (v. 12) into God's presence. As per the comment on Psalm 24:3-4 above, this suggests that we should access God's presence.

. . . Draw near to God

See also:

- [God is near us in hard times and when we pray](#), p. 1975

Heb 7:18-19, 25 For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we *draw near to God*.  ... ²⁵Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost^u those who *draw near to God through him*, since he always lives to make intercession for them. 

^u That is, completely; or *at all times*

The "better hope" (v. 19) alludes to Jesus Christ's priesthood and the new covenant, by which we are able to draw near to God (cf. [Heb 10:19-22](#) ↓). The Greek verb translated as "draw near" (v. 25) speaks of constantly coming to worship God, through Jesus Christ (cf. NBC).

Heb 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers,^v since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 

^v Or *brothers and sisters*



The earlier reference to entering the holy places (v. 19) suggests that in speaking of drawing near to God (v. 22) the writer has in view believers coming into God's presence to meet with him – as opposed to one coming near to God in the sense of beginning a right relationship with God. The “full assurance of faith” (v. 22) appears to refer to a full assurance “that comes from having faith” (CEV).

James 4:8 *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* 📖

This is an appeal to wayward believers to draw near to or come back to God in repentance, rather than simply encouragement to draw near to God so as to meet with him. But even so it is somewhat applicable to the latter.

Ps 73:28 *But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.* 📖

✦ **Condemnation of ones who rebel and do not draw near to God:**

Zeph 3:1-2 *Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! ²She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God.* 📖

Come before God, meeting with him

See also:

- *God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit*, p. 797
- *Pray before God, in his presence*, p. 1216
- *Worship before God, in his presence*, p. 1346

Deut 31:11 *... when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.* 📖

Just as the Israelites at times together came before God, believers can both individually and corporately come before God, to meet with him.

Judg 20:26 *Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.* 📖

We ought to come before God and meet with him when facing hard times (cf. **2Chr 20:13 ↓**; **2Ki 19:14 ↓**), as well as a matter of course.

2Chr 20:13 *Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.* 📖

2Ki 19:14 *Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD.* 📖

Deut 12:18 *... but you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place that the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite who is within your towns. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all that you undertake.* 📖

For their festivals, the Israelites were to come before God and celebrate in his presence (cf. **2Sam 6:5, 21 ↓**), at the designated centre of worship, which later would be in Jerusalem.

2Sam 6:5, 21 *And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the LORD, with songs^w and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.* 📖 ...
²¹*And David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the LORD—and I will make merry before the LORD.* 📖

^w Septuagint, 1 Chronicles 13:8; Hebrew *fir trees*

This clearly demonstrates that being before God involves not only times of being quiet and solemn – as is also reflected in Deuteronomy 12:18 above.

Ps 63:2 *So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.* 📖

Here and in 16:11 below David speaks of meeting with or being with God, with a heightened sense of God's presence.

Ps 16:11 *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* 📖

Note that being in God's presence in the afterlife is possibly in view here.

✦ **The psalmist's yearning to come before God in his temple:**

Ps 84:1-2, 10 *How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! ²My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.* 📖 ... ¹⁰*For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.* 📖



Continue to live before God, in his presence . . .

See also:

- *God and Jesus Christ are always with their people . . .*, p. 803
- *. . . God's people are always with God – living in his presence*, p. 803
- *God's people have fellowship with him and Jesus Christ*, p. 813

The references amongst the following verses to dwelling in God's temple, in his presence, involve more than just simply being there. They also imply interaction with God, in particular being in regular communion and fellowship with him – and so are applicable to believers as they seek to live as such.

Isa 23:18b It will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who *dwell before the LORD*.

Ps 15:1-2 O LORD, who shall *sojourn in your tent*? Who shall *dwell on your holy hill*? ²He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; ...

Ps 23:6 Surely^x goodness and mercy^y shall follow me all the days of my life, and *I shall dwell^z in the house of the LORD forever*.^a

- ^x Or *Only*
- ^y Or *steadfast love*
- ^z Or *shall return to dwell*
- ^a Hebrew *for length of days*

Ps 27:4 *One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire^b in his temple*.

- ^b Or *meditate*

Ps 84:4 *Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!* Selah

Ps 91:1 *He who dwells in a the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty*.

Ps 92:12-13 The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³*They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God*.

Verse 13 indicates that the righteous live in fellowship with God, in which they “flourish” (cf. BBC).

Luke 24:52-53 And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,⁵³and *were continually in the temple blessing God*.

Acts 23:1 And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, *I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day*.”

Ps 43:3 Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them *bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!*

The psalmist's plea to be brought into God's presence is indicative of his desire to live in or at least be in God's presence. The term “holy hill” refers to Mount Zion. Note that this verse is part of a prayer for deliverance.

Ps 90:1 *Lord, you have been our dwelling place^c in all generations*.

^c Some Hebrew manuscripts (compare Septuagint) *our refuge*

The reference is apparently primarily to God being the people's refuge (cf. AMP). It is also indicative of the people living in his presence, under his protection.

. . . “Walk” with God

See also:

- **Gen 17:1** ; **1Ki 8:25** ; **1Ki 9:4**

To “walk” with God involves living before him. It suggests a personal and interactive relationship, inclusive of such things as prayer and trust in God.

Mic 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,^d and to *walk humbly with your God?*

- ^d Or *steadfast love*

Gen 5:24 *Enoch walked with God*, and he was not,^e for God took him.

- ^e Septuagint *was not found*

Gen 6:9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. *Noah walked with God*.

Mal 2:6 True instruction^f was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. *He walked with me in peace and uprightness*, and he turned many from iniquity.

- ^f Or *law*; also verses 7, 8, 9



Ps 56:13 For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, *that I may walk before God in the light of life.*



Ps 89:15 Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, *who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face, ...*

Walking with God entails walking in the spiritual light of his “presence” (CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT) and “kindness” (GNT).

✦ Cling to God:

Ps 63:8 *My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.*



Act before God – in awareness of his presence and scrutiny

See also:

- *Note: References to God’s or Jesus Christ’s presence and approval regarding a matter, p. 1628*

Verses that speak of acting “before” God, generally suggest that the action/s should be done in awareness of God’s presence and scrutiny.

Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; *walk before me, and be blameless, ...*”

‡ Hebrew *El Shaddai*

In contrast to the phrase “walk with God” (the subject of the previous subsection), most references to walking “before” God (cf. **1Ki 8:25** ↓; **1Ki 9:4** ↓) probably refer more to obeying him than fellowship with him – although they are applicable to and even inclusive of the latter. Note that “walk before God” in Psalms 56:13 in the previous subsection, probably has the fellowship aspect foremost in view.

1Ki 8:25 Now therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your sons *pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.*’

1Ki 9:4 And as for you, if you will *walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, ...*

Note that in addition to the above verses, other references to walking “before” God are: “The LORD, before whom I have walked” (Gen 24:40); and “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked” (Gen 48:15).

Deut 6:25 And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to *do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.*

Deut 18:13 *You shall be blameless before the LORD your God, ...*



2Chr 31:20 Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and *he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God.*

2Chr 27:6 So Jotham became mighty, because *he ordered his ways before the LORD his God.*

2Cor 2:17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, *in the sight of God we speak in Christ.*

2Cor 4:2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but *by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.*

Paul in effect claims to “tell the truth before God” (NLT; cf. **2Cor 12:19** ↓), commending himself to “everyone’s sense of what is right and wrong” (NirV®). As with 2:17 above and 12:19 below, this implies that Paul spoke not only in awareness of God’s presence, but also his scrutiny.

2Cor 12:19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? *It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved.*

Num 32:20-22, 27 So Moses said to them, “If you will do this, if you will *take up arms to go before the LORD for the war, and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before the LORD, until he has driven out his enemies from before him and the land is subdued before the LORD; then after that you shall return and be free of obligation to the LORD and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. ...* ²⁷*but your servants will pass over, every man who is armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord orders.*”



The references relating to going into battle “before the LORD” imply not only recognition of God’s presence and scrutiny or authorization, but also reliance on him. Note that the references to “before the LORD” in v. 22 appear to speak of God’s witness to and authorization of the outcome of the Israelites’ action.



✦ Jesus Christ's exhortation to the church in Sardis:

Rev 3:2 *Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.* 

Jesus Christ exhorts the church members to ensure that they do all that they should in God's eyes.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Know God

See also:

- *To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father*, p. 120
- *Jesus came to enable us to know God*, p. 511
- *God and Jesus Christ enable their people to know them*, p. 811
- *So God's people know him . . .*, p. 812
- *. . . and God's people know Jesus Christ*, p. 812

In verses included in this section, occurrences of the term "knowledge of" in relation to God (or Christ), have been interpreted as encompassing knowing God in a personal sense, rather than just simply knowing about him. (This is reflected in some of the comments.) Moreover, knowing God in a personal sense is intertwined with knowing about God. For it is in coming to know more about God that leads us to respond to and interact with God – and thus develop a personal relationship with him.

Subsections

- Know God and Jesus Christ
- Knowing God and Jesus Christ is linked to obeying their commands
- Knowing God is linked with loving and caring for others
- Knowing God and Jesus Christ aids godly living
- Knowing God and Jesus Christ is vital for spiritual growth
- Further blessings of knowing God and Jesus Christ
- Note: Not knowing God leads to sin and evil

Know God and Jesus Christ

Jer 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴but *let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.* For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."



Verse 24 may be presenting two things to boast about. Firstly, that one understands and knows God; and secondly, that he is the LORD who exercises love, justice and righteousness on earth. Alternatively the second thing may be intended as an extension of the first – i.e. the verse may be speaking of boasting that one knows that God is the LORD who exercises such wonderful characteristics.

1Jn 2:13 I am writing to you, fathers, because *you know him who is from the beginning*. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because *you know the Father*. 

John wrote this letter to believers partly because they knew Jesus Christ and the Father, one implication of which is that believers know – or should know – Jesus Christ and God. Note that the reference to "fathers", "young men" and "children" are interpreted by some to denote various stages of spiritual maturity or possibly chronological age groupings, but John may just be using these three terms to emphasize that he is referring to all of his readers. As such the achievements attributed to each of the three groups would be applicable to all of them.

1Chr 28:9 And you, Solomon my son, *know the God of your father* and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. 

Hos 6:6 For *I desire steadfast love^h and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings*. 

^h Septuagint *mercy*

Such "knowledge of God" (cf. **Hos 4:1** ↓) may well refer to or be inclusive of knowing God (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Hos 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for *the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; ...* 

The Israelites are censured here for having no "knowledge of God [from personal experience with Him]" (AMP; cf. NASB, NCV, NKJV, NRSV).



✦ Learn about Jesus Christ:

Eph 4:19-21 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that is not *the way you learned Christ!*—²¹assuming that *you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ...*

Verse 21 describes what was presumably the way that they had “learned Christ” (v. 20).

Knowing God and Jesus Christ is linked to obeying their commands

See also:

▪ [1Chr 28:9](#)

1Jn 2:3-4 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ...

Ex 33:13 Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.

Moses’ request to be shown God’s ways or “plans” (CEV, GNT, NCV, cf. v. 12), leading to knowing God better, was based on him having found favor with God. A key aspect of finding favor with God is obedience to him – reflecting the importance of obedience for knowing God.

Col 1:10 ... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

This appears to indicate that living a life worthy of and pleasing to the Lord, bearing fruit, leads to one “increasing in the knowledge of God” – or coming to “know God better and better” (NLT, cf. GNT). Note that alternatively some interpret the final phrase as referring to growing (spiritually) in or by the knowledge of God.

John 8:55 But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.

This is not necessarily indicating that keeping God’s word leads to one knowing God, but it does at least associate them.

John 14:21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

Jesus Christ will reveal himself or make himself known to those who obey his commands.

Knowing God is linked with loving and caring for others

1Jn 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Jer 22:16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the LORD.

Knowing God is manifested in caring for the poor and needy, amongst other things. Note that this verse may be implying that one who knows God reflects his character and deeds.

Knowing God and Jesus Christ aids godly living

Note that the previous two subsections also pertain to this topic.

2Pet 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us toⁱ his own glory and excellence,^j ...

ⁱ Or by

^j Or virtue

The Greek for “knowledge” indicates a complete or additional knowledge, here implying a very close, personal relationship with God. (BKC)

1Chr 28:9 And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

This suggests that knowing God encourages one to serve God.

Ps 9:10 And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Knowing God fosters trust or faith in him, as reflected in 2 Timothy 1:12 immediately below.

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.^k

^k Or what I have entrusted to him; Greek my deposit



Dan 11:32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but *the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.* 

This verse is referring to the evil ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, but is applicable to resisting any forces opposing God and his people.

Gal 4:8 Formerly, *when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.* 

This suggests that knowing God leads to freedom from ungodly things, such as idols (which are in view here).

2Pet 2:20 For if, after *they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.* 

Although speaking of false teachers who had fallen away from the faith, the verse still does indicate that knowing Jesus Christ enables one to escape “the defilements of the world”.

1Jn 4:6 We are from God. *Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* 

This is speaking of recognizing teachers as true or false, depending on whether they listened to the apostles. It can also be applied more generally. For people who know God recognize and listen to true authority – notably that based on the apostolic writings of the NT.

Knowing God and Jesus Christ is vital for spiritual growth

See also:

- [Phil 3:10](#) 

2Pet 3:18 But *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.* 

Believers grow spiritually through Christ’s grace and knowledge of him. As noted earlier, the latter probably encompasses personal knowledge of him or knowing him personally.

Col 1:10 ... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and *increasing in the knowledge of God.* 

As indicated earlier in *Knowing God and Jesus Christ is linked to obeying their commands...*, the final clause is often interpreted as referring to growing to know God better or increasing in knowledge of him. But because it can

alternatively be understood as speaking of “steadily growing and increasing in and by the knowledge of God” (AMP), it arguably pertains to this topic.

Eph 4:11-13 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^l and teachers,^m ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³*until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,ⁿ to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ...* 

^l Or *pastors*

^m Or *the shepherd-teachers*

ⁿ Greek *to a full-grown man*

Knowledge of Christ is important for unity amongst Christians. The verse also suggests that such knowledge leads to the spiritual maturity of the body of Christ (cf. v. 12). As such it is vital for the spiritual growth of believers – both individually and corporately.

Eph 3:17-19 ...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸*may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,* ¹⁹*and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* 

This is speaking of knowing the love of Jesus Christ rather than Jesus Christ himself, the theme of this subsection, but obviously the former is one aspect of the latter. Knowing Christ’s love develops one’s spiritual growth to the extent that one “may be filled with all the fullness of God” (v. 19b) – which appears to be referring to believers growing in God’s communicable attributes.

John 17:26 *I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.* 

The last phrase of the verse speaks of the intimate relationship the disciples had with Jesus Christ (cf. [Phil 3:8](#) ) which, like the aforementioned love of God, resulted from Christ making God known to them. One can thus infer from this verse that the more one knows God, the more one experiences God’s love and such a relationship with Jesus Christ. (For comment on “that the love with which you have loved me may be in them”, see [John 17:26](#) – under ... *God enables his people to love*, p. 880.)

Prov 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and *the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.* 

Knowing God brings spiritual understanding (cf. GNT, NCV).



Further blessings of knowing God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- [John 17:26](#) ↑

John 17:3 *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* 📖

Eternal life involves knowing God and Jesus Christ in an ongoing, progressive, intimate relationship. While this is not explicitly saying that eternal life is a blessing resulting from knowing God and Jesus Christ, it certainly at least associates knowing them with eternal life.

Phil 3:8-11 *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.* 📖

Paul appears to associate knowing Jesus Christ with gaining him (v. 8b) and being “found in him” (v. 9a). Thus it can be inferred that these – along with the associated righteousness (v. 9) – are in a sense blessings of knowing Jesus Christ. Additionally, in vv. 10-11, the concepts immediately following Paul’s declaration that he wants to know Christ (v. 10a) are understood as an elaboration on what knowing Christ involves or leads to. For comment on them, see [Phil 3:8-11](#) – under *Note: Desire God and things of God*, p. 1200.

2Pet 1:2 *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* 📖

Ps 36:10 *Oh, continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart!* 📖

The implication here is that God does do this – i.e. consistently shows his love to those who know him.

Ps 91:14 *Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.* 📖

✦ **Those who do not know God will be punished when Jesus Christ’s returns:**

2Thes 1:7b-10 *...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.⁹They will suffer the*

punishment of eternal destruction, away from^o the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,¹⁰when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. 📖

^o *Or destruction that comes from*

Similarly, on judgment day Jesus Christ will reject those whom he “never knew”, as indicated in Matthew 7:22-23 – “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Note: Not knowing God leads to sin and evil

See also:

- *Spiritual ignorance results in further sin and ungodliness*, p. 1673
- *The ungodly do not know God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit*, p. 1675

John 15:21 *But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.* 📖

John 16:2-3 *They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.³And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.* 📖

1Cor 15:34 *Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.* 📖

The sin referred to here is that of not believing in the resurrection of the dead – one which Paul links to ignorance of God.

Gal 4:8 *Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.* 📖

1Thes 4:3-5 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification:^p that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body^q in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ...* 📖

^p *Or your holiness*

^q *Or how to take a wife for himself; Greek how to possess his own vessel*



3Jn 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; *whoever does evil has not seen God.* 

Those who do evil do not know God (cf. AMP, NCV, Nlrv, NLT).

Ex 5:2 But Pharaoh said, *“Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”* 

1Sam 2:12-17 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. *They did not know the LORD.* ¹³The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant^r would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, ¹⁴and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. ¹⁵Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest’s servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw.” ¹⁶And if the man said to him, “Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish,” he would

say, “No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force.” ¹⁷*Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt.* 

^r Hebrew young man; also verse 15

Acts 17:29-30 Being then God’s offspring, *we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.* ³⁰*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ...* 

Sins such as idolatry (v. 29; cf. [Gal 4:8 ↑](#)) resulted from ignorance of God, with people thinking that his divine being was like a man-made image.

† No one who continues to sin has known Jesus Christ:

1Jn 3:6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; *no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Praying to God

See also:

- a) *Pray for Each Other (I): General*, p. 1322
- b) *Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask*, p. 1325
- *II. Praying in Hard Times*, p. 1954

Prayer is one of the greatest privileges and one of the greatest responsibilities of being a Christian. It is also one of the main sources of vitality for our lives as Christians, and is critical to our effectiveness in our endeavors for God's kingdom. At the end of our lives, quite possibly many of us will see prayer as the main thing that we should have done more often. As the saying goes, "Life is short; pray hard."

a) The Importance of Prayer

Subsections

- Prayer is portrayed as an offering to God and Jesus Christ
- Prayer is very powerful . . .
- . . . If we ask God for things, he will give or do them
- We help others by praying for them
- We are called on to pray

Prayer is portrayed as an offering to God and Jesus Christ

In being portrayed as an offering to God, the importance of prayer is shown in it being depicted as honoring and desirable to God, amongst other things.

Ps 141:2 *Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!* 

Acts 10:4 And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God." 

Cornelius's prayers and alms are portrayed as being akin to sacrifices offered up ("have ascended") to God. The last clause implies that they have and/or would be remembered by God.

Rev 8:3-4 And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and *he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne,* ⁴*and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God* from the hand of the angel. 

Incense was a key aspect to a number of OT offerings.

Rev 5:8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders *fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* 

Particularly with the correlation of the prayers with incense and in light of 8:3-4 above, this also appears to portray prayer as an offering – in this case to Jesus Christ.

Prayer is very powerful . . .

James 5:16-18 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and *pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*^a

¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and *he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.* ¹⁸*Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.* 

^a Or *The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power*

Mark 9:28-29 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "*Why could we not cast it out?*" ²⁹*And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."*^b 

^b Some manuscripts add *and fasting*

The power of prayer is such that demons can be driven out with it – in fact some demons cannot be driven out without it.

John 14:12-14 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and *greater works than these will he do*, because I am going to the Father. ¹³*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do*, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴*If you ask me^c anything in my name, I will do it.* 

^c Some manuscripts omit *me*

The promise that the disciples would do even greater things than what Jesus had been doing (v. 12) appears to be linked to prayer (vv. 13-14). As such it is a tremendous witness to the power and importance of prayer. (What the apostles would later accomplish, as recorded in Acts, is evidence of the validity of the promise.)



Acts 9:40 But Peter put them all outside, and *knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise."* And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 

This and 28:8 below demonstrate the incredible power of prayer or, more precisely, the power of God accessed through prayer.

Acts 28:8 It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And *Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him.* 

Isa 37:21-22 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: *Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, ²²this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him: "She despises you, she scorns you— the virgin daughter of Zion; she wags her head behind you— the daughter of Jerusalem.* 

Because Hezekiah prayed to God concerning Sennacherib and the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem, God promised to take action against Sennacherib, as poetically indicated in v. 22b. Consequently he delivered Jerusalem (cf. vv. 36-38). Note that the clause "she wags her head behind you" (v. 22) likely speaks of the people of Jerusalem scoffing at Sennacherib and his army fleeing (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT).

... If we ask God for things, he will give or do them

See also:

- [John 14:12-14](#) 
- [Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted](#), p. 1228
- e) [Epilogue: God's Response to Requests](#), p. 1229

The tremendous promises of answered prayer in this subsection are obviously not an automatic guarantee that every request will be granted. Amongst other things (cf. [d\) Making Requests](#), p. 1224), such prayer must be consistent with God and Jesus Christ's purpose and will (cf. [1Jn 5:14-15](#) ), which is largely what is meant by asking "in Jesus' name". (See the introductory comment on [Ask for things in Jesus Christ's "name"](#), p. 1225.) Nevertheless, these wonderful promises should greatly encourage us to pray fervently and persistently.

Matt 7:7-11 *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish,*

will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!* 

As with "ask", the terms "seek" and "knock" are references to prayer. The use of them along with "ask" is to emphasize the need for the listeners to persevere in prayer.

Matt 18:19-20 Again I say to you, *if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.* 

As indicated by the preceding verses (cf. vv. 15-18), the immediate reference is to prayer regarding an unrepentant brother who has sinned against you. However the promise here (v. 19) would appear to be applicable to any request consistent with coming together in Jesus Christ's name (v. 20) and so to furthering his objectives.

Matt 21:22 And *whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.* 

John 16:24 Until now you have asked nothing in my name. *Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.* 

1Jn 5:14-15 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that *if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.* 

✦ The apostles gave a very high priority to prayer:

Acts 6:4 But *we will devote ourselves to prayer* and to the ministry of the word. 

We help others by praying for them

Rom 15:30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to *strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ...* 

2Cor 1:10-11 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹*You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.* 

Phil 1:18b-19 Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹*for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...* 



Philem 1:22 At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for *I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.* 

Acts 12:5-7, 11 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. ⁶Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands.  ... ¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” 

This suggests that the church’s prayer for Peter was a key factor in his deliverance.

We are called on to pray

The fact that we are called on and even commanded to pray, points to the importance of prayer.

1Thes 5:16-18 Rejoice always, ¹⁷*pray without ceasing*, ¹⁸*give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* 

Quite likely the remark in v. 18b applies also to the directions in the preceding verses (vv. 16-17), as well as to that immediately preceding it (v. 18a).

Matt 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and *pray to your Father* who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 

Luke 18:1 And he told them a parable to the effect that *they ought always to pray* and not lose heart. 

Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, *be constant in prayer.* 

Eph 6:16-18 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸*praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ...* 

Col 4:2 *Continue steadfastly in prayer*, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 

1Thes 5:25 Brothers, *pray for us.* 

1Tim 2:1, 8 *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,*  ... ⁸*I desire then that in every place the men should pray*, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ... 

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Praying before God

See also:

- *c) Meet with God and Live before Him*, p. 1204
- *Pray anywhere*, p. 1222

Subsections

- *Pray before God, in his presence*
- *Approach God with confidence*
- *Be reverent . . .*
- *. . . and humble yourself before God*
- *Pray to God as a caring father*
- *Pray in the Holy Spirit*
- *Note: It is vital for prayer that we live righteously . . .*
- *. . . and so it is vital for prayer that we act rightly towards others*

Pray before God, in his presence

See also:

- *Come before God, meeting with him*, p. 1206

To pray “before” God involves being mindful of his presence as one prays.

2Sam 7:18 *Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?”* 

David went into “the Tent of the Lord’s presence” (GNT). The sacred ark of the covenant, which signified God’s presence, was in David’s time enclosed in an inner section of this tent and then later in the temple. To pray even in the outer



sections of these places was indicative of praying before God, in his presence (cf. [2Chr 6:24](#) ↓).

[1Ki 8:28, 59](#) Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day,  ... ⁵⁹Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, ... 

[1Ki 9:3](#) And the LORD said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. 

[2Chr 6:24](#) If your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and they turn again and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house, ... 

[Neh 1:4-6](#) As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. 

[Jer 36:7](#) It may be that their plea for mercy will come before the LORD, and that every one will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and wrath that the LORD has pronounced against this people. 

Approach God with confidence

See also:

- [Approach God . . .](#), p. 1205
- [. . . Draw near to God](#), p. 1205
- [Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted](#), p. 1228

We are to approach God with confidence both in regard to him receiving us and to him hearing our prayers.

[Eph 3:11-12](#) This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in *Christ Jesus our Lord*, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. 

This speaks of “access” (v. 12) into God’s presence, with prayer quite possibly being primarily in view.

[Heb 4:15-16](#) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. 

The phrase “draw near to the throne of grace” is probably referring to approaching God, to whom we can come because of our high priest (v. 15; cf. [Heb 10:19-22](#) ↓). But possibly it could instead be referring to approaching Jesus Christ, the high priest who is able to “sympathize with our weaknesses”. Alternatively, the writer may in fact not be attempting to distinguish between God and Jesus Christ.

[Heb 10:19-22](#) Therefore, brothers,^d since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 

^d Or brothers and sisters

The reference to Jesus’ body as “the curtain” (v. 20), is drawing a parallel between Jesus’ death which opened a way for believers to confidently enter into God’s presence, and the curtain which the high priest went through to enter the Most Holy Place of God’s presence in the temple. This link was emphatically affirmed by what took place when Jesus died – “And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” (Matt 27:51) This event symbolically pronounced that there is no longer any barrier to people themselves directly entering into God’s presence. Because of what our “great priest” (v. 21) has done, this privilege is no longer confined to just the high priest, nor do people need to have a human priest make representations to God on their behalf.

[1Jn 3:18-22](#) Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and whatever we ask we



receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 

By loving each other with actions and in truth we know that we belong to the truth, and set our hearts at rest in God's presence (vv. 18-19). As such we can have confidence before God when praying to him because we obey and please him.

1Jn 5:14 And *this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* 

✦ No one would dare of themselves to approach God:

Jer 30:21 Their prince shall be one of themselves; their ruler shall come out from their midst; I will make him draw near, and he shall approach me, for *who would dare of himself to approach me? declares the LORD.* 

Be reverent . . .

See also:

- *Worship God in reverence and awe . . .*, p. 1347
- *. . . Even bow and fall down before God*, p. 1348

Heb 5:7 In the days of his flesh, *Jesus^e offered up prayers and supplications*, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and *he was heard because of his reverence.* 

^e Greek *he*

Eph 3:14-16 For this reason *I bow my knees before the Father*, ¹⁵from whom every family^f in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ... 

^f Or *fatherhood*; the Greek word *patria* is closely related to the word for *Father* in verse 14

Kneeling in prayer – “fall to my knees and pray” (NLT) – is indicative of reverence for God, and submission to him. See *Postures and gestures used in prayer*, p. 1223.

1Chr 17:25 For you, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him. Therefore *your servant has found courage to pray before you.* 

That David needed courage to pray to God, reflects the awe he held for God and presumably the reverence in which he prayed.

Ecl 5:1-2, 7 ^g Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing

evil. ^{2h} Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.  ... ⁷For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity;ⁱ but *God is the one you must fear.* 

^g Ch 4:17 in Hebrew

^h Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

ⁱ Or *For when dreams and vanities increase, words also grow many*

The context involves approaching God, with vows being primarily in view (cf. vv. 3-6). Quite possibly “dreams” alludes to foolish or self-centered vows or prayers. As reflected in v. 3, the verse is saying that like much dreaming, many words are meaningless in God's presence (cf. NCV). Rather, when in God's presence one should have an overriding sense of awe and so fear and reverence of God (v. 7b), as reflected by the tone of vv. 1-2.

. . . and humble yourself before God

2Chr 33:12-13 And when he was in distress, *he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.* ¹³*He prayed to him*, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God. 

Ezra 8:21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, *that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey* for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. 

Dan 10:12 Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and *humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.* 

This appears to be referring to Daniel consistently being humble before God, not only when praying but obviously inclusive of it.

Gen 18:27-28 Abraham answered and said, “Behold, *I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.* ²⁸*Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?”* And he said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.” 

Abraham's words in v.27 imply humility, in making his request before God (v. 28b) – as do those of the centurion in making his request to Jesus below in Luke 7:6-7.



Deut 9:18-19 Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke him to anger. ¹⁹For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me that time also.

Moses in effect humbled himself before God, in prayer (v. 19b), by falling prostrate before him and fasting (cf. [Ezra 8:21](#) ↑) for forty days and forty nights (v. 18).

✦ The centurion's humble appeal to Jesus:

Luke 7:6-7 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. ⁷Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed.

Pray to God as a caring father

1Pet 1:17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ...

Matt 6:6-9 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ^j

^j Or Let your name be kept holy, or Let your name be treated with reverence

Matt 7:9-11 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Having a holy and loving Father in heaven should inspire us to make requests of him, doing so in awareness of him being such a Father. Note that the term "evil" (v. 11) is used here in a relative sense, in comparison to God and his standards, rather than in a general sense.

Luke 22:41-42 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

John 11:41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

Pray in the Holy Spirit

See also:

- [Worship God in spirit and by the Holy Spirit](#), p. 1346

Being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, believers are to pray "in the Spirit". As such we are to consciously rely on the Holy Spirit's help, to empower and guide us in our prayers.

Eph 6:16-18 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ...

Jude 1:20-21 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

✦ The Holy Spirit helps us in prayer:

Rom 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because^k the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

^k Or that

This appears to be speaking of the Holy Spirit helping believers (v. 26a) while they pray (v. 26b). As such, the Holy Spirit overcomes their ignorance as to what to pray for by interceding on their behalf. This action of the Holy Spirit has been linked with people praying in the Spirit. See also the introductory comment on [Worship God in spirit and by the](#)



Holy Spirit, p. 1346. Note that “with groanings” (v. 26) is unlikely a reference to the gift of tongues.

Note: It is vital for prayer that we live righteously . . .

See also:

- Acts 10:1-4 ↴
- *Prepare yourself to come before God, as shown in the OT practice of consecration*, p. 1204
- *God answers those who obey and please him . . .*, p. 1230
- *. . . God does not listen to those who do evil rather than good*, p. 1230
- *In righteousness* [how to give praise and thanks], p. 1256
- *We must live righteously to acceptably worship God . . .*, p. 1379
- *. . . Our offerings are not acceptable to God if our lives do not please him*, p. 1380
- *God hears the cries of the godly and rescues them . . .*, p. 1977

Ps 145:18 *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.* 

Calling on God “in truth” may be referring to praying with integrity, implying righteousness – the reason for its inclusion here. However, more precisely, it may well be speaking of praying with sincerity (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT). The two alternatives are not unrelated.

Prov 15:8 *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.* 

Prov 15:29 *The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.* 

2Tim 2:22 *So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.* 

Note that “call on the Lord” is not necessarily referring specifically to prayer here, although it would be inclusive of it or at least applicable to it.

James 5:16 *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*¹ 

¹ Or *The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power*

1Pet 3:12 *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.* 

1Pet 4:7 *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.* 

. . . and so it is vital for prayer that we act rightly towards others

Isa 58:3-4 *‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,^m and oppress all your workers. ⁴Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.* 

^mOr *pursue your own business*

Note that fasting and humbling oneself are being spoken of as being done in association with prayer.

Isa 58:9-10 *Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.* 

Mark 11:25 *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”ⁿ* 

ⁿ Some manuscripts add verse 26: *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses*

Holding something against someone betrays a lack of grace and is incompatible with both what God wants us to be and to his own character, and so is a barrier to fellowship with him and prayer to him. Furthermore, if we want God to treat us graciously, we then must in turn treat others as such. Note that similarly in Matthew 5:23-24 Jesus says that before making an offering to God, first be reconciled to any brother (or sister) with something against you – “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Acts 10:1-4 *At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ²a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.*



³About the ninth hour of the day^o he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, “Cornelius.” ⁴And he stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “*Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.*”

^o That is, 3 P.M.

Cornelius’s generosity to the poor (and his devoutness) went “hand in hand” with and in a sense supplemented his prayers.

1Tim 3:8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ...

1Pet 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you^p of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

^p Some manuscripts *since you are joint heirs*

‡ However, requests should not be made on the basis of any righteousness of our own, but on God’s mercy:

Dan 9:18 O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For *we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.*

☰

Daniel may be referring to his people’s great lack of righteousness, rather than implying that whatever degree of righteousness one might have is no basis on which to make requests of God. However, even so, his words are very much applicable to the latter. For whatever level of righteousness we might display in our own lives is in itself far short of what God requires of us and of what would be needed to impose on his will.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Physical Aspects of Prayer

Subsections

- Pray aloud or in your heart
- Pray anywhere
- Pray anytime
- Pray constantly



- Spend long periods alone in prayer – like Jesus did
- Keep alert to pray
- Postures and gestures used in prayer
- Note: Do not pray for show and do not babble on

Pray aloud or in your heart

Acts 4:24, 29-31 And when they heard it, *they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,* ... ²⁹And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants^a to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹And *when they had prayed*, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

^a Greek *bondservants*

Ps 3:4 *I cried aloud to the LORD*, and he answered me from his holy hill. Selah

Ps 142:1 *With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD.*

Gen 24:42-45 *“I came today to the spring and said, ‘O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you are prospering the way that I go, behold, I am standing by the spring of water. Let the virgin who comes out to draw water, to whom I shall say, “Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,” and who will say to me, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,” let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master’s son.’* ⁴⁵*“Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her water jar on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew water. I said to her, ‘Please let me drink.’*

1Sam 1:12-13 *As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.* ¹³*Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman.*

Pray anywhere

See also:

- [Acts 10:30](#) ↴; [Acts 16:25](#) ↴

The following verses illustrate that one can pray anywhere by giving examples of prayer in a variety of diverse locations.

Luke 18:10 *Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*

Matt 6:6 *But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

Acts 10:9 The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, *Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour^r to pray.*

^r That is, noon

Luke 5:16 *But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.*

Luke 6:12 In these days *he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.*

Acts 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to *the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer*, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.

Acts 21:5b *And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed ...*

Pray anytime

See also:

- [Acts 10:9](#) ↗; [Luke 6:12](#) ↗

Similar to the previous subsection, the following verses illustrate that one can pray anytime by giving examples of prayer at various times of the day.

Ps 119:147 *I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.*

Ps 88:13 But I, O LORD, cry to you; *in the morning my prayer comes before you.*

Ps 86:3 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for *to you do I cry all the day.*

Ps 55:17 *Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.*

Dan 6:10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. *He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.*

Acts 10:30 And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, *I was praying in my house at the ninth hour^s and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ...*

^s That is, 3 P.M.

Acts 16:25 *About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ...*

1Sam 15:11b And Samuel was angry, and *he cried to the LORD all night.*

Pray constantly

See also:

- [Ps 86:3](#) ↗; [1Sam 15:11b](#) ↗
- [Ask persistently](#), p. 1227
- [Pray constantly for other Christians](#), p. 1322

Luke 2:37b She did not depart from the temple, *worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.*

Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, *be constant in prayer.*

Eph 6:18 *... praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ...*

1Thes 5:17-18 *... pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

1Tim 5:5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and *continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ...*

1Cor 7:5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may *devote yourselves to prayer*; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.



Acts 1:14 All these with one accord were *devoting themselves to prayer*, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.^t 

^t Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verse 15

Acts 2:42 And *they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* 

Spend long periods alone in prayer – like Jesus did

See also:

- *Pray together*, p. 1351

Matt 14:23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, *he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,* ... 

Mark 1:35-37 And *rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.* ³⁶And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” 

The fact that he rose (to go out to pray) very early and apparently continued until he had been missed and eventually found by the disciples (cf. vv. 36-37), implies that Jesus spent a considerable amount of time praying, alone.

Luke 5:16 But *he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.* 

Luke 6:12 In these days *he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.* 

Luke 21:37 And every day he was teaching in the temple, but *at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet.* 

Jesus probably spent nights in this way so that he could pray for an extended time alone.

Keep alert to pray

Eph 6:18 ... praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. *To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,* ... 

Col 4:2 *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.* 

We are to devote ourselves to prayer, “keeping alert in it” (NASB; cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

1Pet 4:7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore *be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.* 

In order to pray we must “keep sound minded *and* self-restrained and alert” (AMP).

Matt 26:40-41 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹*Watch and pray* that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 

In light of the reference to keeping watch with him (v. 40), Jesus’ subsequent exhortation to watch – and pray – probably has watching out for imminent danger primarily in view. Nevertheless it still implies that his weary disciples needed to keep alert to pray (cf. NLT).

Mark 13:33 *Be on guard, keep awake.*^u For you do not know when the time will come. 

^u Some manuscripts add *and pray*

Here and in Luke 21:36 below, “awake” has the sense “alert” (cf. GNT, NASB, NIV, NLT, NRSV). The rendering in the text note suggests that we need to be alert in prayer (cf. AMP, NKJV).

Luke 21:36 But *stay awake at all times, praying* that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man. 

Postures and gestures used in prayer

See also:

- ... *Even bow and fall down before God*, p. 1348

Acts 9:40 But Peter put them all outside, and *knelt down and prayed*; and turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 

Acts 20:36 And when he had said these things, *he knelt down and prayed with them all.* 

Matt 26:39 And going a little farther *he fell on his face and prayed*, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” 



2Sam 7:18 Then King David went in and *sat before the LORD* and said, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?”

Mark 11:25 And *whenever you stand praying*, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”^v

^v Some manuscripts add verse 26: *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses*

John 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, *he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said*, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ...

Ex 9:29 Moses said to him, “As soon as I have gone out of the city, *I will stretch out my hands to the LORD*. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD’s.

1Tim 2:8 I desire then that in every place the men should *pray, lifting holy hands* without anger or quarreling; ...

Note: Do not pray for show and do not babble on

Matt 6:5-8 And *when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

We should pray in secret to God “who is in secret” (v. 6), rather than pray publicly to be seen by the public.

Mark 12:38-40 And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces ³⁹and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁰who devour widows’ houses and *for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.*”

Ecc 5:1-3, 7 ^w Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. *To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth.*

Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool’s voice with many words. ... For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear.

^w Ch 4:17 in Hebrew

^x Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

^y Or *For when dreams and vanities increase, words also grow many*

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Making Requests

See also:

- *Ask God to teach you his ways and commands*, p. 1171
- *Ask God to help you follow his ways and commands*, p. 1178
- *b) Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask*, p. 1325
- *Note: Commit to God whatever you do*, p. 1419
- *Ask God for wisdom . . .*, p. 1637
- *Ask God for forgiveness and restoration*, p. 1844
- *Ask God for help to avoid sin . . .*, p. 1855
- *b) Ask God for Help (I): General*, p. 1958
- *b) Have Faith in God and Pray* [what to do in persecution], p. 2011

Note that the teaching on prayer in general in the previous two sections – *b) Praying before God*, p. 1216, and *c) Physical Aspects of Prayer*, p. 1221 – is also very pertinent to this section on making requests to God in prayer.

Subsections

- *Ask for things in Jesus Christ’s “name”*
- *Ask earnestly . . .*
- *. . . Even fast when making requests of God*
- *Ask persistently*
- *Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted*
- *Give thanks and praise when asking*
- *Note: “The Lord’s Prayer” – the prayer Jesus gave as an example*



Ask for things in Jesus Christ's "name"

See also:

- *d) Jesus Christ's 'Name'*, p. 106
- *d) Epilogue: God's People Relate to God through Jesus Christ*, p. 795
- ... *Do God's work in the "name" of Jesus Christ*, p. 1418

In Jewish thought, a person's name represented or embodied their whole person – including their nature, authority and purpose/s. As such, to ask in Jesus Christ's "name" is to do so in accordance with all that his name signifies. It is prayer that is compatible with Jesus Christ himself and his purposes – and made on his authority (cf. NIV, ZBC).

When praying, people often use the phrase "in Jesus Christ's name" (or "in Jesus' name") to signify that they are asking for something in Jesus Christ's "name". The usage of the phrase does not by itself mean that the prayer is necessarily in accordance with Jesus Christ's "name". Along with being conscious of and acknowledging Jesus Christ's authority and role in our making requests to God, the content of the prayer is also at issue. Thus asking for things in Jesus Christ's "name" concerns both how we ask and what we ask.

Bear in mind that the deeper one's relationship with Jesus Christ becomes, the better-equipped one becomes to make requests of God in Jesus Christ's "name". (See also the introductory comment on *God's people ask the Father for things in Jesus Christ's "name"*, p. 798.)

John 14:13-14 *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask me^z anything in my name, I will do it.* ☞

^z Some manuscripts omit *me*

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so *that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.* ☞

Notice that the promise in the last part of the verse follows on from the presumption that those asking have been bearing fruit, fulfilling Jesus Christ's purposes in carrying out their appointed tasks.

John 16:23-24, 26 In that day you will ask nothing of me. *Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.* ☞ ... ²⁶In that day you will *ask in my name*, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ... ☞

"In that day" (vv. 23, 26) refers to the time following Jesus' ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – inclusive of the present age. The second statement in v. 26, probably means that we are able to ask God directly, in Jesus Christ's name; Jesus does not have to ask for us.

Matt 18:19-20 Again I say to you, *if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.* ☞

Coming together in Jesus Christ's name (v. 20) to pray (v. 19a) gives assurance of Jesus Christ's presence (v. 20b), even his participation in and sanction of the prayers. Thus it engenders prayer that is in accordance with his "name", effectively praying in his "name".

✦ Give thanks for things in Jesus Christ's "name":

Eph 5:18-20 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰*giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...* ☞

Ask earnestly . . .

See also:

- *Pray earnestly for other Christians*, p. 1322

Ps 119:58, 145 *I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.* ☞ ... ¹⁴⁵*With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes.* ☞

Dan 9:3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, *seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.* ☞

Wearing sackcloth and ashes was primarily a sign of sorrow, but it also – along with his fasting – reflects the intensity of Daniel's prayer.

Mark 5:22-23 Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and *seeing him, he fell at his feet ²³and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live."* ☞

Perhaps this is not a prayer as such, but obviously it is still an example of making an earnest request to Jesus or God.



Luke 22:44 And being in an agony *he* [Jesus] *prayed more earnestly*; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.^a 

^a Some manuscripts omit verses 43 and 44

Heb 5:7 In the days of his flesh, *Jesus*^b *offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears*, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 

^b Greek *he*

James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and *he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.* 

... Even fast when making requests of God

See also:

- [Dan 9:3](#) 
- [Deut 9:18](#) 
- [Worship God through prayer and even with fasting](#), p. 1349
- [In petitioning God, express your anguish over consequences of your sin – even with fasting](#), p. 1845
- [Fast as a means of humbling yourself before God](#), p. 1904

Fasting promotes and is indicative of earnestness in prayer (as clearly reflected in some of the following verses). For when we fast, the ache and craving of our hunger brings an earnestness and intensity to our prayers. In addition, our hunger serves as a persistent reminder to pray.

Note that the references to prayer in the following passages are not all explicitly regarding making requests, but in most at least it appears likely that requests were involved.

Judg 20:26-28 Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. *They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening*, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ²⁷*And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD* (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, ministered before it in those days), *saying, “Shall we go out once more to battle against our brothers, the people of Benjamin, or shall we cease?”* And the LORD said, “Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your hand.” 

2Sam 12:16 *David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.* 

In addition to fasting, David also expressed his earnestness in seeking God’s mercy for his sick child by spending the nights lying on the ground. Note that David’s request was in the face of God’s ordained judgment on him (cf. v. 14) and it was not granted (cf. v. 18).

2Chr 20:2-3 Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,^c from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar” (that is, Engedi). ³*Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.* 

^c One Hebrew manuscript; most Hebrew manuscripts *Aram* (Syria)

Ezra 8:21, 23 Then *I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods.*  ... ²³*So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.* 

Neh 1:4 As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and *I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.* 

Est 4:16 “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and *hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do.* Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” 

Although not mentioned, presumably prayer is in view.

Jonah 3:7-8 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: *Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water,* ⁸*but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God.* Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 

Mark 9:28-29 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹And he said to them, “*This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.*”^d 

^d Some manuscripts add *and fasting*

The text note indicates that in some manuscripts v. 29 speaks of “prayer and fasting”.

Luke 2:37 ... and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.^e She did not depart from the temple, *worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.* 

^e Or *as a widow for eighty-four years*



Luke 5:33 And they said to him, “*The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.*”

Acts 13:3 Then *after fasting and praying* they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, *with prayer and fasting* they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Ask persistently

See also:

- *Pray constantly*, p. 1222
- *Persist in prayer to God* [in hard times], p. 1963

Luke 11:5-10 And he said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷and he will answer from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything?’ ⁸*I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence^f he will rise and give him whatever he needs.* ⁹*And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.* ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

^f Or *persistence*

There are differing opinions as to whether this passage is primarily teaching persistence or boldness in prayer. The key is whether “impudence” (v. 8, cf. NCV, NIV) should be rendered “persistence” (cf. text note, CEV, GNT, NASB, NKJV, NLT, NRSV). The number of translations supporting “persistence” would suggest that this is quite possible. That persistence in prayer is probably the theme, is arguably also implied by the use of three similar terms for asking – i.e. “ask...seek...knock” (vv. 9-10). This is borne out in the NLT – “And so I tell you, keep on asking... Keep on looking... Keep on knocking...”

Luke 18:1-8 And he told them a parable to the effect that *they ought always to pray and not lose heart.* ²He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³And there was a widow in that city who *kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’* ⁴*For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵yet because this widow*

keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’ ⁶*And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?’* ⁸*I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”*

The latter part of v. 8 points to the need to persist in faith (cf. AMP) – as is required in persistence in prayer – until Christ’s return.

1Tim 5:5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and *continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ...*

Deut 9:18-19 Then *I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights.* I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke him to anger. ¹⁹For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But *the LORD listened to me that time also.*

That the Lord listened to Moses (v. 19b) indicates that he prayed (cf. vv. 26-29), presumably quite constantly, during the 40 days and nights of lying prostrate before God.

Isa 62:1, 6-7 *For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.* ... ⁶On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; *all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, ⁷and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.*

The speaker here is either the LORD (cf. NIV) or Isaiah (cf. AMP). If it is the LORD, then v. 1 is not speaking of persistence in prayer, although it would still be applicable to it. The term “watchmen” (v. 6a) depicts godly people – quite possibly the prophets, particularly if God is the speaker. While watching for God’s salvation (v. 1) or news of it, they persist in prayer to God – never silent, day or night. Likewise all godly people are called on (vv. 6b-7) to give themselves and God no rest, petitioning God – until he establishes Jerusalem as “a praise in the earth”.



Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted

See also:

- [Luke 18:7-8](#) ↑
- [Have faith that God and Jesus Christ will do what you ask](#), p. 1094
- [If we have faith nothing will be impossible](#), p. 1098
- [Approach God with confidence](#), p. 1217
- [Note: Believe that God will hear you and answer your prayer – and tell him so](#), p. 1969

Matt 21:18-22 In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again!” And the fig tree withered at once. ²⁰When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither at once?” ²¹And Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, *if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.* ²²*And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.*”

Belief is vital in petitioning God, particularly in regard to things that seem impossible, as Jesus figuratively points out (v. 21; [Mark 11:22-24](#) ↓). But belief is not merely making yourself “believe” what you do not really believe. Instead, it involves an understanding of God’s will and genuinely trusting in God to fulfill his will (cf. ZBC).

Mark 11:22-24 And Jesus answered them, “*Have faith in God.* ²³*Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.* ²⁴*Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received^g it, and it will be yours.*”

^g Some manuscripts *are receiving*

These verses are from the parallel passage in Mark to that of the above passage from Matthew 21. Note that Jesus uses a similar illustration in Luke 17:6 (although he does not expressly relate it to prayer): “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

James 1:6-8 *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

Verse 8 implies that one who doubts when making requests, in a sense cannot make up his mind (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). For he wavers between belief of sorts (as shown in asking) and unbelief (as shown in doubting).

James 5:14-15 *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

The broader context of the whole of Scripture would suggest that all prayer, including prayer offered in faith for healing, is still subject to God’s will. (See [Ask for things in Jesus Christ’s “name”](#), p. 1225, and [God and Jesus Christ grant anything we ask that is in accordance with their will . . .](#), p. 1231. Also note the refusal of Paul’s request to have the thorn in his flesh removed, 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; and that Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus, 2 Timothy 4:20.) Some commentators qualify the sickness spoken of here, seeing it as only referring to sickness brought about by sin, or as meaning a spiritual weakness or weariness; but most interpret it as speaking of sickness generally. Note that the anointing with oil (v. 14b) may be medicinal treatment, although some view it as being of spiritual significance. Either way it is done “in the name of the Lord”, acknowledging that healing is ultimately from him.

Ps 5:3 *O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you^h and watch.*

^h Or *I direct my prayer to you*

Particularly if the alternative rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), David appears to speak of making requests of God and then watching, presumably in faith, for God to answer.

1Chr 5:20 *And when they prevailed over them, the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried out to God in the battle, and he granted their urgent plea because they trusted in him.*

Presumably the Israelite’s trust encompassed the belief that God would answer their prayers.

‡ **Everything is possible for those who believe:**

Mark 9:22-23 *And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” ²³And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.”*



Give thanks and praise when asking

See also:

- *Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times*, p. 1973

Part of the reasoning as to why we ought to give thanks and praise when making our request/s of God, is that it acknowledges and helps us bear in mind God's blessings – including past answers to prayer – and in doing so reinforces our faith in making our request/s.

Phil 4:6 ...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything *by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* 

Note that the use of "supplication" appears to underline the need to make "definite requests" (AMP).

1Chr 16:4 Then he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, *to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel.* 

To "invoke" means to call on or appeal to God in prayer, which involves making requests.

Dan 6:10-11 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and *prayed and gave thanks before his God*, as he had done previously. ¹¹Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel *making petition and plea before his God.* 

Col 4:2 *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.* 

1Tim 2:1 First of all, then, *I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ...* 

Philem 1:4 *I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ...* 

Ps 66:17 *I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was onⁱ my tongue.*^j 

ⁱ Hebrew *under*

^j Or *and he was exalted with my tongue*

The psalmist's cries to God for help were accompanied by praise.

Ps 71:12-16 O God, *be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!* ¹³*May my accusers be put to shame and consumed; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt.* ¹⁴*But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more*

and more. ¹⁵*My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.* ¹⁶*With the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.* 

Note: "The Lord's Prayer" – the prayer Jesus gave as an example

Matt 6:9-13 *Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.^k ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,^m ¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."ⁿ* 

^k Or *Let your name be kept holy, or Let your name be treated with reverence*

^l Or *Let your kingdom come, let your will be done*

^m Or *our bread for tomorrow*

ⁿ Or *the evil one*; some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*

The clause "hallowed be your name" (v. 9) means may your name "be honored" (NLT, cf. CEV, GNT) or "always be kept holy" (NCV™). In v. 10, "your will be done" is speaking of people acting in accordance with God's will and/or the fulfillment of God's plans for the world. In v. 13, "lead us not into temptation" may have the sense "don't let us yield to temptation" (NLT; cf. NIV). Alternatively "temptation" may have a more general sense, referring to "hard testing" (GNT; cf. NRSV). Note that the conclusion of "The Lord's Prayer" as it is often prayed in church is contained in the text note.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Epilogue: God's Response to Requests

Note that a number of the subsections in the previous sections regarding how to pray are very pertinent to the theme of this section – because for prayer to be answered, it should be presented appropriately.



Subsections

- God answers those who obey and please him . . .
- . . . God does not listen to those who do evil rather than good
- God and Jesus Christ grant anything we ask that is in accordance with their will . . .
- . . . Further verses regarding prayer and God's will
- Sometimes God may not appear to answer, or does not answer immediately
- Sometimes God and Jesus Christ refuse requests
- Examples and affirmations of God answering prayer
- Further promises and prophecies of God answering prayer

God answers those who obey and please him . . .

See also:

- *Note: It is vital for prayer that we live righteously . . .*, p. 1220
- *. . . and so it is vital for prayer that we act rightly towards others*, p. 1220

1Jn 3:21-22 Beloved, *if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;*²²*and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.* 

As noted earlier, the expression “if our hearts do not condemn us” (v. 21) refers to having a clear conscience before God, from obeying and pleasing him (v. 22b; cf. v. 18).

John 9:31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but *if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.* 

John 15:7-8, 16 *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.  . . .¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and *appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.* 

Being in Jesus Christ (v. 7) – knowing, believing and obeying his words – produces prayer that is consistent with Jesus Christ's purpose and will. Such prayer will be answered. Regarding v. 16, the promise to answer prayer appears to be based on one obediently bearing fruit, as alluded to earlier. However some commentators consider it to be primarily related to the preceding clauses regarding being chosen and

appointed by Jesus Christ. Either way it would seem that prayer regarding one's work for God is largely in view.

Ex 33:17 And the LORD said to Moses, *“This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.”* 

The final clause points to Moses' close relationship with God, which is indicative of the fact that he obeyed and pleased God (as per the preceding clause).

Dan 9:23 *At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved.* Therefore consider the word and understand the vision. 

As with being known by God (cf. [Ex 3:17 ↑](#)), being “greatly loved” by God indicates that one obeys and pleases God, amongst other things.

. . . God does not listen to those who do evil rather than good

See also:

- *. . . Our offerings are not acceptable to God if our lives do not please him*, p. 1380

Job 35:12-13 *There they [wicked people] cry out, but he does not answer, because of the pride of evil men.*¹³*Surely God does not hear an empty cry, nor does the Almighty regard it.* 

Ps 66:18 *If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.* 

Prov 21:13 *Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.* 

Prov 28:9 *If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.* 

Isa 1:15 *When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.* 

Isa 59:1-2 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;²*but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.* 

Jer 11:10-11, 14 *They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone*



after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers. ¹¹Therefore, thus says the LORD, Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Though they cry to me, I will not listen to them. ¹²... ¹⁴“Therefore do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble. ¹⁵”

Note that in v. 14 God indicates that the people’s judgment was fixed; their doom was sealed. As such there was no point even righteous Jeremiah praying for them.

Lam 3:42-44 *We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven. ⁴³“You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us, killing without pity; ⁴⁴you have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through. ⁴⁵”*

Ezek 8:17-18 Then he said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? *Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations that they commit here, that they should fill the land with violence and provoke me still further to anger? Behold, they put the branch to their^o nose. ¹⁸Therefore I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.” ¹⁹”*

^o Or my

Note that it is not clear what the expression “put the branch to their nose” (v. 17) means. It may have been a reference to a pagan worship ritual or possibly even an insulting gesture towards God. Whatever the case, it was obviously offensive to God (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Ezek 20:31 *When you present your gifts and offer up your children in fire,^p you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. ³²”*

^p Hebrew and make your children pass through the fire

Mic 3:4 *Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil. ⁵”*

Zec 7:13 *“As I^q called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the LORD of hosts, ... ¹⁴”*

^q Hebrew he

John 9:31a *We know that God does not listen to sinners ... ³²”*

[†] God does not respond to those who ask with wrong motives:

James 4:3 *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴”*

God and Jesus Christ grant anything we ask that is in accordance with their will . . .

See also:

▪ *Ask for things in Jesus Christ’s “name”, p. 1225*

1Jn 5:14-15 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that *if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. ¹⁶”*

Deut 10:10 I myself stayed on the mountain, as at the first time, forty days and forty nights, and *the LORD listened to me that time also. The LORD was unwilling to destroy you. ¹¹”*

Here Moses refers to his earlier request that God would not destroy his people (cf. 9:26). The last statement suggests that God granted Moses’ request as it was in line with his will.

Matt 8:2-3 And behold, a leper^r came to him and knelt before him, saying, “*Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.*” ³*And Jesus^s stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.”* And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴”

^r Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

^s Greek he

“I will” (v. 3) has the sense “I am willing” (AMP, NASB, NIV, NKJV). In stating his willingness to heal, Jesus affirmed that the leper’s request was in accordance with his will, and so he granted the request.

John 14:13-14 *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask me^t anything in my name, I will do it. ¹⁵”*

^t Some manuscripts omit me

Asking for things in Jesus Christ’s name is akin to asking for things that are in accordance with his will. As noted earlier, praying in Jesus Christ’s name signifies prayer that is compatible with his person and purpose. Thus it is in effect prayer that is reflective of or in accordance with his will – and is answered.



... Further verses regarding prayer and God's will

Matt 6:9-10 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.^u ¹⁰Your kingdom come, *your will be done,*^v on earth as it is in heaven. 📖

^u Or *Let your name be kept holy, or Let your name be treated with reverence*

^v Or *Let your kingdom come, let your will be done*

The believer's request that "your will be done" (v. 10) reflects the need for the Christian's own will and requests to conform to God's will. Note that the instruction to pray that God's will be done on earth also reflects the need to ask for specific things to be done that are in line with his will.

Luke 22:41-42 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.*" 📖

Jesus requested that his impending suffering be avoided – if this was in God's will. The request was not in accordance with God's will and so was not granted.

Rom 1:9-10 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰*always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.* 📖

Paul appears to pray that his request be in accordance with God's will or, similarly, be achieved through God's will. The case appears to be the same in 15:31-32 below.

Rom 15:30-32 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to *strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,* ³¹*that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,* ³²*so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.* 📖

✦ **The Holy Spirit intercedes for believers in accordance with God's will:**

Rom 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because^w *the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* 📖

^w Or *that*

Most commentators understand v. 27b to mean that the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers with petitions that are in accordance with God's will. However v. 27b could instead be

read as meaning, "the Spirit intercedes for the saints, which is in accordance with God's will."

Sometimes God may not appear to answer, or does not answer immediately

See also:

▪ *Prayer desperately asking God how long suffering and his apparent inaction or wrath is to continue,* p. 1957

Job 19:7 *Behold, I cry out, 'Violence!' but I am not answered; I call for help, but there is no justice.* 📖

Job 30:20 *I cry to you for help and you do not answer me; I stand, and you only look at me.* 📖

"I stand" presumably refers to standing up to pray – "when I pray" (GNT) and/or to standing up in a form of appeal to God.

Ps 22:1-2 *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.* 📖

Ps 80:4 O LORD God of hosts, *how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?* 📖

The people (or the psalmist) are in effect asking how much longer God would reject their prayers.

Ps 88:9b, 14 *Every day I call upon you, O LORD; I spread out my hands to you. ... ¹⁴O LORD, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?* 📖

Hab 1:2 O LORD, *how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?* 📖

✦ **God may answer without us realizing it:**

Job 33:13-14 *Why do you contend against him, saying, 'He will answer none of man's words'?* ¹⁴*For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it.* 📖

^x Hebrew *his*

^y Or *He will not answer for any of his own words*

The use of this reference here should be qualified. Firstly, the meaning of the Hebrew in v. 13 is not clear, as evidenced by the second text note. Secondly, "God speaks" (v. 14) is not necessarily referring specifically to answering prayer (cf. vv. 15-20), although it may well be inclusive of it.



Sometimes God and Jesus Christ refuse requests

Deut 3:23-26 And I pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying, ²⁴O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours? ²⁵*Please let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.* ²⁶*But the LORD was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the LORD said to me, 'Enough from you; do not speak to me of this matter again.* 

2Sam 12:14-16, 18a Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD,^z the child who is born to you shall die.” ¹⁵Then Nathan went to his house. And the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and he became sick. ¹⁶*David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.*  ... ¹⁸*On the seventh day the child died.* 

^z Masoretic Text *the enemies of the LORD*; Dead Sea Scroll *the word of the LORD*

2Cor 12:7-10 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,^a a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸*Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.* ⁹*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 

^a Or *hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited*

This is an example of God or Jesus Christ not granting a request (v. 9a) because they have a higher purpose (vv. 9b-10).

Mark 14:35-36, 39 And going a little farther, *he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.* ³⁶And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”  ... ³⁹*And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.* 

Obviously Jesus’ request here was not answered (cf. ch. 15). (Note the comment on Luke 22:41-42, above in . . . *Further verses regarding prayer and God’s will.*)

✦ God can do far more than all we ask:

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ...* 

It can be inferred from this that sometimes God declines to answer requests because he has a plan far better “than all that we ask or think”.

Examples and affirmations of God answering prayer

See also:

- *Give thanks and praise when asking*, p. 1229
- *Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times*, p. 1973
- e) *Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering and Cries*, p. 1975

Gen 24:12-15, 18-19 And he said, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. ¹³Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴*Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this^b I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.” ¹⁵*Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.*  ... ¹⁸*She said, "Drink, my lord." And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink.* ¹⁹*When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.”* *

^b Or *By her*

Note that God began to answer the prayer of Abraham’s servant before he had finished praying (v. 15).

1Sam 1:27 *For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him.* 

1Ki 13:6 And the king said to the man of God, “Entreat now the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.” And *the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored to him and became as it was before.* 



1Ki 17:21-22 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, let this child’s life^c come into him again.”²²And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. 

^c Or soul; also verse 22

1Chr 4:9-10 Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, “Because I bore him in pain.”^d¹⁰Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm^e so that it might not bring me pain!” And God granted what he asked. 

^d Jabez sounds like the Hebrew for pain

^e Or evil

Note that the latter part of Jabez’s request (v. 10) alludes to the association of his name with pain (cf. v. 9 text note), reflective of his birth (v. 9b).

Ps 21:1-2 O LORD, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults! ²You have given him his heart’s desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah 

The “desire of his heart” and “request” (v. 2) are probably concerning his victories and the deliverance involved (v. 1).

Ps 65:2, 5 O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come.  ... ⁵By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; ... 

Ps 99:6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called upon his name. They called to the LORD, and he answered them. 

Acts 9:40 But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 

Acts 12:5, 11 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.  ... ¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” 

Acts 28:8 It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. 

James 5:17-18 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. 

Further promises and prophecies of God answering prayer

Isa 41:17-18 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the LORD will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them. ¹⁸I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 

Isa 49:8 Thus says the LORD: “In a time of favor I have answered you; in a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, ... 

With the Messiah being in view, “I have answered you” may have a future sense (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) or fulfillment – i.e. it appears to be a promise.

Isa 65:24 Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. 

This is an eschatological prophecy and promise speaking of the people of the renewed Israel. (Zechariah 13:9 below also has the renewed Israel of the end time in view.)

Jer 29:10-12 For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare^f and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 

^f Or peace

Jer 33:3 Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. 

Zec 13:9 And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’ 



Rom 10:12-13 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, *bestowing his riches on all who call on him.* ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” 

✦ Jesus knew God always heard him:

John 11:41-42 So they took away the stone. And *Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard*

me. ⁴²*I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



Exalting God

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I. Instructions

We exalt God by doing such things as glorifying, honoring, praising and thanking him. Exalting God is a very common theme in the Bible and should also be a prominent part of our lives. In fact the Bible tells us to praise and thank God constantly. The significance of exalting God is underlined by the first answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism which says: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

a) Glorify and Honor God

Subsections

- Glorify God, giving glory to him
- Honor God
- Exalt God
- Glorify and honor God by thanksgiving and praise
- Glorify and honor God and Jesus Christ by how you live . . .
- . . . Glorify and honor them by doing godly work and good deeds
- Live so that others will glorify God because of what you do
- Not glorifying and honoring God has detrimental outcomes
- Note: God honors and gives glory to his people

Glorify God, giving glory to him

See also:

- 1Tim 1:17 ↴; Rev 5:13 ↴; Rev 7:11-12 ↴
- *Jesus Christ is honored and glorified*, p. 129

Ps 22:23 You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, *glorify him*, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! 

Ps 86:12 I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and *I will glorify your name forever*. 

Isa 24:15 Therefore in the east^a *give glory to the LORD; in the coastlands of the sea, give glory to the name of the LORD, the God of Israel*. 

^a Hebrew *in the realm of light*

Isa 42:12 *Let them give glory to the LORD*, and declare his praise in the coastlands. 

Luke 2:14 "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*"^b 

^b Some manuscripts *peace, good will among men*

Phil 4:20 *To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen*. 

When used at the end of a sentence "Amen" means "so be it" or "may this be fulfilled" (cf. NEL).

Honor God

1Tim 1:17 *To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.*^c Amen. 

^c Greek *to the ages of ages*

1Tim 6:15-16 ... which he will display at the proper time—*he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen*. 

As well as ascribing honor to God in the final statement, Paul also honors God in his preceding eloquent description of God (vv. 15b-16a).

Rev 5:13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "*To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!*" 

Rev 7:11-12 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, "*Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen*." 

Isa 26:13 O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but *your name alone we bring to remembrance*. 

This speaks of acknowledging and honoring God as their God (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NRSV).

✚ **Be jealous for God's honor:**

Num 25:11-13 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that *he was jealous with my jealousy among them*, so that I



did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy.
¹²Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace,
¹³and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because *he was jealous for his God* and made atonement for the people of Israel.’”

In v. 11, “he was jealous with my jealousy among them” speaks of Phinehas acting in jealousy for God, on God’s behalf (cf. NLT, NRSV). By taking decisive measures against a man who behaved with disdain towards God (cf. vv. 6-8), Phinehas acted to preserve God’s honor (vv. 11, 13; cf. NCV, NIV).

Exalt God

To exalt God, we “lift him up” – such as by acknowledging and declaring his surpassing greatness. As noted earlier (and implied by the title and contents of this chapter) it encompasses glorifying and honoring God – as well as praising and thanking him.

Ex 15:2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and *I will exalt him.*

Ps 34:3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and *let us exalt his name together!*

Ps 99:5 *Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!*

Isa 25:1 *O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.*

Isa 12:4 And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, *proclaim that his name is exalted.*”

Ps 18:46 The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and *exalted be the God of my salvation—*

Precisely speaking, this and 57:5 below are expressing a prayer or desire that God be exalted, which in itself is acting so as to exalt him.

Ps 57:5 *Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!*

Glorify and honor God by thanksgiving and praise

Ps 50:23 *The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!*

Ps 66:2 *...sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!*

One can infer from this verse that we should praise God in such a way that it is glorious and so glorifies him.

Ps 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song; *I will magnify him with thanksgiving.*

Isa 24:15-16a Therefore in the east^d *give glory to the LORD; in the coastlands of the sea, give glory to the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.* ¹⁶*From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise, of glory to the Righteous One.*

^d Hebrew *in the realm of light*

Luke 2:13-14 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host *praising God and saying,* ¹⁴*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*^e

^e Some manuscripts *peace, good will among men*

Rom 14:6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. *The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.*

The reference to “the one who abstains” giving thanks, would appear to speak of thanking God for the food that he does eat.

Rom 15:8-9 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order *that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”*

2Cor 4:15 For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people *it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.*

Paul speaks of thanksgiving – with the consequent glorifying of God – as being in response to God’s grace bringing more and more people to respond to the gospel.

Ps 22:23 You who fear the LORD, *praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!*



This and the following verses do not say or so clearly imply that we glorify/honor God by praising/thanking him. However the close usages of the terms arguably do point to this.

Ps 86:12 *I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.* 

Dan 4:34, 37 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and *praised and honored him* who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;  ... ³⁷Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, *praise and extol and honor the King of heaven*, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble. 

To “extol” God is to enthusiastically praise him.

Glorify and honor God and Jesus Christ by how you live . . .

See also:

- [Rom 14:6](#) 
- [John 17:10](#) 
- *Note: In doing God's will, Jesus brought glory to God . . .*, p. 557
- *Live so that others will glorify God because of what you do*, p. 1242
- *By ungodly actions we bring dishonor to God before other people . . .*, p. 1245

God's people are identified with God and Jesus Christ. As such their lives are in a sense a reflection on God and Jesus Christ. So when God's people live good lives they bring glory and honor to God and Jesus Christ.

1Cor 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or *whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* 

Josh 7:19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, *give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise^f to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.*” 

^f Or *and make confession*

The expression “give glory to the LORD God” is used here as an exhortation to glorify God by telling the truth, as reflected in the last statement.

John 21:18-19 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you

wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹*(This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.)* And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” 

By putting God's interests ahead of his own life – showing that he considered pleasing God to be more important than keeping his life – Peter would glorify God as a martyr. In conjunction with this, Jesus may also have meant that the means of Peter's death would be dreadful, indicating that Peter's preparedness to face such a death would heighten the extent of his glorification of God through it.

Rom 4:20-21 *No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,* ²¹*fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.* 

In believing that God would fulfill his promise to him, Abraham “brought glory to God” (NLT).

Rom 15:7 Therefore *welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.* 

1Cor 6:20 ... for you were bought with a price. So *glorify God in your body.* 

Primarily in view here is honoring God by abstaining from sexual sin.

Phil 1:9-11 And it is my prayer *that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,* ¹⁰*so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,* ¹¹*filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.* 

The expression “to the glory and praise of God” (v. 11b) may well have all of the preceding things listed in view (cf. NIV). However, “the fruit of righteousness” (v. 11a) may primarily be in view. Note that if this term is referring to good deeds (cf. CEV, NCV) rather than to righteous qualities (cf. GNT), then the reference could be placed in the following subsection.

Phil 1:20 ... as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but *that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.* 



2Thes 1:9-10 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from^g the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰when *he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints*, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

☰

^g Or *destruction that comes from*

This appears to be saying that Jesus Christ will “receive glory because of his holy people” (NCV™), with presumably their “holy” lives being primarily in view.

1Pet 4:16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ☰

This is often understood to be speaking of giving glory or praise to God (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV), but it could well instead be referring to responding to the suffering in a way which glorifies God – which would pertain to the theme of this subsection.

. . . Glorify and honor them by doing godly work and good deeds

See also:

- **1Pet 2:12** ↓

John 15:8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ☰

Here “fruit” appears to refer to – or at least be applicable to – the product of work done for God’s kingdom. By bearing such good “fruit” we bring glory to God, showing ourselves to be disciples of the one sent by him.

John 17:4, 10 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ☰ ... ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ☰

Jesus Christ glorified God through what he did (v. 4). In turn Jesus Christ was glorified through his disciples (v. 10; cf. GNT, NCV). The latter is presumably in part at least speaking of things such as following him, testifying to him being the glorious Son of God and possibly also their lives generally – all of which demonstrated his grace and power.

2Cor 8:19, 23 And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as *we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself* and to show our good will. ☰ ... ²³As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, *they are messengers^h of the churches, the glory of Christ.* ☰

^h Greek *apostles*

In v. 23b, Paul quite possibly means that the “brothers” “bring glory to Christ” (GNT, NCV, NLT; cf. CEV) in themselves and by their work as “messengers of the churches”.

2Thes 1:11-12 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and *may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power*, ¹²so that *the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you*, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. ☰

1Pet 4:10-11 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹*whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.* To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ☰

☰

The first clause in v. 11 probably indicates that we should rely on God’s help in what we say in ministering to others. Similarly, the second means that we should serve others with, and in reliance on, God’s strength. This brings glory to God when people perceive the work he is doing, through us.

Prov 3:9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; ... ☰

Honor God by giving to him of your assets and what you produce.

Prov 14:31 Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but *he who is generous to the needy honors him.* ☰

‡ The church should bring glory to God by what it is and does:

Eph 3:20-21 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹*to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.* Amen. ☰

The expression “to him be glory in the church” (v. 21) appears to be implying that God is to be glorified by the church in what it is and does – which would fittingly parallel the reference to God being glorified by Jesus Christ, God being glorified in his person and by what he does (and has done). This interpretation also corresponds well with the preceding clause, which speaks of God’s power at work “within us” (v. 20).



Live so that others will glorify God because of what you do

Matt 5:16 In the same way, *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.* 

We are to let our good deeds “shine out for all to see” (NLT), so that others will glorify God, with our good deeds being indicative of the goodness and praiseworthiness of God, to whom we belong.

2Cor 9:13 *By their approval of this service, theyⁱ will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ...* 

ⁱ Or you

Gal 1:23-24 They only were hearing it said, *“He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”* ²⁴*And they glorified God because of me.* 

The churches of Judea glorified God for Paul’s conversion after Paul having been such a fierce adversary and for what Paul was doing in preaching the faith.

1Pet 2:12 *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.* 

Note that “the day of visitation” probably refers to the day of God’s judgment or Christ’s return. Some commentators see it as possibly referring to any time God grants salvation to such convicted non-believers.

Not glorifying and honoring God has detrimental outcomes

Jer 13:16 *Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you look for light he turns it into gloom and makes it deep darkness.* 

Acts 12:21-23 On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. ²²And the people were shouting, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!” ²³*Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.* 

This implies that Herod accepted the praise given to him, praise that no man is worthy of. As he accepted it instead of

acknowledging that only God is deserving of such glory, Herod was struck down and died.

Rev 16:8-11 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed^j the name of God who had power over these plagues. *They did not repent and give him glory.* ¹⁰*The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish* ¹¹*and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores.* They did not repent of their deeds. 

^j Greek *blasphemed*; also verses 11, 21

This suggests that the refusal of people to repent and glorify God (v. 9b) means that they will continue to suffer the effects of the fourth judgment (vv. 8-9a) and be subject to the subsequent judgment (vv. 10-11).

Dan 5:23, 26-28 ... but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but *the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.*  ... ²⁶This is the interpretation of the matter: *MENE, God has numbered^k the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷TEKEL, you have been weighed^l in the balances and found wanting; ²⁸PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.* ^m 

^k *MENE* sounds like the Aramaic for *numbered*

^l *TEKEL* sounds like the Aramaic for *weighed*

^m *PERES* (the singular of *Parsin*) sounds like the Aramaic for *divided* and for *Persia*

Mal 2:2 *If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.* 

Rom 1:21 For although they knew God, *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* 

Hos 2:8-9 *And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. ⁹Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness.* 



Israel had “not noticed, understood, or realized” (AMP) that God was the ultimate source of what they produced and had. Acknowledging God (cf. NCV, NIV) as this source is honoring to him. To not do so (v. 8) is failing to honor him and can lead to damaging consequences (v. 9).

✦ **We should seek God’s glory rather than our own:**

Ps 115:1 *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!* 

Note: God honors and gives glory to his people

See also:

- *On delivering them, God may even honor or exalt his people*, p. 909

Deut 26:19 ... and that *he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made*, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised. 

1Sam 2:30 Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,’ but now the LORD declares: ‘Far be it from me, for *those who honor me I will honor*, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.’ 

Job 36:7 He does not withdraw his eyes from *the righteous, but with kings on the throne he sets them forever, and they are exalted.* 

Ps 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; *you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* 

The anointing of a guest’s head with oil was a way of welcoming or honoring the guest (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Ps 89:15-16 Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face, ¹⁶who exult in your name all the day and *in your righteousness are exalted.* 

Ps 148:14 *He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints*, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the LORD! 

The term “horn” in this sense speaks of power, possibly a strong king is in view (cf. NCV, NIRV). The clause “praise for all his saints” may then speak of them being exalted through this empowerment. Alternatively it may speak of praise for

them to offer (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV), in which case the verse would not be pertinent to this subsection.

John 12:26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. *If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.* 

John 17:22-23 *The glory that you have given me I have given to them*, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 

There are various interpretations of what “glory” is referring to here, including: continuing Christ’s glorious reconciliatory work; the manifestation of Christ in them (v. 23a); and eternal glory that will be consummated in heaven.

2Cor 3:18 *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,^a are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.* For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 

^a Or *reflecting the glory of the Lord*

Believers reflect Jesus Christ’s glory, with their characters being transformed into his likeness, increasingly reflecting and even manifesting Christ’s glory.

2Thes 1:11-12 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. 

1Pet 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ... 

Josh 4:14 *On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.* 

1Chr 29:25 *And the LORD made Solomon very great in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.* 

✦ **God is the glory of his people:**

1Sam 15:29 And also *the Glory of Israel* will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret. 

The glory which God’s people have primarily emanates from God – from their relationship and association with him. In a sense they partake of his glory, as the one to whom they belong and serve.



Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Do Not Dishonor God

Subsections

- Do not blaspheme God
- Do not by your actions indirectly blaspheme or profane God
- By ungodly actions we bring dishonor to God before other people . . .
- . . . Live a life worthy of God and Jesus Christ – and all that is of them
- Do not profane or defile things of God
- Additionally, do not despise God . . .
- . . . and do not scoff at God
- Note: We must treat God as holy

Do not blaspheme God

See also:

- *Note: Like a person, the Holy Spirit can be treated wrongly,* p. 150

Blaspheming God is to speak – or act (cf. the following subsection) – in a way that detracts from the honor of God.

Lev 24:15-16 And speak to the people of Israel, saying, *Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin.* ¹⁶*Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death.* All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, *when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.* 

The NT does not advocate the death penalty, but the OT's stipulation of the death penalty for these actions does serve to underline the seriousness of them – and foreshadow the even more severe eternal judgment to come.

Ex 22:28 *You shall not revile God,* nor curse a ruler of your people. 

To “revile” is to verbally attack someone in an abusive and/or insulting fashion. As such, to revile God is effectively blaspheming him.

Lev 22:32 *And you shall not profane my holy name,* that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you, ... 

God's name is profaned when one acts towards him in a blasphemous, derogatory or disrespectful manner.

1Sam 3:13 *And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God,^o and he did not restrain them.* 

^o Or *blaspheming for themselves*

2Ki 19:22 *Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Holy One of Israel!* 

By his messengers, Sennacherib king of Assyria had insulted and blasphemed “the Holy One” – the outcome of which would be a horrific defeat (cf. v. 35).

1Tim 1:19b-20 By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,²⁰ among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, *whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.* 

Paul had expelled these men from the church, putting them out into the cold world – Satan's domain – till they learnt not to blaspheme.

Matt 12:24, 31-32 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, *“It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”*  ... [Jesus:] ³¹Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but *the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.* ³²And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but *whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.* 

There are a number of interpretations of what Jesus meant by blaspheming or speaking against the Holy Spirit. One of the most prominent is that Jesus meant that by attributing to Satan what realistically could only have been the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 24), the Pharisees were willfully rejecting the Holy Spirit – and thus God – a sin that can never be forgiven; “an eternal sin” (Mark 3:29) (cf. ZBC).

‡ Do not use God's name in vain:

Ex 20:7 *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.* 

This command to not take the LORD's name in vain is applicable to any misuse of it. Misuses include: deceptive use of it – which is likely primarily in view – such as in taking an oath in his name in order to deceive; intentionally



blaspheming it; and disrespectful or irreverent use. Note that any such misuse of God's name blasphemes it.

Do not by your actions indirectly blaspheme or profane God

See also:

- [Rom 2:23-24](#) ↓

Num 15:30-31 But *the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD*, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹Because *he has despised the word of the LORD* and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.

To act "with a high hand" (v. 30) is to do so "defiantly" (NASB, NIV). Verse 31a explains why sinning defiantly blasphemes God.

Ezek 20:27, 39 Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: In this also *your fathers blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously with me.* ... ³⁹"As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: Go serve every one of you his idols, now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but *my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols.*

The "gifts" (v. 39b) may have simply been ones the people offered to their idols in worship of them, or alternatively ones that they offered to God (cf. NLT) while hypocritically also worshipping idols. In either case, being God's people yet turning to idol worship profaned God's name (cf. [Lev 18:21](#) ↓).

Lev 18:21 *You shall not give any of your children to offer them^p to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.*

^p Hebrew *to make them pass through* [the fire]

Lev 19:12 *You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.*

Lev 22:2 *Speak to Aaron and his sons so that they abstain from the holy things of the people of Israel, which they dedicate to me, so that they do not profane my holy name: I am the LORD.*

Here "abstain" is either speaking of in some way separating themselves from (cf. AMP, NKJV) or being careful with (cf. NASB, NLT, NRSV) or, similarly, respectful of (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV) the holy things.

Prov 30:9 ... lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and *steal and profane the name of my God.*

Amos 2:7b ... *a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned;* ...

The reference is to sexual intercourse.

Ezek 43:7-8 ... and he said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. And *the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies^a of their kings at their high places,^r ⁸by setting their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them. They have defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed, so I have consumed them in my anger.*

^a Or *the monuments*; also verse 9

^r Or *at their deaths*

Verse 8 may well be speaking of the kings in particular building next to God's temple (cf. CEV, GNT) and then defiling it and God's name by committing detestable practices (vv. 7-8) in such close proximity.

Prov 14:31 *Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.*

Likewise 17:5a says, "Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker ...". The implication is that we should not do such things for it would be in effect showing contempt for God, he being their Maker.

By ungodly actions we bring dishonor to God before other people . . .

By ungodly actions God's people bring dishonor to God (as reflected in the previous subsection). This is particularly so when the actions are known to other people, as it publicly reflects badly on God as the one to whom his people belong. The dishonor is heightened if the other people consequently blaspheme or show contempt for God.

Rom 2:21b-24 While you preach against stealing, *do you steal?* ²²You who say that one must not commit adultery, *do you commit adultery?* You who abhor idols, *do you rob temples?* ²³*You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.* ²⁴*For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."*

When those who are supposedly God's people act contrary to his commands – particularly if they advocate such



commands – not only do they dishonor God (v. 23) but in response to their hypocrisy others blaspheme God (v. 24; cf. [2Sam 12:13-14](#) ↓; [1Tim 6:1](#) ↓).

2Sam 12:13-14 David said to Nathan, “*I have sinned against the LORD.*” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴Nevertheless, because *by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD,*^s the child who is born to you shall die.”

^s Masoretic Text *the enemies of the LORD*; Dead Sea Scroll *the word of the LORD*

If the alternative translation in the text note is to be preferred, then the sense of the first half of v. 14 may well be: “by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme” (NKJV; cf. AMP, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Ezek 36:19-20 *I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them. ²⁰But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land.’*

Being God’s people and yet being taken into exile by the Babylonians – which was God’s punishment for their sin (v. 19b) – made it appear to other nations that God could not care for his people (v. 20). Thus the people’s actions led to God’s name being profaned.

1Tim 6:1 Let all who are under a yoke as slaves^t regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

^t Greek *bondservants*

... Live a life worthy of God and Jesus Christ – and all that is of them

1Thes 2:12 ... we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to *walk in a manner worthy of God*, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Col 1:9-10 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to *walk in a manner worthy of the Lord*, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

3Jn 1:6 ... who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey *in a manner worthy of God.*

The expression “in a manner worthy of God” may be speaking of how John’s readers should carry out his instruction, i.e. meaning that they should do so as servants and representatives of God. As such, this would be illustrative of acting and living in a way that is worthy of God. Alternatively the focus may be on the people they were to help, who were worthy of receiving such help (cf. CEV), themselves being people of God. Note that in Romans 16:2 Paul similarly asks his readers to: “... welcome her [Phoebe] in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints ...”

Rev 3:4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and *they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

Acts 5:41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that *they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*

The “name” is “the name of Jesus” (NLT; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV). The apostles appear to have understood that they had been counted worthy by Jesus Christ of being associated with his name – to the point of suffering for it. It can thus be inferred that they had been living lives worthy of Jesus Christ – which is exemplary to all believers.

Phil 1:27 *Only let your manner of life be worthy^u of the gospel of Christ*, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ...

^u Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

Note that this and the following verses speak of living lives worthy of things that are of or associated with God and Jesus Christ.

Eph 4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called*, ...

2Thes 1:5 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may *be considered worthy of the kingdom of God*, for which you are also suffering—

2Thes 1:11 To this end we always pray for you, *that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power*, ...

This verse implies that: we ought to live a life worthy of God’s calling (cf. [Eph 4:1](#) ↑); and that such a life involves having good purposes and doing things prompted by faith in God.



Acts 13:46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since *you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life*, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 

This suggests that we should aspire to be “worthy of eternal life” – and so should live accordingly.

✦ **Anyone who does not put Jesus Christ first and follow him is not worthy of him:**

Matt 10:37-38 *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* ³⁸*And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.* 

To be worthy of Jesus Christ we must put his interests ahead of even those closest to us (v. 37) and follow him, shouldering the accompanying hardships (v. 38).

Do not profane or defile things of God

See also:

- [Mal 1:11b-13](#) 

Lev 19:5-8 When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted. ⁶It shall be eaten the same day you offer it or on the day after, and anything left over until the third day shall be burned up with fire. ⁷*If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is tainted; it will not be accepted,* ⁸*and everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned what is holy to the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from his people.* 

Having been sacrificed to God (v. 5), a fellowship offering was in effect given to God, and holy to him (v. 8). To eat it on the third day would profane or desecrate it (vv. 7-8). For by then the meat would be in poor condition for eating and to eat it would be to use something of God in a substandard, impure form and manner – which would be dishonoring to him.

Lev 22:9 *They shall therefore keep my charge, lest they bear sin for it and die thereby when they profane it:* I am the LORD who sanctifies them. 

This is likely speaking of profaning God’s “charge” or command (cf. GNT, NLT); alternatively the place of worship may be in view (cf. CEV, NRSV).

Lev 22:15-16 *They shall not profane the holy things of the people of Israel, which they contribute to the LORD,* ¹⁶*and so cause them to bear iniquity and guilt, by eating their holy things: for I am the LORD who sanctifies them.* 

Note that the people were to share in eating some types of offerings (cf. [Lev 19:5-6](#) ) but not other types, as is in view here.

Ezek 20:13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and *my Sabbaths they greatly profaned.* “Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them. 

Ezek 22:26 *Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.* 

The expression “done violence to my law” most likely refers to breaking the law (cf. GNT, Nlrv, NLT).

Ps 74:7 They set your sanctuary on fire; *they profaned the dwelling place of your name*, bringing it down to the ground. 

Likewise 79:1 says, “O God, the nations ... have defiled your holy temple ...”

Jer 7:30 For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight, declares the LORD. *They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by my name, to defile it.* 

Ezek 5:11 Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely, *because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw.* ^v *My eye will not spare, and I will have no pity.* 

^v Some Hebrew manuscripts *I will cut you down*

✦ **Jesus cleansed the temple of misuse:**

Mark 11:15-17 And they came to Jerusalem. And *he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.* ¹⁶*And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.* ¹⁷*And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”* 

The merchants were using God’s temple to make unjust gain. Such misuse of the temple was in a real sense desecrating it.



Additionally, do not despise God . . .

To despise God – or to scoff at God (as per the following subsection) – is demeaning and dishonoring to God.

Num 14:11, 23 *And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?”* ...²³shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it.

Num 15:31 *Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.*

Num 16:30 *But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD.*

1Sam 2:17, 29-31 *Thus the sin of the young men [the sons of Eli] was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt.* ...²⁹Why then do you scorn^w my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?³⁰Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,’ but now the LORD declares: ‘Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.’³¹Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.

^wSeptuagint; Hebrew *kick at*

Mal 1:6-8, 11b-13a *“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’”*⁷*By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that the LORD’s table may be despised.*⁸*When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.* ...¹¹ ... *For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.*¹²*But you profane it when you say that the Lord’s table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised.*¹³*But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts.*

The “table” (vv. 7b, 12) is a reference to the altar, probably alluding to the fact that the priests ate from the sacrifices offered on the altar. In placing polluted/defiled food (v. 7) and imperfect sacrifices (v. 8) on God’s altar, the priests were effectively saying by their actions that they considered it contemptible (vv. 7b; 12b-13), implying that such inferior things were good enough for it. In treating God’s altar as such, they were essentially despising him (v. 7) and profaning his name (v. 12).

Ps 28:5 *Because they do not regard the works of the LORD or the work of his hands, he will tear them down and build them up no more.*

Similarly Isaiah 5:12 says, “... they do not regard the works of the LORD or the work of his hands ...” Such disregard for God or things of him is akin to despising God.

. . . and do not scoff at God

2Chr 36:16 *But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.*

Ps 73:11 *And they say, “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?”*

Such scoffing is one reason for the end that will befall the wicked (cf. vv. 17-20).

Prov 3:34 *Toward the scorers he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.*^x

^x Or *grace*

Those who scorn God may be primarily in view here (cf. CEV).

Isa 5:18-19 *Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes,¹⁹who say: “Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!”*

Verse 19 is likely to have been spoken in sarcasm, with those concerned in essence scoffing at God.

Isa 28:14, 22 *Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers, who rule this people in Jerusalem!* ...²²*Now therefore do not scoff, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard a decree of destruction from the Lord GOD of hosts against the whole land.*

Those in view here were probably scoffing at Isaiah rather than directly at God, but as he spoke the words of God they were in effect scoffing at God.



Acts 13:41 “Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.”

2Pet 3:3-7 ... knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” ⁵For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Such scoffers (vv. 3-4) can be correlated with “the ungodly” (v. 7). As such they face destruction (v. 7).

✦ **Wicked fools claim that God does not exist:**

Ps 14:1 *The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”* They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.

Note: We must treat God as holy

Isa 8:13 But the LORD of hosts, *him you shall honor as holy.* Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

Isa 29:23 For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, *they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob* and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

Num 20:12 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to *uphold me as holy* in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”

Lev 22:32 *And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel.* I am the LORD who sanctifies you, ...

Lev 10:1-3 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized^y fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. ²And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said, ‘Among

those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.” And Aaron held his peace.

^y Or *strange*

Regarding what God says in v. 3, translations differ as to whether God is saying: that he will show himself to be holy/sanctified, thus displaying his glory; or that he must be treated as holy/sanctified, and accordingly be honored. If the latter is correct, this passage is indicating that by acting contrary to a particular command of God (v. 1) Aaron’s sons dishonored God, not treating him as holy – resulting in their deaths (v. 2).

Ps 96:9 *Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;*^z tremble before him, all the earth!

^z Or *in holy attire*

The first clause appears to indicate that we should worship God being mindful of or in view of “all his holy splendor” (NLT). The alternative rendering in the text note offers another possible meaning.

1Pet 3:15 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ...

✦ **Prayer that God’s name would be treated as holy:**

Matt 6:9 *Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”*^a

^a Or *Let your name be kept holy, or Let your name be treated with reverence*

This request is essentially that God would be treated as holy, and so with the greatest respect and honor. The fact that it is the first request in the Lord’s Prayer is indicative of the priority it should be for us.

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) Praise and Thank God

See also:

- *Jesus Christ is offered praise and blessing*, p. 129

Subsections

- Praise God
- Bless God
- Calls for all things everywhere to praise and bless God
- Praise and bless God constantly
- Praise and bless God forever
- Give thanks to God
- Give thanks to God always
- Blessings of giving praise and thanks to God
- Note: God has formed his people to bring himself praise and honor

Praise God

See also:

- Ps 104:35 ↓; Ps 135:19-21 ↓; Dan 2:19-23 ↓; Ps 106:2 ↓

Ps 113:1 *Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD!* 📖

Ps 146:1 *Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!* 📖

Ex 15:2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; *this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.* 📖

Deut 10:21 *He is your praise.* He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. 📖

Ps 18:3 I call upon *the LORD, who is worthy to be praised*, and I am saved from my enemies. 📖

Ps 66:2 ... sing the glory of his name; *give to him glorious praise!* 📖

Ps 92:1 *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; ...* 📖

Ps 96:4 For *great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised*; he is to be feared above all gods. 📖

Ps 100:4a *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!* 📖

Ps 109:30 With my mouth I will give great thanks to the LORD; *I will praise him in the midst of the throng.* 📖

Ps 149:6 *Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, ...* 📖

✦ **We cannot praise God to the full extent that he deserves:**

Ps 106:2 *Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD, or declare all his praise?* 📖

Bless God

To bless another is to benefit them. We can do this by acting or speaking in a way that benefits them. The same is true of blessing God. Regarding actions, we can bless God by acting in ways that: bring glory or honor to him; and/or benefit his cause (e.g. proclaiming the gospel). Regarding speech, we can bless God by acknowledging and proclaiming his attributes and deeds. Such verbal blessing of God is akin to praising him. It is such speech that a number of commentators have in view when defining what the Bible means by blessing God.

However, when we speak specifically of blessing another (e.g. "bless you" or "may he/she be blessed") what we are doing is akin to praying for them, that God would act for their benefit. As such, it can be argued that at times when we speak specifically of blessing God, we are effectively praying that he be benefited, e.g. that he would cause his name to be glorified. This is reflected by the like clauses "hallowed be your name" (Matt 6:9) and "blessed be your name" (cf. Neh 9:5; Job 1:20-21; Ps 113:2; Dan 2:20). These clauses have the same structure and sense. As the former one is obviously a prayer request – the first in the Lord's Prayer – it would appear that so too is the latter one.

Bear in mind that when the Bible speaks specifically of blessing God, usually (if not always) it has in view God's wondrous characteristics or great things that he has done for us. So it is clearly associated with praise or thanksgiving.

Ps 103:1-5, 22b *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!* ²*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,* ³*who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,* ⁴*who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,* ⁵*who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* 📖 ... ²²... *Bless the LORD, O my soul!* 📖



Josh 22:33 And the report was good in the eyes of the people of Israel. And *the people of Israel blessed God* and spoke no more of making war against them to destroy the land where the people of Reuben and the people of Gad were settled. 📖

1Chr 29:10, 20 Therefore *David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever.* 📖 ...
²⁰*Then David said to all the assembly, "Bless the LORD your God." And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed their heads and paid homage to the LORD and to the king.* 📖

Neh 8:6 And *Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands.* And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 📖

Neh 9:5b *Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.* 📖

Ps 72:19 *Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!* 📖

Ps 100:4b Give thanks to him; *bless his name!* 📖

Ps 104:35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! *Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!* 📖

Ps 113:2 *Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore!* 📖

Ps 134:1-2 *Come, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who stand by night in the house of the LORD! ²Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD!* 📖

Ps 135:19-21 *O house of Israel, bless the LORD! O house of Aaron, bless the LORD! ²⁰O house of Levi, bless the LORD! You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD! ²¹Blessed be the LORD from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!* 📖

Dan 2:19-23 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. *Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.* ²⁰Daniel answered and said: *"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ²¹He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ²²he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. ²³To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and*

praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter." 📖

Luke 1:64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and *he spoke, blessing God.* 📖

Luke 2:27-32 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸*he took him up in his arms and blessed God* and said, ²⁹"Lord, now you are letting your servant^b depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ^{32a}a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." 📖

^b Greek *bondservant*

James 3:9a With it *we bless our Lord and Father ...* 📖

1Pet 1:3a *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!* 📖

Calls for all things everywhere to praise and bless God

Ps 69:34 *Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them.* 📖

Ps 103:20-22 *Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! ²¹Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! ²²Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!* 📖

Ps 113:3 *From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!* 📖

Ps 145:21 My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and *let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.* 📖

Ps 148:1-12 *Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights! ²Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! ³Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! ⁴Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! ⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created. ⁶And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.^c ⁷Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, ⁸fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word! ⁹Mountains and all hills, fruit*



trees and all cedars! ¹⁰Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds! ¹¹Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! ¹²Young men and maidens together, old men and children! 📖

^c Or it shall not be transgressed

Along with angels and people, the psalmist poetically calls upon other creatures (cf. [Ps 69:34](#) †; [Ps 145:21b](#) †), various objects and other things in nature (cf. [Ps 103:22](#) †) to praise God.

[Ps 150:1, 6](#) Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!^d 📖 ... ⁶Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! 📖

^d Hebrew *expanse* (compare Genesis 1:6-8)

[Isa 42:10](#) Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. 📖

[Rom 15:11](#) And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." 📖

[Rev 19:5](#) And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great." 📖

[Rev 5:13](#) And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" 📖

This is not actually a call for all things everywhere to praise or bless God (as per this subsection's heading) but obviously it is an example of it.

‡ God receives praise from all over the earth:

[Ps 48:10a](#) As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. 📖

Praise and bless God constantly

[Heb 13:15](#) Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. 📖

[Ps 34:1](#) I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 📖

[Ps 71:6, 8, 14](#) Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. 📖 ... ⁸My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day. 📖 ... ¹⁴But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. 📖

[Ps 84:4](#) Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah 📖

[Ps 119:164](#) Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules. 📖

[Luke 24:52-53](#) And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple blessing God. 📖

[Rev 4:8](#) And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" 📖

Praise and bless God forever

[Ps 70:4](#) May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!" 📖

[Ps 145:1-2, 21](#) I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. ²Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. 📖 ... ²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever. 📖

[Ps 41:13](#) Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen. 📖

This may mean that God should be blessed "from everlasting to everlasting" – as per the theme of this subsection – or alternatively that blessing should be given to God who is "from everlasting to everlasting".

[Ps 79:13](#) But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise. 📖

[Ps 111:10b](#) His praise endures forever! 📖

God should – and indeed will be – praised forever. (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

[Ps 115:18](#) But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD! 📖



Ps 146:2 *I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.*

Isa 38:20 The LORD will save me, and *we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the LORD.*

Rom 1:25 ... because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than *the Creator, who is blessed forever!* Amen.

As per the theme of this subsection, the final phrase may mean that God “is to be” (GNT, NLT; cf. NCV, Nlrv) or “will be” (CEV) praised/blessed forever. Alternatively, rather than being used as a verb, “blessed” may be intended as an adjective, describing God’s state as “blessed”. The same can be said regarding the similar clause in 2 Corinthians 11:31 below.

2Cor 11:31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, *he who is blessed forever*, knows that I am not lying.

Rev 5:13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, *“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

In speaking of blessing being “to” God “forever and ever” this verse and 7:11-12 below may be acknowledging God as having and/or being deserving forever of blessing. Alternatively or in conjunction with this, the verses may be meaning or implying that we are to bless God forever (as per the theme of this subsection). Note that making such statements is in itself offering a blessing.

Rev 7:11-12 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, *“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”*

Give thanks to God

As with praising God, thanking God for things exalts him, for by doing so we attribute praiseworthy things to him.

Ps 92:1 *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; ...*

Ps 95:2 *Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

Ps 100:4 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

The gates and courts – as with the “gates of righteousness” (Ps 118:19 ↓) – are those of the temple.

Ps 109:30 *With my mouth I will give great thanks to the LORD; I will praise him in the midst of the throng.*

Ps 118:19, 28 Open to me the gates of righteousness, *that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.* ...
²⁸*You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you.*

Ps 136:1-3, 26 *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. ²Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever. ³Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever; ... ²⁶Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

Jonah 2:9 *But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!*

Eph 5:4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but *instead let there be thanksgiving.*

Col 1:11-12 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹²*giving thanks^e to the Father*, who has qualified you^f to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

^e Or *patience, with joy giving thanks*

^f Some manuscripts *us*

Col 3:15-16 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. *And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Col 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, *being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*



Give thanks to God always

See also:

- *Always thank God for other Christians because of their faith and love*, p. 1324

Eph 5:19-20 ... addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰*giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father* in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...

In v. 20 “everything” may be intended to include even bad things; Paul at least appears to be indicating that we should give thanks to God amidst everything that happens (cf. **1Thes 5:18** ↓). If one is able to find something to be thankful for in regard to bad things – particularly if one can continue on giving thanks – one’s spirit will be rejuvenated and strengthened.

1Thes 5:18 ... *give thanks in all circumstances*; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Col 2:7 ... rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, *abounding in thanksgiving*.

We should be “abounding *and* overflowing ... with thanksgiving” (AMP). As such we should “always be thankful” (NCV™).

Col 3:17 *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Even while we do other things we should give thanks to God (cf. NCV, NLT). Note that Paul exhorts the Colossians to be thankful in each of three consecutive verses (cf. **vv. 15-16** ↑), highlighting its importance.

1Chr 23:30 *And they were to stand every morning, thanking and praising the LORD, and likewise at evening, ...*

These duties of the Levites provide an example of regular thanksgiving.

Ps 30:12b *O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!*

Ps 44:8 In God we have boasted continually, and *we will give thanks to your name forever*. Selah

‡ **Thanksgiving is to be made for all people:**

1Tim 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and *thanksgivings be made for all people, ...*

This appears to be saying that we should give thanks for everyone (cf. CEV). Alternatively, it could possibly be speaking of giving thanks on behalf of others.

Blessings of giving praise and thanks to God

Ps 50:14-15 *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, ¹⁵*and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.**

‡ Or *Make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*

Ps 63:4-5 *So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.* ⁵*My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, ...*

In saying that his “soul will be satisfied” (v. 5a), David may well be referring to the satisfaction that praising God (vv. 4, 5b) brought to him. Alternatively he could have in view God satisfying his needs as one of God’s people, who praises him.

Ps 89:15-16 *Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face,* ¹⁶*who exult in your name all the day and in your righteousness are exalted.*

Those who participate in enthusiastic worship of God are blessed (v. 15a). Persistently exulting or reveling in God (v. 16a) is itself a blessing, for it involves much joy. Moreover, God exalts them (v. 16b).

Ps 92:1-3 *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;* ²*to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night,* ³*to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.*

In saying that it is “good” to praise God, the psalmist probably primarily means that it is appropriate and right to do so, because of who God is and what he has done. However he may also be pointing to the fact that praising God is good for us. As such the verse would be particularly pertinent to this subsection. The following references similarly speak of the pleasantness of praising God.

Ps 135:3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; *sing to his name, for it is pleasant!*^h

^h Or *for he is beautiful*

Ps 147:1 Praise the LORD! *For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant,*ⁱ and a song of praise is fitting.

ⁱ Or *for he is beautiful*

Note: God has formed his people to bring himself praise and honor

God has formed his people to bring himself praise and honor. This praise and honor occurs through such things as: the praise that they themselves give God; the things that God does for them, drawing praise from themselves and others;



and that what God makes them to become reflects God's greatness, bringing him renown, praise and honor.

Isa 43:20-21 *The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.*

In v. 20 the wild animals are figuratively said to honor God, to reflect the honor and praise given to God for his provision of water for his people as they returned from exile through desolate land. Verse 21 then speaks of the people themselves praising God, with presumably his provision being largely in view.

1Pet 2:9 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Isa 60:21 *Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.^j*

^j Or that I might display my beauty

The future renewed Israel is in view here and below in the verses from Isaiah and Jeremiah 33:8-9. What God will make Israel will reflect his splendor (cf. [Isa 61:3 ↓](#)), no doubt bringing him praise and honor.

Isa 61:3 *... to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.^k*

^k Or that he may display his beauty

Isa 61:10-11 *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations.*

The phrase "righteousness and praise" (v. 11b) probably refers to the righteousness and praise of all nations (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). As such this speaks of God bringing himself praise in the sight of and even from other nations (v. 11) through what he has done for his people (v. 10b). Correspondingly, his people themselves exult in him (v. 10a). For comment on the term "robe of righteousness" (v. 10), see

[Isa 61:10](#) – under ... *in which we should rejoice and exult*, p. 1284.

Jer 33:8-9 *I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. ⁹And this city^l shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.*

^l Hebrew *And it*

Eph 1:4b-6, 11-14 *In love ⁵he predestined us^m for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ... ¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guaranteeⁿ of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,^o to the praise of his glory.*

^m Or before him in love, having predestined us

ⁿ Or down payment

^o Or until God redeems his possession

Note that the final clause (v. 14b) may have in view God sealing believers with the Holy Spirit (v. 13b), as well as them acquiring their inheritance (v. 14a) – or his redemption of them (cf. text note) – "to the praise of his glory".

Jer 13:11 *For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the LORD, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen.*

God formed Israel in part to bring himself praise and glory, but they largely failed to live up to this goal.

✚ God seeks glory for himself:

John 8:50 *Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.*

Here Jesus is speaking, stating that God seeks glory.

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) How to Give Praise and Thanks (I): General

See also:

- *God's people give thanks and praise to God through Jesus Christ*, p. 797
- *b) Worshiping before God*, p. 1346

Note that in this and the following section there are a handful of references to glorifying and honoring God as the topics are also relevant to doing them, with praise and thanksgiving being a major part of glorifying and honoring God.

Subsections

- In righteousness
- Wholeheartedly
- Through prayer
- In singing . . .
- . . . along with making music
- With dancing
- With lifting up of hands
- Loudly and with shouts
- By making offerings
- Note: Give praise and thanks to God with and among other people

In righteousness

See also:

- *Note: It is vital for prayer that we live righteously . . .*, p. 1220
- *. . . and so it is vital for prayer that we act rightly towards others*, p. 1220
- *d) Righteousness and Making Offerings*, p. 1379

For our praise and thanksgiving to be valid and acceptable to God, it is critical that we be righteous, striving to live righteous lives.

Ps 119:7 *I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules.*^p 

^p Or *your just and righteous decrees*; also verses 62, 106, 160, 164

Ps 33:1 *Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright.* 

Ps 97:12 *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!* 

Ps 26:6-7 *I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, ⁷proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds.* 

In the first clause the psalmist speaks, perhaps figuratively, of declaring or showing his innocence (CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), indicative of his righteousness.

Wholeheartedly

Ps 9:1 *I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.* 

Ps 111:1 ^q *Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.* 

^q This psalm is an acrostic poem, each line beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet

Ps 103:1 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!* 

Ps 108:1 *My heart is steadfast, O God! I will sing and make melody with all my being!*^r 

^r Hebrew *with my glory*

2Sam 6:14 *And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod.* 

David's dancing before God was part of a celebration before God – an act of worship in praise and honor of God.

2Chr 30:21 *And the people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness, and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with all their might^s to the LORD.* 

^s Compare 1 Chronicles 13:8; Hebrew *with instruments of might*

† Praise to God should be given willingly:

Ps 119:108 *Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O LORD, and teach me your rules.* 



Through prayer

See also:

- *Give thanks and praise when asking*, p. 1229

Phil 4:6 ... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything *by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God.

Col 4:2 *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*

Philem 1:4 *I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ...*

Dan 6:10b He got down on his knees three times a day and *prayed and gave thanks before his God*, as he had done previously.

Ps 42:8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and *at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.*

The psalmist's prayer takes the form of a song (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT), presumably in praise of God.

Dan 2:23 *To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter.*

This is an example of thanksgiving and praise being given to God in prayer, in this case for what God had done.

In singing . . .

See also:

- *Joy should characterize singing and shouting to God*, p. 1264

Ps 40:3 *He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.* Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

Ps 47:6-7 *Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!* ⁷For God is the King of all the earth; *sing praises with a psalm!*^t

^t Hebrew *maskil*

Ps 96:1-2 *Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!* ²*Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.*

Ps 28:7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and *with my song I give thanks to him.*

Ps 100:2, 4 Serve the LORD with gladness! *Come into his presence with singing!* ... ⁴*Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*

Ps 147:7 *Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre!*

Jer 30:19 *Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who celebrate.* I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.

Jonah 2:9 *But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay.* Salvation belongs to the LORD!

Eph 5:18-20 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart*, ²⁰*giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father* in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...

The singing and melody we make to the Lord should not just be the literal, audible kind. Our hearts and minds should consistently overflow with singing and melody to him.

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, *singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? *Let him sing praise.*

2Chr 20:21 And when he had taken counsel with the people, he *appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire*, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever."

Choirs singing songs of praise and thanksgiving were an important part of formal worship in the OT – as shown in the following verses and in the following subsection.

2Chr 30:21 And the people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness, and the Levites and the priests *praised*



the LORD day by day, singing with all their might^u to the LORD.



^u Compare 1 Chronicles 13:8; Hebrew *with instruments of might*

Ezra 3:11a And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”

Neh 12:8, 31, 46 And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his brothers was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. ...³¹Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate. ...⁴⁶For long ago in the days of David and Asaph there were directors of the singers, and there were songs^v of praise and thanksgiving to God.

^v Or *leaders*

... along with making music

See also:

▪ Ps 149:3 ↓; Ps 150:4 ↓; 2Sam 6:15 ↓; Ex 15:20-21 ↓

Ps 57:7-9 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody! ⁸Awake, my glory! ^wAwake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! ⁹I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.

^w Or *my whole being*

Here “awake the dawn” (v. 8b) refers to greeting either the rising of the sun or possibly the time of salvation, with songs and music of praise.

Ps 33:2-3 Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! ³Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

Ps 81:1-2 Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! ²Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp.

Ps 150:3-5 Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! ⁴Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! ⁵Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

Isa 38:19-20 The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness. ²⁰The LORD will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the LORD.

1Chr 25:3, 6-7 Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei,^x Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to the LORD. ...⁶They were all under the direction of their father in the music in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the order of the king. ⁷The number of them along with their brothers, who were trained in singing to the LORD, all who were skillful, was 288.

^x One Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint; most Hebrew manuscripts lack *Shimei*

Note that in v.3 “prophesied” appears to speak of proclaiming God’s message (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT), in this case in song.

2Chr 5:13 ... and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,” the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ...

2Chr 7:6 The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the LORD that King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD—for his steadfast love endures forever—whenever David offered praises by their ministry;^y opposite them the priests sounded trumpets, and all Israel stood.

^y Hebrew *by their hand*

‡ God is his people’s song:

Ex 15:2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

The LORD is called “my song” because he is the subject and stimulus for the Israelites’ song – “the reason for my song” (CEV); he “makes me sing” (NCV™).



With dancing

Ps 149:3 Let them *praise his name with dancing*, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! 

Ps 150:4 *Praise him with tambourine and dance*; praise him with strings and pipe! 

2Sam 6:14-16 And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn. ¹⁶As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart. 

David danced “to honour the LORD” (GNT), expressing his joy in the spirit of this celebration, which was in worship of the LORD. Note that David’s wife Michal’s reaction (v. 16b) was entirely inappropriate, as later implied (cf. vv. 21-23).

Ex 15:20-21 Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and *all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing*. ²¹And Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.” 

✦ On being healed, a previously crippled man walked and leaped as he praised God:

Acts 3:8 And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, *walking and leaping and praising God*. 

With lifting up of hands

Neh 8:6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” *lifting up their hands*. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 

Ps 63:4 *So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands*. 

Given the context, in the latter part of the verse David may well be speaking of lifting up his hands in praise and honor of God’s name. However it could be referring more generally to prayer (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT; cf. **1Tim 2:8** ↓).

Ps 134:2 *Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the LORD!* 

✦ A call to lift up hands in prayer:

1Tim 2:8 *I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ...* 

Loudly and with shouts

See also:

▪ *Joy should characterize singing and shouting to God*, p. 1264

2Chr 20:19 And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, *stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice*. 

Ps 26:6-7 I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, ⁷*proclaiming thanksgiving aloud*, and telling all your wondrous deeds. 

Ps 66:8 Bless our God, O peoples; *let the sound of his praise be heard, ...* 

Ps 95:1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; *let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!* 

Luke 17:15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, *praising God with a loud voice; ...* 

Ezra 3:11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.” And *all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD*, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 

Ps 33:3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, *with loud shouts*. 

Ps 81:1 Sing aloud to God our strength; *shout for joy to the God of Jacob!* 

By making offerings

See also:

▪ *Offerings are an important part of worshiping God*, p. 1362

▪ *Offerings express thanksgiving to God for his deliverance*, p. 1364

The OT practices of making formal offerings (or sacrifices) as expressions of thanksgiving, parallel – and are applicable to – the giving of our resources to God and his work as expressions of our thankfulness for his goodness.



Lev 7:11-12 And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. ¹²*If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil.* 

2Chr 29:31 Then Hezekiah said, “You have now consecrated yourselves to^z the LORD. Come near; *bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the LORD.*” *And the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings.* 

^z Hebrew *filled your hand for*

Ps 50:14, 23 *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,^a and perform your vows to the Most High,*  ... ²³*The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!* 

^a Or *Make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*

Ps 56:12-13 I must perform my vows to you, O God; *I will render thank offerings to you.* ¹³For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life. 

Ps 107:21-22 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! ²²*And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!* 

Note that this speaks of the sacrifice of thank offerings (v. 22) supplementing thanksgiving to God (v. 21).

Ps 116:12, 17 What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?  ... ¹⁷*I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.* 

Offerings are not only an expression of our thankfulness to God (v. 17), but in a sense they are to a small extent a repayment for all his goodness (v. 12).

Jer 33:10b-11 ... there shall be heard again ¹¹the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of *those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD: “Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!”* For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD. 

✦ **Offering a song of thanksgiving as a sacrifice:**

Jonah 2:9 *But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!* 

Note: Give praise and thanks to God with and among other people

See also:

- *Offer praise and thanksgiving together*, p. 1350
- *What God is like and what he has done . . .* [things to explain in spreading the gospel], p. 1744
- . . . *including what God has done for you*, p. 1745

As well as doing so by ourselves, we should also give praise and thanks to God with and among other people. Note that the things spoken of in the preceding subsections are applicable to praising and thanking God both individually and with others.

Neh 12:24 *And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers who stood opposite them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch by watch.* 

Ps 34:3 *Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!* 

Ps 35:18 *I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you.* 

The “great congregation” (cf. **Ps 111:1 ↓**; **Ps 40:9-10 ↓**; **Ps 68:26 ↓**; **Ps 107:32 ↓**) and the “mighty throng” refer to the great company of the people gathered for worship at the tabernacle or temple.

Ps 68:26 *“Bless God in the great congregation, the LORD, O you^b who are of Israel’s fountain!”* 

^b The Hebrew for *you* is plural here

Ps 111:1 ^c *Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.* 

^c This psalm is an acrostic poem, each line beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet

Ps 40:9-10 *I have told the glad news of deliverance^d in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. ¹⁰I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your*



salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. 

^d Hebrew *righteousness*; also verse 10

David would not hide what he knew of God – notably God’s wonderful characteristics, reflected in his deeds. Rather David proclaimed these things to other worshipers. As such he was effectively praising God amongst others.

Ps 57:9 *I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.* 

This may well have an evangelical thrust (cf. *What God is like and what he has done* . . . , p. 1744; and . . . *including what God has done for you*, p. 1745). It certainly has such an application.

Ps 71:16-18 *With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.* ¹⁷O God, from my youth you have taught me, and *I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.* ¹⁸So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until *I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.* 

As with David in 40:9-10 above, in v. 16 the psalmist speaks of going to the place of worship and proclaiming God’s acts and righteousness to others gathered there. Such public praise would also appear to be what is spoken of in the subsequent verses (vv. 17-18).

Ps 107:32 *Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing

See also:

- *c) Joy*, p. 890
- *Rejoice and take pride “in” Jesus Christ*, p. 1081
- *d) Praise and Rejoice in God* [what to do in persecution], p. 2015

To rejoice is to be glad or joyful. By focusing on God, his promises and the wonderful things he has done – in the world, for others and for ourselves (including his many blessings) – we cannot help but be filled with joy, and so we rejoice. This is typically done in conjunction with praising and thanking God.

Subsections

- Rejoice and be glad in God
- Rejoice in God always
- Exult and glory in God
- Rejoice and exult when giving praise and thanks to God
- Be glad and joyful when praising and thanking God
- Joy should characterize singing and shouting to God
- Note: Delight in God and in things of God

Rejoice and be glad in God

Ps 97:12 *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!* 

Ps 32:11 *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!* 

Ps 33:1 *Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright.* 

Ps 33:21 *For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.* 

Ps 70:4 *May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, “God is great!”* 

Psalm 40:16 likewise says: “... may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you ...”

Ps 104:34 *May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.* 

Ps 105:3 *Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!* 

Ps 149:2 *Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!* 

Phil 3:1a *Finally, my brothers,^e rejoice in the Lord.* 

^e Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 13, 17



Here “rejoice in the Lord” (cf. 4:4) appears to have a subtly different meaning to similar phrases in the other verses in this subsection, in addition to it referring to Jesus Christ. Rather than meaning rejoice in or because of the Lord, it probably more specifically means rejoice “in your union with the Lord” (GNT). See *Rejoice and take pride “in” Jesus Christ*, p. 1081.

Rom 5:11 More than that, *we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The phrase “through our Lord Jesus Christ” is referring to either how we rejoice in God (cf. *d) Epilogue: God’s People Relate to God through Jesus Christ*, p. 795) or the reason why we can, as per the remainder of the verse.

Rom 12:12 *Rejoice in hope*, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

We are to rejoice in or because of the hope we have due to God, with his promises and what he has done for us, in particular what he has done through Jesus Christ.

Ps 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, and *rejoice with trembling*.

This indicates that rejoicing is not incompatible with fearing God and trembling before him.

Ps 34:2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD; *let the humble hear and be glad*.

Lev 23:40 And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and *you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days*.

Note that these instructions were in regard to celebrating the Feast of Booths.

Neh 12:43 And they offered great sacrifices that day *and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away*.

Rejoice in God always

See also:

- [Ps 89:15-16](#) ↓
- *d) Praise and Rejoice in God* [what to do in persecution], p. 2015

Phil 4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice*.

See the comment on [Phil 3:1a](#), in the previous subsection.

1Thes 5:16 *Rejoice always*, ...

2Cor 6:8b-10 We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Even amidst the sorrow Paul encountered in his work, Paul always had reason to rejoice (cf. [Hab 3:16-19](#) ↓).

Deut 12:18b *And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all that you undertake*.

This rendering points to the fact that God’s people should rejoice before God in everything they do (cf. Nlrv). However, although the verse is applicable to this, note that the context suggests that it is probably more specifically speaking of the people being gathered together before God and rejoicing over everything that they had done or worked for (cf. GNT, NCV).

Deut 33:18 And of Zebulun he said, “*Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and Issachar, in your tents*.”

The phrase “in your going out” is often understood to denote one’s outside activities – particularly those regarding one’s occupation – and “in your tents” probably refers to one’s home life. Together they appear to be intended to encompass all of life and all one does. As such this verse indicates that we are to rejoice always, in everything we do.

Ps 5:11 *But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you*.

We should sing for joy “always” (CEV, GNT) and “forever” (NCV™, NLT).

Hab 3:16-19a I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. ¹⁷*Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,* ¹⁸*yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.* ¹⁹GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places.

Even in affliction one can – and should – rejoice in God (cf. [2Cor 6:10](#) ↑).



‡ “The joy of the LORD is your strength”:

Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for *the joy of the LORD is your strength.*”

The people would draw strength from the joy that they had in the LORD, or the “joy that the Lord gives” (GNT, cf. CEV).

Exult and glory in God

See also:

▪ . . . *Only boast about God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1895

To exult in God is to rejoice in him with a sense of triumph and celebration. To “glory” in God is similar; it also involves taking pride in God. As such it is akin to boasting in God.

Ps 9:2 *I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.*

Ps 64:10 *Let the righteous one rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in him! Let all the upright in heart exult!*

Ps 68:3-4 But the righteous shall *be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!* ⁴Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; *exult before him!*

Ps 89:15-16 Blessed are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face, ¹⁶*who exult in your name all the day* and in your righteousness are exalted.

Zeph 3:14 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! *Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!*

This is from a prophecy of the restoration and redemption of Jerusalem and the remnant of Israel (cf. v. 13).

Ps 35:9 Then *my soul will rejoice in the LORD, exulting in his salvation.*

Ps 105:3 *Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!*

Isa 41:16b *And you shall rejoice in the LORD; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.*

Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God^f and *glory in Christ Jesus* and put no confidence in the flesh—

^f Some manuscripts *God in spirit*

‡ The godly should exult in “glory”:

Ps 149:5 *Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds.*

This appears to be speaking of God’s people exulting in the glory that is theirs in their relationship with God. As such “glory” has a different sense here to the above verses.

Rejoice and exult when giving praise and thanks to God

Ps 9:2 *I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.*

Ps 28:7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; *my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.*

Ps 97:12 *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!*

Ps 68:4 *Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him!*

Ps 106:47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and *glory in your praise.*

The last clause is probably speaking of glorying in praising God (cf. AMP).

Luke 1:46-47 And Mary said, “*My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ...*”

Rev 19:7 *Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ...*

The call in v. 7a is given in view of the impending consummation of Jesus Christ’s relationship or union with his people (v. 7b).



Be glad and joyful when praising and thanking God

See also:

- [Ps 33:1](#) ↓

2Chr 29:30 And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And *they sang praises with gladness*, and they bowed down and worshiped.

Neh 12:27 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to *celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing*, with cymbals, harps, and lyres.

Ps 42:4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God *with glad shouts and songs of praise*, a multitude keeping festival.

Ps 43:4 Then I will go to the altar of God, *to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.*

Ps 63:5 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and *my mouth will praise you with joyful lips*, ...

Ps 71:23 *My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed.*

Ps 95:2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; *let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*

Luke 19:37-38 As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began *to rejoice and praise God* with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Acts 2:46-47 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food *with glad and generous hearts*, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Col 1:11-12 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience *with joy*, ¹²giving thanks^g to the Father, who has qualified you^h to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

^g Or *patience, with joy giving thanks*

^h Some manuscripts *us*

✦ **The great gladness and praise in the celebration of the Passover under Hezekiah:**

2Chr 30:21, 23, 25-26 And *the people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness, and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing with all their mightⁱ to the LORD.* ...²³Then the whole assembly agreed together to keep the feast for another seven days. *So they kept it for another seven days with gladness.* ...²⁵*The whole assembly of Judah, and the priests and the Levites, and the whole assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners who came out of the land of Israel, and the sojourners who lived in Judah, rejoiced.* ²⁶*So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.*

ⁱ Compare 1 Chronicles 13:8; Hebrew *with instruments of might*

Joy should characterize singing and shouting to God

See also:

- [2Chr 29:30](#) ↑; [Neh 12:27](#) ↑; [Ps 42:4](#) ↑; [Ps 71:23](#) ↑; [Ps 95:2](#) ↑; [Luke 19:37](#) ↑
- *In singing . . .*, p. 1257
- *Loudly and with shouts*, p. 1259

Singing for joy to God and shouting for joy to God not only expresses our joy (or rejoicing) in praising and thanking God, but also supplements and even intensifies our joy.

1Chr 15:16 David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as *the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy.*

Ps 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them *ever sing for joy*, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.

Ps 33:1 *Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright.*

Ps 47:1 Clap your hands, all peoples! *Shout to God with loud songs of joy!*

Ps 66:1 *Shout for joy to God, all the earth; ...*



Ps 81:1 Sing aloud to God our strength; *shout for joy to the God of Jacob!* 

Ps 84:2 My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; *my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.* 

Ps 98:4-9 *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!* ⁵Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! ⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD! ⁷Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! ⁸Let the rivers clap their hands; *let the hills sing for joy together* ⁹before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity. 

In vv. 7-8 nature is figuratively called upon to join in the rejoicing of God's people – expressing a totality of rejoicing in God by his creation.

Ps 107:22 And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy! 

Isa 35:2a ... it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. 

Isa 42:11 Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; *let the habitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains.* 

‡ David and the people made merry before God, with singing and music:

2Sam 6:5 And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the LORD, with songsⁱ and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. 

ⁱ Septuagint, 1 Chronicles 13:8; Hebrew *fir trees*

Note: Delight in God and in things of God

See also:

- *Delight in God's commands*, p. 1180
- *Take comfort in God's word and delight in it*, p. 1945

To delight yourself in God is to make him your desire, your prime source of pleasure and joy.

Ps 37:4 *Delight yourself in the LORD*, and he will give you the desires of your heart. 

Neh 1:11a O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your *servants who delight to fear your name*, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. 

Job 22:23-26 If you return to the Almighty you will be built up; if you remove injustice far from your tents, ²⁴if you lay gold in the dust, and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed, ²⁵*then the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver.* ²⁶*For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God.* 

What Eliphaz actually says is sound, indicating that one should spurn such things and instead delight in God. But note that he was wrong to imply that Job was guilty of wickedness and in giving such priority to riches.

Ps 40:8 *I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.* 

Ps 111:2 Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. 

Ps 119:14, 16, 24, 35, 47 *In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.*  ... ¹⁶*I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.*  ... ²⁴*Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.*  ... ³⁵*Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.*  ... ⁴⁷*for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.* 

Isa 55:1-2 *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* ²*Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.* 

Delight yourself in the things of God, which satisfy spiritual thirst and hunger.

Isa 58:13-14 “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure^k on my holy day, and *call the Sabbath a delight* and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure,^l or talking idly;^m ¹⁴then you shall *take delight in the LORD*, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;ⁿ I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” 

^k Or *business*

^l Or *pursuing your own business*

^m Hebrew or *speaking a word*

ⁿ Or *of the land*



Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Reasons to Exalt God

Not only does the Bible tell us to persistently exalt God, it is bulging with good reasons for doing so. Generally speaking, these compelling reasons, or things for which to exalt God, concern what God is like and what he does.

Note that the ensuing sections and subsections, to a degree correspond to the following chapters and their major sections (and generally have been ordered accordingly): 1. *God's Being*; 2. *God's Character*; 6. *God's Creation*; 7. *God's Sovereignty*; and 19. *God's Care of His People*.

Also note that as rejoicing is usually done in the context of exalting God – praising, thanking and glorifying him – verses speaking of things for which to rejoice, or rejoice in God, have been included in the following sections. These are usually amongst the other references, but they are in a separate subsection where there are a number of them regarding a particular theme.

a) Aspects of God's Being

The verses in this and the following section speak of exalting both attributes of God and exalting God himself because of attributes of his. Doing the former effectively does the latter as well.

Subsections

- God's glory
- God's eternity
- God's greatness
- God's power
- God's wisdom and knowledge
- God's "name"

God's glory

See also:

- 1Tim 6:15-16 ↕; Rev 4:9 ↕
- *b) God's Glory*, p. 13

Note that it is debatable in a number of the following verses as to whether the writers are speaking of: exalting the actual glory of God's essence and presence; acknowledging the

glory (or gloriousness) of God that is due to his attributes and to what he does; or giving glory to him in the sense of glorifying or honoring him (cf. *Glorify God, giving glory to him*, p. 1238). See also the comment below under 1 Chronicles 29:10b-13, and the introductory comment to *b) God's Glory*, p. 13.

1Chr 29:10b-13 And David said: "*Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever.* ¹¹*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.* ¹²*Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.* ¹³*And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.* 📖

As in some of the following passages, in v. 11 the speaker appears to ascribe glory to God. Doing so appears to both attribute it to God and in a sense assign it to God, the latter being somewhat similar to a blessing. God's name is glorious (v. 13) in no small part due to the glory of his presence along with: the glory that emanates from attributes such as his power, which in a sense reflect the glory of God's presence; and the glory given to him by people glorifying him.

Ps 29:1-2 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,^a *ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.* ²*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.*^b 📖

^a Hebrew *sons of God*, or *sons of might*

^b Or *in holy attire*

Ps 29:9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth^c and strips the forests bare, and *in his temple all cry, "Glory!"* 📖

^c Revocalization yields *makes the oaks to shake*

The cry of "Glory" is in response to the aforementioned manifestation of God's awesome power (cf. vv. 3-8) and in acknowledgment of its reflection of God's glory.

Ps 66:2 ...*sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!* 📖

The call to "give to him glorious praise" probably has in view the form of the praise reflecting the glory or gloriousness of God.

Ps 71:8 *My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day.* 📖

The last clause may well be speaking of declaring God's glory (cf. GNT, NIV, NLT).

Ps 72:19 *Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!* 📖



The second clause appears to express the desire – virtually as a prayer – that God’s glory be revealed throughout all the earth (cf. CEV). The manner and context in which the author does this exalts God’s glory.

Psa 138:5 ... and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.

This implies that God’s ways exhibit his glory (cf. **Eph 1:4b-6, 11-14** ↓). Singing of God’s marvelous ways, indirectly at least, points to and exalts his glory.

Isa 24:14 They lift up their voices, they sing for joy; over the majesty of the LORD they shout from the west.^d

^d Hebrew *from the sea*

This speaks of praise of God’s majesty (cf. **1Chr 29:11** ↑; **Jude 1:25** ↓), an attribute associated with and reflective of his glory.

Ezek 3:12 Then the Spirit^e lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice^f of a great earthquake: “Blessed be the glory of the LORD from its place!”

^e Or *the wind*; also verse 14

^f Or *sound*

The phrase “from its place” appears to refer to heaven (cf. GNT, NCV). The glory of God’s essence and presence is in view.

Jude 1:24-25 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Here “glory, majesty, power and authority” (v. 25) are ascribed to God – or proclaimed as God’s – throughout the past, present and future. With the clause “through Jesus Christ our Lord”, Jude quite possibly means that they are God’s through Christ. Alternatively he may be speaking of offering such acclamation through Christ (cf. Nlrv).

Rev 19:1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ...

Note that “hallelujah” is a call to praise God, often used itself as an expression of praise to God.

✦ What God has done regarding his people through Jesus Christ is to the praise of his glorious grace and his glory:

Eph 1:4b-6, 11-14 In love ⁵he predestined us^g for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ... ¹¹In him we have obtained an

inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee^h of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it;ⁱ to the praise of his glory.

^g Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

^h Or *down payment*

ⁱ Or *until God redeems his possession*

These verses reflect that God’s glory is manifested or reflected in what he does (vv. 11-14). Note that the praise spoken of in the final clause (v. 14b) may have in view believers being sealed with the Holy Spirit (v. 13) as well as their inheritance and completed redemption (v. 14a; cf. text note).

God’s eternity

See also:

- *God has always been alive, the first of all things . . .*, p. 24
- *. . . God existed before the world began*, p. 25
- *God will live forever*, p. 25
- *God transcends time*, p. 26

Neh 9:5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, “Stand up and bless the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

The phrase “from everlasting to everlasting” may well be speaking of God’s eternity (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT) – hence the inclusion of the verse here. But note that some translations interpret the phrase to be referring to how we should bless or praise God, i.e. that we should do so forever (cf. GNT, NASB). Even so, the latter case points to the former.

Dan 4:34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; ...

1Tim 6:15-16 ... which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.



Rev 4:8-10a And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and *day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*⁹ *And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,* ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and *worship him who lives forever and ever.*

The expression "who was and is and is to come" (v. 8) attests to both the past and future aspects of God's eternity, along with his present existence.

✦ Ascribe honor and glory to God forever:

1Tim 1:17 *To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever!*¹ Amen.

¹ Greek *to the ages of ages*

In conjunction with and indicative of his eternity, Paul speaks of honor and glory either as being possessed by or as being continually given to God, "forever and ever".

God's greatness

See also:

- **1Chr 29:10b-13** ; **Ps 66:3-4**
- **a) God's Greatness**, p. 28

Deut 32:3 For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; *ascribe greatness to our God!*

Ps 48:1a *Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised* in the city of our God!

Ps 95:2-3 *Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!* ³*For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*

Ps 99:2-3 *The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.* ³*Let them praise your great and awesome name!* Holy is he!

Ps 104:1 *Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great!* You are clothed with splendor and majesty, ...

Ps 145:3 *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.*

Ps 150:2 Praise him for his mighty deeds; *praise him according to his excellent greatness!*

Isa 12:6 *Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your*^k *midst is the Holy One of Israel.*

^k The Hebrew for *your* in verse 6 is singular, referring to the *inhabitant of Zion*

✦ Praise God for his great deeds:

Rev 15:3 *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant*^l *of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"*^m

^l Greek *bondservant*

^m Some manuscripts *the ages*

God's power

See also:

- **Ps 150:2**
- **Dan 2:20** ; **Rev 7:12**
- **b) God's Power (I): Ultimate Power**, p. 32
- **c) God's Power (II): His Deeds**, p. 36
- **God's deeds in general**, p. 1274

1Chr 29:10b-13 And David said: "*Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever.* ¹¹*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.* ¹²*Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.* ¹³*And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.*

Ps 21:13 *Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength! We will sing and praise your power.*

Ps 59:16 *But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.*

The psalmist tells how he will sing about God's "might" (NRSV) – along with his love – which the psalmist had experienced in God's fortress-like protection.

Ps 66:3-4 *Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. ⁴All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name."* Selah



Eph 6:8:32-35 *O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, Selah* ³³*to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.* ³⁴*Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies.* ³⁵*Awesome is God from hisⁿ sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!*

ⁿ Septuagint; Hebrew *your*

Eph 3:20-21 *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,* ²¹*to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Rev 19:1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ...”

Here power is ascribed to God (cf. **Ps 68:34** ↑). The implication is that ultimate power belongs to God.

✦ Acknowledge God’s might:

Isa 33:13 Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and you who are near, *acknowledge my might.*

God’s wisdom and knowledge

See also:

- **d) God’s Knowledge and Wisdom**, p. 40

Rom 11:33-34, 36b *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* ³⁴*“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”* ... ³⁶ ... *To him be glory forever. Amen.*

The rhetorical questions in v. 34 underline that God’s mind and wisdom far surpass that of anyone else.

Rom 16:27 ... *to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.*

Dan 2:20 Daniel answered and said: “*Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.*”

Rev 7:11-12 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, “*Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and*

thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Wisdom, along with the other attributes mentioned, is being ascribed to God – such things “belong to our God” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Ps 92:5 How great are your works, O LORD! *Your thoughts are very deep!*

The subsequent verses (vv. 1-4) speak of thanksgiving, praise and rejoicing, suggesting that this also is spoken in praise.

God’s “name”

See also:

- **Ps 105:3** ↓
- **e) Addendum: God’s ‘Name’**, p. 46
- **God’s “name” is praised and blessed**, p. 50

Note that references to God’s “name” are synonymous with God himself. As such, references to attributes of his “name” for which it should be exalted, are effectively speaking of attributes of God for which he should be exalted.

Neh 9:5b *Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.*

Ps 29:2 *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.*^o

^o Or in holy attire

Ps 66:2 ... *sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!*

The psalmist calls us to sing about the glory of God’s name (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT).

Ps 99:3 *Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he!*

Ps 148:13 *Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.*

Ps 30:4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and *give thanks to his holy name.*^p

^p Hebrew *to the memorial of his holiness* (see Exodus 3:15)

Ps 89:12 The north and the south, you have created them; Tabor and Hermon *joyously praise your name.*



✦ Give thanks to God that “his Name” is near:

Ps 75:1 *We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We^a recount your wondrous deeds.*

^a Hebrew *They*

The psalmist effectively gives thanks that God himself (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT) is near, as evidenced by his wonderful deeds.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Aspects of God's Character

Subsections

- God's holiness
- God's steadfast love . . .
- . . . along with God's faithfulness
- God's righteousness and justness
- God's mercy
- God's goodness

God's holiness

See also:

- *a) Holiness* [God's], p. 54

God's holiness – in which he is set apart from all others in his purity and righteousness – should evoke awe, praise and worship.

Ps 71:22 *I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.*

“O Holy One of Israel” suggests that God's holiness is at least partly in view in the aforementioned praise.

Ps 97:12 *Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!*

Ps 99:3, 5, 9 *Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he!* ... ⁵*Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!* ... ⁹*Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the LORD our God is holy!*

Rev 4:8 *And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”*

Rev 15:4 *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.*

2Chr 20:21 *And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, “Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever.”*

It is debatable as to whether “holy attire” refers to God's holiness (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT) – which would make the verse relevant to this subsection – or to the priests' holy garments (cf. AMP, GNT).

✦ Glory in God's holy name:

Ps 105:3 *Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!*

We are to glory or exult in God's holy name (cf. NLT), rejoicing and being glad that we belong to him (cf. GNT, NCV).

God's steadfast love . . .

See also:

- *a) Love* [God's], p. 74

Ps 31:7-8, 21 *I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, ⁸and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place.* ... ²¹*Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city.*

Ps 36:7 *How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.*

Ps 63:3 *Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.*

Ps 59:16-17 *But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. ¹⁷O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love.*



Ps 86:12-13 *I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. ¹³For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.* 

Ps 107:1, 8 *Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!*  ... ⁸*Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!* 

Ps 136:1-3, 26 *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. ²Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever. ³Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever;*  ... ²⁶*Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.* 

The refrain "his love endures forever" is repeated in each of this psalm's 26 verses. It is likewise used as a refrain in 118:1-4.

Ezra 7:27-28a *Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem, ²⁸and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers.* 

... along with God's faithfulness

See also:

- c) *Faithfulness* [God's], p. 64

God's love and faithfulness are often spoken of together in the OT, usually in the context of praise to God, as shown in a number of the passages here.

Ps 57:9-10 *I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. ¹⁰For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.* 

Ps 89:1-2, 5, 8 *I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. ²For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness."  ... ⁵Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!  ... ⁸O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you?* 

Verse 2a speaks of God's steadfast love being established to last forever.

Ps 92:1-2 *It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; ²to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, ...* 

Ps 100:4-5 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! ⁵For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.* 

Ps 115:1 *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!* 

Ps 117:1-2 *Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! ²For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!* 

Ps 138:2 *I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.^r* 

^r Or *you have exalted your word above all your name*

David speaks of God demonstrating his love and faithfulness in helping David, by which he had exalted above all things his name and his word or promises.

Isa 25:1 *O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.* 

Isa 38:19 *The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness.* 

Gen 24:27 ... and said, "*Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen.*" 

1Ki 8:15, 56 *And he said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying,  ... ⁵⁶"Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. *

God's faithfulness is exemplified by him faithfully keeping his promises, for which Solomon blesses him.



‡ Request that God's name be given glory because of his love and faithfulness:

Ps 115:1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but *to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!*



God's righteousness and justness

See also:

- *b) Righteousness and Justice* [God's], p. 59
- *c) God's Judgment Is Just*, p. 427
- *God's judgments*, p. 1279

Judg 5:11a *To the sound of musicians^s at the watering places, there they repeat the righteous triumphs of the LORD, the righteous triumphs of his villagers in Israel.*

^s Or *archers*; the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Job 36:3 I will get my knowledge from afar and *ascribe righteousness to my Maker.*

Ps 7:17 *I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.*

Ps 71:15-16, 24 *My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. ¹⁶With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. ... ²⁴And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long, for they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me hurt.*

Ps 145:7 They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and *shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

Isa 24:16a From the ends of the earth *we hear songs of praise, of glory to the Righteous One.*

Ps 101:1 *I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will make music.*

Dan 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, *praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*

Rev 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant^t of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! *Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!*"^u

^t Greek *bondservant*

^u Some manuscripts *the ages*

God's mercy

See also:

- *b) Mercy* [God's], p. 76

Ps 103:2-5 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Rom 15:8-11 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." ¹⁰And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." ¹¹And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."

Christ's ministry to the Jews confirmed God's promises to the patriarchs (v. 8) which included promises of blessings for all nations, including that of salvation through the Messiah. So the Gentiles can now glorify God for his mercy (v. 9a), praising him and rejoicing with the Jews over the fulfillment of such promises (vv. 9b-11).

1Pet 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ...*

2Cor 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

God's mercy is often manifested in comforting his people, as reflected in the following verse. As such, God's comfort is another reason to exalt him, in conjunction with his mercy and compassion (cf. [Isa 49:13 ↓](#)).



Isa 49:13 *Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.* 

God's goodness

See also:

- c) *Benevolence* [God's], p. 81

Ps 54:6 *With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good.* 

Ps 106:1 *Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!* 

Note that the second exclamation (cf. **Ps 136:1 ↓**; **2Chr 5:13 ↓**) occurs verbatim in 1 Chronicles 16:24, Psalm 107:1 and Psalm 118:1, 29.

Ps 135:3 *Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to his name, for it is pleasant!*^v 

^v Or *for he is beautiful*

Ps 136:1 *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.* 

2Chr 5:13 ...and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD), and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever," the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ... 

2Chr 6:41 And now arise, O LORD God, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and *let your saints rejoice in your goodness.* 

Ps 145:7 *They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) What God Does in the World

Subsections

- God's deeds in general
- God's creative work
- God's provision of water and food . . .
- . . . in which one should rejoice
- God's reign
- God's word . . .
- . . . and the spreading of the gospel
- God's judgments

God's deeds in general

See also:

- **Ps 136:3-4 ↓**
- *Jesus' deeds led people to glorify God*, p. 545
- . . . *God's power; . . .*, p. 1088
- *God's great deeds for his people*, p. 1281
- *Worship God for his marvelous deeds – including his creation of everything*, p. 1344

Job 36:24 *Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung.* 

Ps 26:6-7 I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, ⁷*proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds.* 

Ps 66:3-4 *Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. ⁴All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name."* Selah 

Ps 72:18 *Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.* 

Ps 92:4-5 *For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. ⁵How great are your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep!* 



Psa 86:8-10 There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. ⁹All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. ¹⁰For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

Psa 138:5 ... and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.

Isa 12:4-5 And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵“Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known”^w in all the earth.

^w Or *this is made known*

Isa 25:1 O LORD, you are my God; *I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.*

Rev 15:3-4 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant^x of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!^y ⁴Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

^x Greek *bondservant*

^y Some manuscripts *the ages*

Verse 4 may well have in view people bringing glory to God because he is holy as shown by his deeds (v. 3), his “righteous acts” (v. 4).

Luke 19:37-38 As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

God’s creative work

See also:

- a) *God Made All Things*, p. 200

Rev 4:11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Neh 9:5b-6 *Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.* ^{6a}“You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.

^z Septuagint adds *And Ezra said*

Psa 136:3-9 *Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever; ⁴to him who alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures forever; ⁵to him who by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures forever; ⁶to him who spread out the earth above the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever; ⁷to him who made the great lights, for his steadfast love endures forever; ⁸the sun to rule over the day, for his steadfast love endures forever; ⁹the moon and stars to rule over the night, for his steadfast love endures forever; ...*

Psa 148:2-6 *Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! ³Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! ⁴Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! ⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created. ⁶And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.*^a

^a Or *it shall not be transgressed*

Psa 95:2, 5-6 *Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!* ... ⁵The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. ⁶Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

Note that the title “our Maker” may refer to God as the creator of the nation Israel, rather than actually to him as the creator of their beings.

Psa 71:6 Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of you.

Psa 139:13-14 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. ¹⁴I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.^b Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

^b Or *for I am fearfully set apart*

The phrase “your works” (v. 14b) is probably primarily at least a reference to God’s works of creation.



Ps 145:10 *All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you!*

All that God has made will give thanks to him. The fact that he created them may well be primarily in view as the reason for giving thanks.

Rom 11:36 *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

In this context “through him” either indicates that all things are created through him – in which case it ties in very closely with the preceding phrase “from him” – or that all things continue to exist through him.

Ps 65:8b *You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.*

This suggests that God’s working of morning and evening give reason to rejoice.

✦ Wisdom’s rejoicing over God’s creation:

Prov 8:30-31 [Wisdom:] ... then I was beside him, like a master workman, and *I was daily his^c delight, rejoicing before him always,* ³¹*rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.*

^c Or *daily filled with*

Wisdom is here personified and portrayed as delighting and rejoicing over God’s creation while participating in its formation.

God’s provision of water and food . . .

See also:

- *God’s provision of rain and food is abundant . . .*, p. 209
- *. . . God’s provision satisfies his creation*, p. 210
- *a) God Meets His People’s Needs*, p. 927

Ps 147:7-9 *Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre!* ⁸*He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills.* ⁹*He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.*

Ps 136:25-26 ... [It is] *he who gives food to all flesh*, for his steadfast love endures forever. ²⁶*Give thanks to the God of heaven*, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Ps 107:4-6, 8-9 Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; ⁵*hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.* ⁶*Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.* ... ⁸*Let*

them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! ⁹*For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.*

Isa 43:20-21 *The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people,* ²¹*the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.*

For comment, see [Isa 43:20-21](#) – under *Note: God has formed his people to bring himself praise and honor*, p. 1254.

Joel 2:26 *You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God*, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

Mark 8:6 And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And *he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks*, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd.

Luke 22:17, 19 And *he took a cup, and when he had given thanks* he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ... ¹⁹*And he took bread, and when he had given thanks*, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Rom 14:6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. *The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God*, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Irrespective of what foods one considers appropriate to eat or not to eat, one should give thanks to God for that which one does eat.

1Cor 10:30 *If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?*

The reference is to food that had been previously offered to idols (cf. v. 28).

1Tim 4:3-5 ... who forbid marriage and require abstinence from *foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving* by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴*For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,* ⁵*for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.*

Any food that is received with thanksgiving is holy and acceptable to God, and so the eating of it is also acceptable to him. In v. 5 “prayer” may well refer to saying grace before meals, and possibly “the word of God” may then denote Scripture used in the grace. The “word of God” has also been



interpreted as referring to teaching in Scripture regarding food, and even as an allusion to God's creative word.

. . . in which one should rejoice

Joel 2:23-24 *Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before.* ²⁴*"The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.* 

Deut 12:7 *And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.* 

The Israelites were to rejoice in everything they had worked for, because God had blessed them in their work in obtaining food (cf. [Deut 16:15](#) ↓).

Deut 16:13-15 *You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress.* ¹⁴*You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns.* ¹⁵*For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.* 

The Feast of Booths was in part to celebrate the fruit harvest before God, rejoicing in and acknowledging God's provision.

Deut 26:9-11 *And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.* ¹⁰*And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.'* And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God. ¹¹*And you shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you.* 

Jer 31:12 *They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more.* 

Such radiance is indicative of great joy.

✦ Bless God for good land that produces food:

Deut 8:10 *And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.* 

God's reign

See also:

- [7. God's Sovereignty](#), p. 245

1Chr 29:11-13 *Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.* ¹²*Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.* ¹³*And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.* 

Job 1:20-21 *Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped.* ²¹*And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* 

In his incredible anguish, Job blesses God for his sovereignty displayed in Job's circumstances (v. 21); one of the most riveting verses in the Bible.

Ps 47:1-2, 7-9 *Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!* ²*For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.*  *... ⁷For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!*^d ⁸*God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.* ⁹*The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!* 

^d Hebrew *maskil*

Verse 9 speaks of the leaders of the earth (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT) and/or their weapons/power as belonging to God, emphatically affirming his reign.

Ps 67:4 *Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.* Selah 

Rejoice in and exalt God not just because he reigns supreme but, as indicated here, also because of how he reigns.

Ps 136:2-3 *Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.* ³*Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever; ...* 



This implies that as God is sovereign over all other authorities, we should give thanks to him – thanking him for such things as all he does and all we have within and because of his reign.

Ps 145:1, 10-13a *I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.* 📖 ... ¹⁰*All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you!* ¹¹*They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,* ¹²*to make known to the children of man your^e mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.* ¹³*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.* 📖

^e Hebrew *his*; also next line

Note that this shows that the realm of God's kingdom includes the world, in which are seen many of his mighty acts.

Ps 146:10 *The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!* 📖

Ps 149:2 *Let Israel be glad in his Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!* 📖

Dan 4:34-35 *At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;* ³⁵*all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"* 📖

1Tim 6:15-16 ... which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶*who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.* 📖

1Pet 5:11 *To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* 📖

Jude 1:25 ... *to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.* 📖

Rev 11:15-17 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."* ¹⁶*And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,* ¹⁷*saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord*

God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. 📖

For comment, see **Rev 11:15-17** – under *God will impose his absolute rule on all*, p. 253.

Rev 19:6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, *"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.* 📖

1Chr 16:31 *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!"* 📖

Ps 97:1 *The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!* 📖

‡ **Exalt him as your God:**

Ps 118:28 *You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you.* 📖

Similarly Exodus 15:2 says, "... this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him."

God's word . . .

See also:

- **8. God's Word**, p. 297
- *Delight in God's commands*, p. 1180
- *Take comfort in God's word and delight in it*, p. 1945

Ps 56:4, 10 *In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?* 📖 ... ¹⁰*In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, ...* 📖

Ps 119:48, 54, 62, 111, 162, 164, 171-172 *I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.* 📖 ... ⁵⁴*Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning.* 📖 ... ⁶²*At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules.* 📖 ... ¹¹¹*Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.* 📖 ... ¹⁶²*I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.* 📖 ... ¹⁶⁴*Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules.* 📖 ... ¹⁷¹*My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes.* ¹⁷²*My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right.* 📖

Characteristically, joy and rejoicing (vv. 111, 162) accompany praise. In v. 48, the expression "I will lift up my hands towards" may be indicative of praise (cf. NCV), or similarly respect (cf. GNT, CEV).



Ps 138:4 *All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth, ...* 

The “words of your mouth” probably refers to God’s promises (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV).

Acts 13:47-48 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, *they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord*, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. 

... and the spreading of the gospel

See also:

- [Acts 13:47-48](#) 
- *The gospel has spread far and wide*, p. 1776

Acts 11:12-18 And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. ¹³And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴*he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.*’¹⁵As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’¹⁷*If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?*’¹⁸When they heard these things they fell silent. And *they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”* 

Note that glorifying of God for the extension of salvation to the Gentiles is also apparent in 13:47-48 in the previous subsection and 21:19-20a below.

Acts 21:19-20a After greeting them, *he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.* ²⁰*And when they heard it, they glorified God.* 

2Cor 2:14 *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.* 

Paul alludes to the practice of victorious Roman generals leading their soldiers and captives in a triumphant procession, where the air was filled with sweet aroma, to portray God triumphantly spreading the gospel through him in Christ.

2Cor 4:15 For it is all for your sake, so *that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.* 

Paul speaks of God’s grace producing great thanksgiving, as it touches the lives of more and more people in bringing salvation through the gospel.

Phil 1:18a What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, *Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.* 

1Thes 2:13 *And we also thank God constantly^f for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.* 

^f Or *without ceasing*

Rom 6:17 *But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ...* 

Here Paul appears to be giving thanks to God for the Roman believers’ adherence to Christian teaching, subsequent to their conversion.

God’s judgments

See also:

- [10. God’s Judgment](#), p. 417

The following verses largely speak of exalting God for his judgments because of their justice and/or their awesomeness.

Ps 9:2-4 *I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.* ³*When my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish before^g your presence.* ⁴*For you have maintained my just cause; you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.* 

^g Or *because of*

Ps 67:4-5 *Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.* Selah ⁵*Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!* 

Ps 76:8-10 *From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still,* ⁹*when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth.* Selah ¹⁰*Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant^h of wrath you will put on like a belt.* 



^h Or *extremity*

The meaning of the Hebrew in v. 10 is unclear. Quite possibly the first clause is meaning that God's judgment (v. 9) against "the wrath of man" will bring him praise (cf. GNT, NRSV).

Ps 96:10-13 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; *he will judge the peoples with equity.*" ¹¹*Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; ¹²let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy ¹³before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.* 

Here and in 98:8-9 immediately below, creation is poetically called upon to rejoice and sing because of God's righteous judgment. The implication is that all people everywhere should rejoice and sing as such.

Ps 98:8-9 *Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together ⁹before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.* 

Ps 48:11 *Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your judgments!* 

Rev 14:7 And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and *give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.*" 

Rev 19:1-3 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "*Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*"¹ ³*Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."* 

ⁱ Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

The "great prostitute" (v. 2) is "Babylon the great" (18:2), which is usually understood to represent either ancient Rome, ungodly world powers in general, or a future ungodly city of great influence.

Deut 32:43 "*Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods,^j for he avenges the blood of his children^k and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him^l and cleanses^m his people's land.*"ⁿ 

^j Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text *Rejoice his people, O nations*

^k Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text *servants*

^l Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text lacks *He repays those who hate him*

^m Or *atones for*

ⁿ Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew *his land his people*

This and the following references do not refer explicitly to "judgment", but they are obviously examples of God's judgment and the joy and/or the glorifying of God that it inspires.

Isa 25:2-3 *For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the foreigners' palace is a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. ³Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you.* 

Rev 11:13 *And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.* 

Note that these survivors had been ungodly people. Commentators differ over whether their giving glory to God was an indication of genuine repentance.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) What God Does for His People

See also:

- [God's steadfast love . . .](#), p. 1271
- [. . . along with God's faithfulness](#), p. 1272
- [God's mercy](#), p. 1273
- [God's goodness](#), p. 1274

Subsections

- [God's great deeds for his people](#)
- [God's salvation through Jesus Christ and the associated blessings . . .](#)
- [. . . in which we should rejoice](#)
- [God's deliverance from difficulties . . .](#)
- [. . . in which we should rejoice and exult](#)



- God's strength for his people
- Further things that God does for his people

God's great deeds for his people

See also:

- *God's deeds in general*, p. 1274
- *God does many good and great things for his people*, p. 1288

Deut 10:21 *He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.*



Ps 66:4-5 *All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.* Selah ⁵*Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.*

Here and in 107:31-32 below, "the children of man" refers to people of God. Here the crossing of the Red Sea and possibly also the crossing of the Jordan are in view in particular (cf. v. 6).

Ps 107:31-32 *Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!* ³²*Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

Isa 63:7 *I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.*

Joel 2:21, 26 *Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things!* ... ²⁶*You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.*

Luke 1:46-49 *And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*

Ps 126:3 *The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.*



✦ **The people's rejoicing at God carry out something suddenly for his people:**

2Chr 29:36 *And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because God had prepared for the people, for the thing came about suddenly.*

The reference here is to the re-establishment of the service of the temple of the LORD (cf. v. 35).

God's salvation through Jesus Christ and the associated blessings . . .

See also:

- **1Pet 1:3-5** ↓
- **13. Salvation through Jesus Christ**, p. 587
- **Always thank God for other Christians because of their faith and love**, p. 1324
- **Thank and praise God because of the service of other Christians**, p. 1324

Note that salvation is not specifically mentioned in most of the following passages, but each passage does speak of at least one aspect of salvation.

Luke 1:68-69 *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ...*

Luke 2:10-12, 16, 20 *And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ... ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ... ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

The fact that the shepherds found the child as they had been told (vv. 16, 20b) was a sign to them (v. 12) affirming the truth of the rest of the angel's message (v. 11). As such they glorified and praised God for what had been made known to them concerning this savior (v. 20).

Rom 7:23-25a *...but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*



For comment on “body of death” (v. 24), see [Rom 7:23-25](#) – under *Jesus Christ's death sets us free from sin's control . . .*, p. 598.

1Cor 15:54-57 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But *thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Death gets its “power to hurt” (GNT, NCV) from sin, which in turn is empowered by the law’s condemnation of people who commit sin (v. 56). But through Jesus Christ believers are given victory over death (vv. 54-55), a key aspect of salvation.

2Cor 9:15 *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*

This “inexpressible gift” is most probably a reference to Jesus Christ, reflective of the salvation that comes through him.

Gal 1:3-5 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴*who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,* ⁵*to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Eph 1:3-6, 13-14 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,* ⁴*even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love* ⁵*he predestined us* ^o*for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,* ⁶*to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.* ... ¹³*In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,* ¹⁴*who is the guarantee* ^p*of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,* ^q*to the praise of his glory.*

^o Or *before him in love, having predestined us*

^p Or *down payment*

^q Or *until God redeems his possession*

The phrase “in the heavenly places” (v. 3) may be indicating that the blessings spoken of are ones that we will experience in the afterlife. Alternatively, the phrase is possibly emphasizing the heavenly and eternal dimension of spiritual blessings that we have now. Note that blessings associated with God’s salvation are prominent in this and the following verses.

Col 1:11-12 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹²*giving thanks^r to the Father, who has qualified you^s to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*

^r Or *patience, with joy giving thanks*

^s Some manuscripts *us*

Heb 12:28 Therefore *let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ...*

1Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may *proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Jude 1:24-25 *Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,* ²⁵*to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

... in which we should rejoice

See also:

▪ [Luke 2:10](#) ; [Jude 1:24](#)

Zec 9:9 *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

The people were called on to rejoice in view of the coming of the Messiah, who would bring salvation.

1Pet 1:3-6, 8-9 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴*to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,* ⁵*who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* ⁶*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,* ... ⁸*Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,* ⁹*obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*



Note that v. 3 speaks of how through Jesus Christ's resurrection God has brought believers into a "living hope" (v. 3). This is a hope of such things as their own resurrection and inheritance (v. 4), which are aspects of the salvation to be consummated in "the last time" (v. 5).

Rom 5:11 More than that, *we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* 

The reason given for rejoicing here is our reconciliation with God, a key aspect of our salvation.

Luke 10:20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but *rejoice that your names are written in heaven.* 

Rom 5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and *we^u rejoice^v in hope of the glory of God.* 

^t Some manuscripts omit *by faith*

^u Or *let us*; also verse 3

^v Or *boast*; also verses 3, 11

The "hope of the glory of God" refers to the hope of "sharing God's glory" (GNT, NCV, NLT).

‡ **Future rejoicing and glorifying of God for the wedding of the lamb:**

Rev 19:7 *Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ...* 

The bride represents God's people, ready to be brought into a consummate relationship with Jesus Christ, the "Lamb".

God's deliverance from difficulties . . .

See also:

- *I. God's Saving of His People*, p. 902
- *Determine and promise to praise and thank God for deliverance*, p. 1972
- *Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times*, p. 1973

Ex 15:1-2 Then Moses and the people of Israel *sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider^w he has thrown into the sea. ²The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.* 

^w Or *its chariot*; also verse 21

The "horse and his rider" (v. 1b) refers to the enemy Egyptian forces.

Ps 18:46-49 *The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation— ⁴⁷the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, ⁴⁸who delivered me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you rescued me from the man of violence. ⁴⁹For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name.* 

Ps 40:16 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; *may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the LORD!"* 

Ps 44:7-8 But *you have saved us from our foes and have put to shame those who hate us. ⁸In God we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to your name forever. Selah* 

Ps 54:6-7 With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; *I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good. ⁷For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.* 

Ps 56:12-13 I must perform my vows to you, O God; *I will render thank offerings to you. ¹³For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.* 

Ps 96:2 *Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.* 

Ps 98:1 *Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.* 

Ps 107:18-22 ... they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. ¹⁹*Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ²⁰He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. ²¹Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! ²²And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!* 

This psalm contains cycles, each of which describe: hardship; cries to God for help; God's deliverance; and calls to give thanks to God for his deliverance. A longer excerpt is included in *Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times*, p. 1973.



Isa 38:20 *The LORD will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the LORD.* 

Isa 44:23 *Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it; shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and will be glorified* in Israel.* 

* Or will display his beauty

Isa 51:3 *For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.* 

The joy, gladness, thanksgiving and singing in Zion are undoubtedly focused on God in response to his comfort in restoring her.

Isa 52:9-10 *Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.* ¹⁰The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and *all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.* 

Jer 20:13 *Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers.* 

Luke 5:24-25 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—*he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.”* ²⁵*And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God.* 

Acts 3:6-8 But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!*” ⁷*And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.* ⁸*And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.* 

Acts 4:21-22 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for *all were praising God for what had happened.* ²²*For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.* 

2Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* 

... in which we should rejoice and exult

See also:

- [Ps 40:16](#) ; [Ps 107:21](#) 
- [Rejoice in God's deliverance from hard times](#), p. 1974

Ex 18:9 *And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.* 

1Sam 2:1 And Hannah prayed and said, “*My heart exults in the LORD; my strength^y is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.*” 

^y Hebrew *horn*

Ps 5:11 *But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.* 

God's protection, effectively delivering from harm, gives good reason to rejoice.

Ps 21:1 *O LORD, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults!* 

Ps 35:9-10 *Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD, exulting in his salvation.* ¹⁰*All my bones shall say, “O LORD, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?”* 

Ps 63:9-11 But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth; ¹⁰they shall be given over to the power of the sword; they shall be a portion for jackals. ¹¹*But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him shall exult, for the mouths of liars will be stopped.* 

Ps 66:6 *He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There did we rejoice in him, ...* 

Ps 118:15-16, 24 *Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: “The right hand of the LORD does valiantly, ¹⁶the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!”*  ... ²⁴*This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.* 

The expression “the LORD does valiantly” (vv. 15-16) and the resultant “day the LORD has made” (v. 24) speak of the “salvation” (v. 15a) that he had brought about for his people (cf. v. 21).

Ps 149:4-5 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; *he adorns the humble with salvation.* ⁵*Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds.* 



The “glory” (v. 5) is associated with the “salvation” that God has adorned them with (v. 4).

Isa 25:9 It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; *let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*” 

Isa 29:19-20 The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and *the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.* ²⁰*For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off, ...* 

This is taken from prophecies of future restoration for Israel.

Isa 61:10 *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* 

Although a number of commentators think it is being used in its usual sense as speaking of living righteously, here “righteousness” may be referring to righting what is wrong. If this is the case, then “he has covered me with the robe of righteousness”, like the clause preceding it, also refers to God’s salvation.

Phil 1:18b-19 *Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...* 

God’s strength for his people

See also:

- [Ps 21:1](#) 
- [1Tim 1:12](#) 
- [b\) God Strengthens His People](#), p. 933

Ps 68:35 Awesome is God from his^z sanctuary; *the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!* 

^z Septuagint; Hebrew *your*

1Pet 5:10-11 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, *will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.* ¹¹*To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.* 

In apparent praise of God – for his strengthening (v. 10) – in v. 11 Peter ascribes dominion to God, acknowledging God’s

sovereignty, and in a sense expressing the desire and/or belief that it will belong to God forever.

Ex 15:2 *The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.* 

The description of the LORD as “my strength and my song” appears to speak of the strength that God gives as leading to praise of him in song.

Ps 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.* 

David calls God “my strength” (cf. [Ex 15:2a](#) ; [Ps 59:17](#) ; [Hab 3:19](#) ; cf. [Ps 81:1](#) ) for the strength of God’s people lies in God’s strength.

Ps 59:17 *O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love.* 

Ps 81:1 *Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob!* 

Hab 3:18-19a *...yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer’s; he makes me tread on my high places.* 

Ps 147:12-13 *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! ¹³For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you.* 

↳ **David’s blessing of God for helping and protecting him:**

Ps 144:1-2 *Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; ²he is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples^a under me.* 

^a Many Hebrew manuscripts, Dead Sea Scroll, Jerome, Syriac, Aquila; most Hebrew manuscripts *subdues my people*



Further things that God does for his people

See also:

- [Ps 147:13](#)

Gen 24:48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD and *blessed the LORD*, the God of my master Abraham, *who had led me by the right way*^b to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.

^b Or *faithfully*

This illustrates that we should bless God for his guidance.

Ezra 7:27-28a *Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the LORD that is in Jerusalem,*²⁸*and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers.*

Ezra blessed God for moving the king to greatly assist him in his work for God. Like Ezra we should praise God for his help in our service of him.

1Ki 8:56 *Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel,* according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant.

Ps 16:7-9 *I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.*^c *8* I have set the LORD always before me; *because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.* *9* *Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^d rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.*

^c Hebrew *my kidneys instruct me*

^d Hebrew *my glory*

Ps 52:8-9 *But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. 9* *I will thank you forever, because you have done it. I will wait for your name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly.*

In v. 9, David appears to have his own blessed state at least partly in view – as depicted by the flourishing olive tree imagery (v. 8) – in speaking of thanking God for what he has done. As such, David speaks of thanking God for his blessing of him.

Ps 103:2-5 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,* ³*who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,* ⁴*who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,* ⁵*who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Ps 119:171 *My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes.*

Isa 12:1 You^e will say in that day: *"I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me.*

^e The Hebrew for *you* is singular in verse 1

Isa 26:12-13 *O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works.* ¹³*O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance.*

Matt 11:25 At that time Jesus declared, *"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ...*

The "things" (v. 25) probably primarily refers to the significance of Jesus' mission and matters of the kingdom. The term "little children" refers to those who like a child are humble, unassuming and unlearned but open to being taught.

1Tim 1:12 *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ...*

James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. *Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.*

When we are cheerful we should praise God for such happiness and the reasons for it, which generally are things God has done for us.

✚ **Believing in God gives reason to rejoice:**

Acts 16:34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And *he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*

Pray for persecuted Christians



e) Epilogue: God's Vast Blessing of His People

See also:

- c) *Benevolence* [God's], p. 81
- II. *The Afterlife*, p. 726

The previous section spoke of some of the wonderful things that God does or has done for his people – in the context of exalting God. This section emphasizes the vastness of God's blessing of his people. The verses in this section generally do not explicitly speak of exalting God because of his vast blessings, but obviously they are readily applicable and adaptable to doing so.

Note that references to blessings in verses from the OT often have material blessings primarily in view. In contrast NT verses primarily speak of spiritual blessings, reflecting one of the differences between the old and new covenants. The OT promises of material blessings can be applied in a spiritual sense to believers in the present life and also the afterlife.

Subsections

- God and Jesus Christ greatly bless their people . . .
- . . . God bestows much favor on his people
- God does many good and great things for his people
- God blesses his people in many ways
- God's people lack no good thing
- Ultimately, God gives his people all things
- Note: God gives his people blessings that last

God and Jesus Christ greatly bless their people . . .

See also:

- *God himself will exceedingly bless Israel*, p. 1015
- *God's great deeds for his people*, p. 1281

Deut 7:14a *You shall be blessed above all peoples.* 

Ps 13:6 *I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.* 

Ps 65:4 *Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!* 

The "goodness of your house" may refer to – and is at least applicable to – the spiritual blessings that come from God's presence, where one can have communion with God.

Ps 115:12-13 *The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; ¹³he will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great.* 

Ps 132:15 *I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread.* 

Similarly in Genesis 24:35 Abraham's servant says, "The LORD has blessed my master abundantly..."

Mal 3:10 *Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.* 

Luke 18:29-30 *And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers^f or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."* 

^f Or wife or brothers and sisters

Rom 10:12 *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.* 

2Cor 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* 

Eph 3:8 *To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ...* 

Paul preached to the Gentiles about "the endless treasures available to them in Christ" (NLT).

2Chr 25:7-9 *But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel, with all these Ephraimites. ⁸But go, act, be strong for the battle. Why should you suppose that God will cast you down before the enemy? For God has power to help or to cast down." ⁹And Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?" The man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this."* 



Gen 12:2-3 And I will make of you a great nation, and *I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.* ³*I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*^g

^g Or *by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves*

This wonderful blessing of God for Abraham, including God's blessing of others through him, arguably has an application to Abraham's spiritual descendants – as often do other blessings bestowed on persons of God. Note that Numbers 24:9b – spoken of in regard to Israel – echoes v. 3a: “Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you.”

... God bestows much favor on his people

Deut 33:23 And of Naphtali he said, “*O Naphtali, sated with favor, and full of the blessing of the LORD, possess the lake^h and the south.*”

^h Or *west*

Ps 5:12 For you *bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.*

Ps 30:5 For his anger is but for a moment, and *his favor is for a lifetime.*ⁱ Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

ⁱ Or *and in his favor is life*

Ps 102:13 *You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come.*

This speaks of a time of deliverance for Jerusalem.

Luke 1:30 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”

Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*”

This quotation is from Isaiah 61:1-2 where it initially had the Israelite's release from the Babylonian exile in view. Here Jesus applies it to his mission. As such it speaks of the salvation that God grants through him. The phrase “liberty to the captives” (v. 18b) is understood by many here in the context of Jesus' ministry to refer to release from sin; the clause “set at liberty those who are oppressed” (v. 18b) possibly also alludes to this.

Acts 7:45b-46 So it was until the days of *David,* ⁴⁶*who found favor in the sight of God* and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.^j

^j Some manuscripts *for the house of Jacob*

‡ **Blessed are those whose God is the LORD:**

Ps 144:15 Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! *Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!*

God does many good and great things for his people

See also:

- *God shows great goodness*, p. 82
- *God's great deeds for his people*, p. 1281
- *e) Epilogue: God's Vast Blessing of His People*, p. 1287

The verses in this subsection highlight that the things God does for his people (in blessing them) are numerous, good and/or great.

1Ki 8:66 On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for *all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David his servant and to Israel his people.*

Isa 63:7 *I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.*

Jer 32:40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that *I will not turn away from doing good to them.* And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

God promised to “never stop doing good things for them” (GNT; cf. NIV, NLT). Note that the renewed Israel of the end time may well be primarily in view here and in 33:9 immediately below.

Jer 33:9 And this city^k shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of *all the good that I do for them.* They shall fear and tremble because of *all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.*

^k Hebrew *And it*



Ex 34:10 And he said, “Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. 

Deut 4:34 Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 

As well as doing many great things in providing blessings for his people, God has done many great things in delivering his people.

Judg 2:7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. 

1Sam 12:7 Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your fathers. 

All the “righteous acts” refers to all the “good” (NCV™, NIV) or “great” (NLT) things that God had done for Israel.

2Sam 7:18-21 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? ¹⁹And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD. You have spoken also of your servant’s house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD! ²⁰And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord GOD! ²¹Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. 

In v. 18 David refers to the great things that God had already done for him, far more than he or his family were worthy of. Then in v. 19 David speaks of God going even beyond this, with God promising to extend the reign of David’s line far into the future – effecting “all this greatness” (v. 21; cf. **1Chr 17:19** ↓).

1Chr 17:19 For your servant’s sake, O LORD, and according to your own heart, you have done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. 

Psa 116:12 What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me? 

John 1:16 And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 

The phrase “grace upon grace” speaks of “one gracious blessing after another” (NLT). Spiritual blessings are in view.

✦ **God has given his people very great promises:**

2Pet 1:4 ... by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 

In addition to having done many great things for his people, God has also given us great promises including promises of great things that he will do for us in the future.

God blesses his people in many ways

Gen 24:1 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 

Mark 10:29-30 Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. 

The “houses” and “lands” promised in this present age (v. 30) are quite unlikely to be speaking of accumulated property. More likely the promises in v. 30 have in view what Christians have within the community of believers. There God’s people have many new intimate relationships and a share in all that belongs to the fellowship of believers.

1Cor 1:4-7 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 

In v. 7 “you” is referring to the Corinthian church as a whole, among whom there was no spiritual gift lacking. Note that, particularly in the light of v. 7, Paul also may have spiritual gifts in the church primarily in view in v. 5.

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ... 



Deut 2:7 For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. *You have lacked nothing.* 

2Sam 23:5 For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. *For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?* 

The phrase “all my help” may be speaking of God always providing effective help for him (cf. CEV); it has also been rendered to speak of David’s salvation (cf. NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV). In speaking of God granting him “my desire”, David has in view God’s wonderful everlasting covenant with him regarding his family (cf. 7:11b-16), giving him in a sense all that he could have hoped for.

Gen 49:25-26 ... by the God of your father who will help you, by the Almighty¹ who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. ²⁶The blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents, up to the bounties of the everlasting hills.^m *May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.* 

¹ Hebrew *Shaddai*

^m A slight emendation yields (compare Septuagint) *the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills*

These many wonderful blessings bestowed on Joseph may not all be readily applicable to God’s people generally, but they are illustrative of the great extent of God’s blessings for his people. Note that “the deep that crouches beneath” (v. 25b) refers to water from springs or other subterranean sources.

✦ The various blessings stated in “the Beatitudes”:

Matt 5:3-12 *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons^m of God. ¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great*

in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 

^m Greek *huioi*; see Preface

To be “poor in spirit” (v. 3) means to be aware of and acknowledge one’s spiritual need (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT), arguably with the suggestion that one looks to God to meet such need (cf. CEV); it implies humility (cf. AMP). The clause “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (vv. 3, 10) probably refers primarily to the future inheritance of the consummated kingdom, though an application to sharing in the blessings of the kingdom in its present form is viable. Quite likely “those who mourn” (v. 4) is speaking mainly of the mourning of godly people over sin and its consequences – their own sin and/or the world’s. Such people “will be comforted,” which may well have initially in view their salvation from sin through Christ’s work; it would encompass the comfort God’s people will receive in the afterlife. The “earth” (v. 5) is probably the new or renewed earth of the afterlife, though some think it refers to the earth in a millennial reign of Jesus Christ. The “peacemakers” (v. 9) are people who “work for peace” (GNT, NLT, cf. NCV) – probably inclusive of both reconciling people with God and making peace between people. They will be deemed to be children of God because they show that they partake of his nature, and perhaps also in that such work is in accordance with his purposes.

God’s people lack no good thing

See also:

- [Deut 2:7](#) 
- [God will provide for all his people’s needs – they will not lack anything](#), p. 932

Ps 34:9-10 Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for *those who fear him have no lack!* ¹⁰The young lions suffer want and hunger; but *those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.* 

God’s people lack nothing of any real consequence.

Ps 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. *No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.* 

Ps 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; *I shall not want.* 

God’s people will not be in want of anything they need.

Isa 55:2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? *Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.* 



That which people acquire apart from God, ultimately does not satisfy (cf. [Ps 16:2](#) ↓). Those who listen to and follow God are blessed with the “food that is good for the soul” (NLT) – “the best food of all” (GNT). This suggests that God’s people have the things which are truly good and necessary – i.e. they lack no good thing.

Philem 1:6 ... and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of *every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ*.^o

^o Or for Christ’s service

God’s people are abundantly blessed with many a “good thing” in Christ. In teaching this, the verse is not actually saying that God’s people have “every good thing” – but arguably it does point to this.

Rev 2:9 *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander^p of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

^p Greek *blasphemy*

Although the believers in Smyrna were materially very poor, they had great spiritual riches. For in their poverty they did not lack what are true riches – the things that are ultimately genuine riches.

✦ **Apart from God, his people have nothing good:**

Ps 16:2 I say to the LORD, “*You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.*”

Ultimately, God gives his people all things

As is reflected in the following verses, in a sense God has given his people all things now – a reality that will be consummated in the afterlife.

1Cor 3:21-23 So let no one boast in men. For *all things are yours*,²² *whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours*,²³ and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

Verse 23 may be implying that all things belong to us (v. 22) as we belong to Christ. For as Christians are in Christ they share in all that belongs to Christ – to whom God has given or will give everything (cf. [Rom 8:32](#) ↓). This reality will be more tangible in the life to come.

2Cor 6:10 ... as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet *possessing everything.*

Matt 5:3, 5 *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ...⁵ *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”*

As noted earlier, the future forms of God’s kingdom and the earth appear to be primarily in view, encompassing all good things.

Luke 15:31 And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and *all that is mine is yours.*’

With the father mirroring God in a number of ways in the parable of the prodigal son, arguably one can infer from this verse that everything of God belongs to his children, as their inheritance.

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, *how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

The phrase “all things” may have in view the inheritance that believers will receive on entry into God’s kingdom. However, given the context, this could be primarily speaking of our salvation. As such, Paul’s thinking may be that if God gave up his Son – the greatest possible gift – to save us, surely he will give us everything else needed to secure our salvation.

1Tim 6:17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on *God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.*

The phrase “provides us with everything” may mean that all things that we have come from God, or that God provides us with everything we need (cf. CEV, NLT). Alternatively it may be saying that God gives us everything, similar to the above references, although the focus here does not appear to go beyond material things.

Note: God gives his people blessings that last

See also:

- *God’s people will have accompanying eternal blessings,* p. 738

Rom 11:29 *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

Heb 10:34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that *you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.*

With “a better possession and an abiding one”, presumably the writer has primarily in view our salvation and the



associated blessings – including those of the age to come (cf. NLT).

Ps 21:6 For you make him most blessed forever;^a you make him glad with the joy of your presence. 

^a Or *make him a source of blessing forever*

This points to blessings “that will last forever” (CEV, Nlrv; cf. GNT), applicable to but not specifically referring to the eternal blessings of the afterlife.

Ps 23:6 Surely^r goodness and mercy^s shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell^t in the house of the LORD forever.^u 

^r Or *Only*

^s Or *steadfast love*

^t Or *shall return to dwell*

^u Hebrew *for length of days*

1Chr 17:27 Now you have been pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever before you, for it is you, O LORD, who have blessed, and it is blessed forever. 

This speaks of God’s promise to David regarding establishing his royal line forever, primarily through one of his sons (cf. vv. 10b-14).

‡ **God’s favor lasts a lifetime:**

Ps 30:5 For his anger is but for a moment, and *his favor is for a lifetime*.^v Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. 

^v Or *and in his favor is life*

Pray for persecuted Christians



Unit F

Church Life

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Being One Body

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I. General

The New Testament deals extensively with how we should relate to other Christians and with issues vital for the life of the church. Amongst the most prominent themes are the need for unity and love. Fellowship is another important concept that we need to grasp, with it being involved in a number of aspects of church life.

a) The Church as One Body

See also:

- *Be united as one*, p. 1300

Subsections

- God's people form local groups, called churches
- The many church members form one body – the body of Christ – with no overriding distinctions
- As one body, church members meet together
- Church members function together as one body
- The church body grows – spiritually and numerically
- Note: All God's people together are the universal church

God's people form local groups, called churches

The term "church" refers to a community of believers. As such it can be used of small house groups as well as local church congregations. Additionally it can be used more generally of God's people as a whole – the worldwide church.

As per the first two uses, believers meet and function together in local community groups (as parts of God's people as a whole). It is this localized context that is generally spoken of in this and the following chapters in *Part F. Church Life*. The verses in this subsection evidence the existence of such local churches. (For further discussion on "church", see the introductory comment under *Church members function together as one body*, p. 1298.)

Acts 13:1 Now *there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers*, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger,^a Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 

^a *Niger* is a Latin word meaning *black*, or *dark*

1Cor 14:33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in *all the churches of the saints*, ... 

2Cor 8:23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, *they are messengers^b of the churches*, the glory of Christ. 

^b Greek *apostles*

This is indicative of believers together forming churches, referring to members of various churches.

1Cor 1:2 *To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints* together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ... 

This and the following verses are examples of the numerous references in the NT letters to the names of particular local churches (cf. **Acts 13:1** ↑) and local churches in certain regions.

Rom 16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant^c of *the church at Cenchreae*, ... 

^c Or *deaconess*

1Cor 16:19a *The churches of Asia* send you greetings. 

Gal 1:2b, 22 *To the churches of Galatia*:  ... ²²And I was still unknown in person to *the churches of Judea* that are in Christ. 

Col 4:15 Give my greetings to *the brothers^d at Laodicea*, and to Nympha and *the church in her house*. 

^d Or *brothers and sisters*

The phrase "the brothers at Laodicea" would appear to denote the church at Laodicea.

‡ A reference to the first church:

Acts 1:15 In those days Peter stood up among *the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120)* and said, ... 

This speaks of what would appear to be the first church or group of believers.

The many church members form one body – the body of Christ – with no overriding distinctions

See also:

- *c) God's People Are One Body 'in' Jesus Christ*, p. 788

The term "the body of Christ" figuratively depicts the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with his people. Moreover, it points to the unity Christ's people have together in their relationship



with him. While the worldwide church is the whole “body of Christ”, each local church is a form of “the body of Christ”. And in each case the many members together make one body – with no disparities or overriding distinctions.

Rom 12:4-5 For *as in one body we have many members*,^e and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵*so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* 

^e Greek *parts*; also verse 5

The phrase “members one of another” (v. 5; **Eph 4:25 ↓**) indicates that church members are: “part of one another” (CEV); “all joined to each other” (GNT); and “mutually dependent on one another” (AMP; cf. NLT). It also suggests that they “belong to each other” (NLT; cf. NCV, NIV).

1Cor 10:16-17 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? *The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* ¹⁷*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.* 

One thing that the Lord’s Supper signifies, with church members eating of the one loaf, is mutual participation in the church body – the body of Jesus Christ.

1Cor 12:12-14, 18-20, 24b-27 For just as *the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.* ¹³*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves^f or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.* ¹⁴*For the body does not consist of one member but of many.*  ... ¹⁸*But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.* ¹⁹*If all were a single member, where would the body be?* ²⁰*As it is, there are many parts,^g yet one body.*  ... ²⁴ ... *But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,* ²⁵*that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.* ²⁶*If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.* ²⁷*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.* 

^f Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

^g Or *members*; also verse 22

For comment on vv. 24b-25, see **1Cor 12:24b-25** – under *Be united as one*, p. 1300.

Eph 4:4, 25 *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call*  ... ²⁵*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.* 

Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed *you were called in one body.* And be thankful. 

Gal 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^h nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* 

^h Greek *bondservant*

Oneness in Jesus Christ takes primacy over all distinctions. In him “there is no difference” (GNT, NCV) between contrasting groups such as Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free people, and males and females. For no such group is spiritually superior to another, and all are equal before God (cf. Eph 6:8-9). Note that the use of “Greek” as opposed to “Jew”, appears to denote Gentiles in general. However in Colossians 3:11 below it may be referring more specifically to those who live according to Greek culture, as opposed to the “uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian”.

Col 3:11 *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,ⁱ free; but Christ is all, and in all.* 

ⁱ Greek *bondservant*

“Christ is all, and in all” (v. 11) points to Christ as the basis and source of his people’s unity. He is “all that matters” (CEV, NLT). All the distinctions previously referred to become irrelevant, no longer forming any kind of barrier.

Acts 4:32 Now *the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul*, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 

As one body, church members meet together

Acts 1:14 *All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*^j 

^j Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verse 15

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, *they were all together in one place.* 



Acts 2:44, 46-47a And *all who believed were together* and had all things in common. ... ⁴⁶And *day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes*, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people.

Acts 5:12 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And *they were all together in Solomon's Portico*.

Acts 11:26b *For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people*. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

Acts 12:12 When he realized this, *he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together* and were praying.

Acts 16:40 So they went out of the prison and *visited Lydia*. And *when they had seen the brothers*, they encouraged them and departed.

This speaks of Paul and Silas meeting with the believers at Lydia's house.

Rom 16:5 Greet also *the church in their house*. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert^k to Christ in Asia.

^k Greek *firstfruit*

Like Acts 16:40 above, this refers to a church that met at a home (cf. **Philem 1:1-2** ↓; **1Cor 16:19** ↓).

1Cor 11:17-21, 33-34 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because *when you come together* it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, *when you come together as a church*, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰*When you come together*, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ... ³³So then, my brothers,^m *when you come together to eat*, wait forⁿ one another—³⁴if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that *when you come together* it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

¹ Or *I believe a certain report*

^m Or *brothers and sisters*

ⁿ Or *share with*

The Corinthians were doing the right thing in meeting together (cf. **1Cor 14:26** ↓) – and as such are a good example

– but their behavior at the meetings obviously left a lot to be desired.

1Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? *When you come together*, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

Philem 1:1-2 Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ²and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and *the church in your house*: ...

This appears to refer to church members who met together at Philemon's house (cf. CEV, GNT).

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵*not neglecting to meet together*, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Matt 18:20 For *where two or three are gathered in my name*, there am I among them.

This suggests that it is a good practice for believers to meet together in small groups, in addition to their local church groups.

Neh 8:1 And *all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate*. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.

In the OT the Israelites and later – after the Babylonian exile – the Jews, were in a sense forerunners of the NT church. This verse is an example of how they would all meet together as one group, a practice paralleled by church meetings.

Church members function together as one body

See also:

- **1Cor 14:26** ↑
- *Participate together in church activities*, p. 1307

The concept represented by the term "church" – often used to translate the Greek word "ekklesia" – involves believers meeting together and functioning as a community or one spiritual body. As such, they worship God together and cohesively further the cause of their head, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they live in relationship with each other, in which they minister to each other. The verses in this subsection contain segments which speak of churches functioning as a unit or cohesive community.



Matt 18:17 If he refuses to listen to them, *tell it to the church*. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 📖

Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but *earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church*. 📖

Acts 15:3-4 So, *being sent on their way by the church*, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.^o *When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church* and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. 📖

^o Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 22

Acts 15:22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with *the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, ...* 📖

Rom 16:4 ... who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but *all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well*. 📖

1Cor 16:19 *The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.* 📖

1Tim 5:16 If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. *Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.* 📖

1Cor 16:1 Now concerning^p the collection for the saints: *as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.* 📖

^p The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1; also verse 12

Here Paul tells the Corinthian church as a whole to do what he had told other churches to do.

2Cor 8:19 And not only that, but *he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us* as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. 📖

‡ **An example of various believers functioning together as one church body:**

Acts 6:1-4 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists^a arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected *in the daily distribution*. ²*And the twelve summoned*

the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers,^r pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 📖

^a That is, Greek-speaking Jews

^r Or *brothers and sisters*

This exemplifies believers functioning together as one church body, by: firstly, their daily distribution of food amongst the needy (v. 1); secondly, them coming together to resolve the problem that arose from it (v. 2); and thirdly, the solution itself, with the believers delegating responsibilities amongst themselves so as to effectively tackle their shared objectives (vv. 3-4).

The church body grows – spiritually and numerically

See also:

- *The church body is built by and "in" Jesus Christ . . .*, p. 790

Eph 4:11-16 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^s and teachers,^t ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for *building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^u to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.* 📖

^s Or *pastors*

^t Or *the shepherd-teachers*

^u Greek to a full-grown man

This speaks of believers growing spiritually individually as well as a church body. In keeping with the context – and as suggested by the text note – the phrase "to mature manhood" (v. 13) probably is speaking of believers together as a body becoming "like a mature person" (NCV™; cf. NASB, NKJV).

Acts 9:31 *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.* 📖



Note that this and 16:5 below speak of churches both growing spiritually – being built up in the faith – and growing numerically. The subsequent verses speak just of the latter.

Acts 16:5 *So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.*

Acts 2:41, 46-47 So those who received his word were baptized, and *there were added that day about three thousand souls.* ... ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And *the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Acts 4:4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and *the number of the men came to about five thousand.*

Acts 5:14 *And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ...*

✦ Each church is to develop into a dwelling in which God lives:

Eph 2:22 *In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^v the Spirit.*

^v Or *in*

Note: All God's people together are the universal church

See also:

▪ **Acts 9:31**

As noted earlier, as well as forming local individual churches, together all believers form the universal church – the whole body of Christ. All the following verses appear to speak of the church in this universal sense.

Matt 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^w *I will build my church*, and the gates of hell^x shall not prevail against it.

^wThe Greek words for *Peter* and *rock* sound similar

^x Greek *the gates of Hades*

Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how *I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.*

Eph 1:22-23 And he put all things under his feet and *gave him as head over all things to the church*, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Eph 3:8-10 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^y God who created all things, ¹⁰so *that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known* to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

^y Or *by*

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as *Christ loved the church* and gave himself up for her, ...

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Be in Unison

Subsections

- Be united as one
- Live in peace and harmony with each other
- Submit to one another
- Avoid foolish controversies and quarreling
- Disagreements and quarreling cause divisions . . .
- . . . Quarreling can even cause ruin
- Sometimes disputes and differences may be necessary
- Note: Have any internal legal disputes judged by people of God

Be united as one

See also:

- **2Cor 13:11** ; **Eph 4:3** ; **Col 3:15**
- *God fosters unity and peace in the church body*, p. 793
- *The church's unity is linked with it having one God, one Lord and one Spirit*, p. 794



Acts 4:32 *Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.* 📖

Note that the second part of the verse shows an important aspect of the early church's unity – believers sharing their possessions (cf. . . . *Share what you have with those in need*, p. 1338). This is exemplary for today's church.

1Cor 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers,^z by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.* 📖

^z Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verses 11, 26

1Cor 12:24b-25 *But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.* 📖

In saying that God has given "greater honor to the part that lacked it" (v. 24b), Paul appears to be referring to people's innate sense of treating the less honorable and unrepresentable parts of the human body with special honor and modesty (cf. v. 23). Paul implies that like the human body, God has combined church members into one body, causing less honorable parts to be given special attention by other body members, so that there will be no division in the body (vv. 24b-25).

Phil 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy^a of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you *that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side* for the faith of the gospel, ... 📖

^a Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

Phil 2:1-2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by *being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* 📖

Col 2:1-2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, *being knit together in love*, to reach all the riches of full

assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ... 📖

Col 3:11-14 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,^b free; but Christ is all, and in all. ¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And *above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.* 📖

^b Greek *bondservant*

In light of v. 11, v. 14 may be speaking of love as "the perfect bond of unity" (NASB) of believers (cf. NCV, NLT) – particularly pertinent to the theme of this subsection. However it may instead be speaking of love as binding together the aforementioned virtues.

1Pet 3:8 Finally, *all of you, have unity of mind*, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 📖

Judg 20:1, 8, 11 *Then all the people of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, and the congregation assembled as one man to the LORD at Mizpah.* 📖
... ⁸*And all the people arose as one man, saying, "None of us will go to his tent, and none of us will return to his house.* 📖 ...
¹¹*So all the men of Israel gathered against the city, united as one man.* 📖

This and 1 Chronicles 12:38 below are examples of the Israelites acting as one. As such they are exemplary of God's people being united as one.

1Chr 12:38 All these, men of war, arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with full intent to make David king over all Israel. *Likewise, all the rest of Israel were of a single mind to make David king.* 📖

Ps 133:1-3 *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!*^c ²*It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!* ³*It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.* 📖

^c Or *dwell together*

The comparisons in vv. 2-3 portray unity amongst believers as being soothing and refreshing, bringing God's blessing (v. 3b). A number of commentators understand that the comparison with the oil for consecrating priests, as indicative of unity consecrating God's people.



Live in peace and harmony with each other

See also:

- *Seek peace, including peace with others . . .*, p. 1557
- *. . . and seek peace for others – in part through prayer*, p. 1558

1Thes 5:13b *Be at peace among yourselves.*

Mark 9:50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and *be at peace with one another.*

Rom 14:19 So then *let us pursue what makes for peace* and for mutual upbuilding.

2Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers,^d rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another,^e *agree with one another, live in peace;* and the God of love and peace will be with you.

^d Or *brothers and sisters*

^e Or *listen to my appeal*

Eph 4:1-3 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Note that the directions in vv. 1-2 are things which are important to maintaining “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v. 3). Other verses in this subsection also speak of such things (cf. **2Cor 13:11** ↑; **Rom 12:16** ↓; **Rom 15:5-7** ↓).

Col 3:15 *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.* And be thankful.

The reference here is to relationships amongst church members, in which the church members should seek the “peace of Christ” in working out differences.

Rom 12:16 *Live in harmony with one another.* Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.^f Never be wise in your own sight.

^f Or *give yourselves to humble tasks*

Rom 15:5-7 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to *live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,* ⁶*that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁷Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Verse 7 indicates that to live in harmony with other believers we need to welcome or accept them (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Phil 4:2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to *agree in the Lord.*

Paul urges these two women to “live in harmony in the Lord” (NASB), settling their disagreement (cf. CEV, NLT).

Submit to one another

Eph 5:18-21 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹*submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

1Cor 16:15-16 Now I urge you, brothers^g—you know that the household^h of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— ¹⁶*be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.*

^g Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 20

^h Greek *house*

Heb 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to them,* for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

1Pet 5:5 Likewise, *you who are younger, be subject to the elders.* Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Avoid foolish controversies and quarreling

See also:

- *Do not quarrel*, p. 1570

2Tim 2:23-24 *Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.* ²⁴*And the Lord’s servantⁱ must not be quarrelsome* but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ...

ⁱ Greek *bondservant*



Titus 3:9 But *avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.* 

Rom 13:13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, *not in quarreling* and jealousy. 

Rom 14:1 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but *not to quarrel over opinions.* 

1Cor 3:3 ... for you are still of the flesh. For *while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?* 

2Cor 12:20 For *I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.* 

Phil 2:14-15 *Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish* in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ... 

In this context “questioning” is effectively quarreling – “arguing” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV), “disputing” (NASB, NKJV).

1Tim 2:8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands *without anger or quarreling;* ... 

James 4:1-2 *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions^j are at war within you?^k ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.* 

^j Greek *pleasures*; also verse 3

^k Greek *in your members*

The source of fights and quarrels – the combatant’s own evil desires (v. 1b) – is indicative of the sinfulness of these things.

‡ **The disciples recognized that their arguing was improper:**

Mark 9:33-34 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “*What were you discussing on the way?*” ³⁴*But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.* 

The disciples apparently were rightly embarrassed and ashamed of their foolish and vain arguing.

Disagreements and quarreling cause divisions . . .

See also:

▪ *Note: False teachers and their teaching are savage and destructive – causing controversies and divisions,* p. 1522

Acts 15:37-39 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And *there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other.* Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ... 

1Cor 1:10-13 I appeal to you, brothers,¹ by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you,* but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that *there is quarreling among you, my brothers.* ¹²*What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.”* ¹³*Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* 

¹ Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verses 11, 26

Many of the Corinthians had apparently formed a preference for one of the notable leaders of the day. This had resulted in quarrels (v. 11) and divisions (v. 12). Paul points out that Christ cannot be divided (v. 13a), with the implication that neither should his body be. Christ alone should be the focus of the faith of believers, for it was Christ not Paul (or any other) who was crucified for them and into whose name they were baptized (v. 13). Note that the inclusion of those who said they followed Christ in Paul’s condemnatory remarks, may have been due to those concerned doing so in a divisive and exclusive manner, making out that they were spirituality superior.

Gal 5:19-20 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, *dissensions, divisions,* ... 

As reflected in v. 20, “dissensions” are disagreements that lead to “divisions” (NCV™).

1Tim 6:3-5 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound^m words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴he is puffed



up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 

^m Or *healthy*

Although true believers are not being spoken of here, this is still illustrative of the fact that controversies and quarrels lead to animosity and division in the church. Note that the “quarrels about words” (v. 4; cf. 2Tim 2:14 ) may refer to quibbling over the technical meaning of certain words, or their application to theological concepts.

Prov 18:19 A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle. 

Disputes cause divisions which are hard to break down.

... Quarreling can even cause ruin

Quarrelling can lead to the ruin of both individuals and church groups.

2Tim 2:14 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God^m not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. 

ⁿ Some manuscripts *the Lord*

Gal 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. 

Possibly the destruction of their faith or their fellowship is in view.

1Cor 3:17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. 

This appears to be speaking of God's church being destroyed by “jealousy and strife” (v. 3) – with those causing this destruction in turn themselves facing destruction from God.

Matt 12:25 Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. 

Jesus was not talking about church groups here, but obviously what he says is very much applicable to them.

† Do not judge each other on disputable matters:

Rom 14:2-6, 10-13 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has

welcomed him. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master^o that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.  ... ¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ¹¹for it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess^p to God.” ¹²So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. ¹³Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. 

^o Or *lord*

^p Or *shall give praise*

The reminders in vv. 10, 12 that we ourselves will be judged by God is a sobering deterrent to judging others. Note that vv. 5-6 contain a couple of important related points on disputable matters. The last statement of v. 5 indicates that we should “firmly make up our own minds” (GNT), taking care to consider what God would have us do. Verse 6 teaches that whatever course of action one takes in regard to such disputable matters, one should aim to honor the Lord by it.

Sometimes disputes and differences may be necessary

Acts 15:1-2 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ²And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. 

1Cor 11:18-19 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part,^q ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. 

^q Or *I believe a certain report*

Where there is sin or false beliefs in the church, differences will be needed so that those who act and believe in accordance with God's will may distinguish themselves from



those who do not (v. 19). It is in fact necessary for believers to take a stand against what is wrong – as is shown in the other passages in this subsection.

Gal 2:11-14 But when Cephas came to Antioch, *I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.* ¹²For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But *when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"* 

The behavior of Cephas/Peter (vv. 12-13) had left him open to condemnation. As such Paul felt compelled to publicly reprimand him.

Note: Have any internal legal disputes judged by people of God

See also:

- *Note: Avoid going to court*, p. 1588

1Cor 6:1-7 *When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ²Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?* 

Verses 2a, 3a appear to refer either to believers playing a role in the final judgment or to their rule with Christ. In v. 7a, Paul appears to be speaking of spiritual failure, either: in seeking retribution, as opposed to being meek and forgiving; or in being at odds with a fellow believer/s, as opposed to being unified as parts of the body of Christ.

Ex 22:7-9 If a man gives to his neighbor money or goods to keep safe, and it is stolen from the man's house, then, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. ⁸If the thief is not found, *the owner of the house shall come near to God to show*

whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. ⁹For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, "This is it," the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbor. 

In speaking of Israelites coming before God to have their disputes resolved, this has in view judges (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NIV) from among the people making decisions on behalf of God (cf. Deut 1:17), as his representatives. This practice is exemplary to God's people today.

Ezek 44:24 *In a dispute, they [the priests] shall act as judges, and they shall judge it according to my judgments. They shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts, and they shall keep my Sabbaths holy.* 

✦ **Moses chose capable people as leaders and to be judges for the people at all times:**

Ex 18:25-26 *Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²⁶And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves.* 

This indicates that judges amongst God's people should be capable, people with authority (as leaders have) and readily available.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Be in Fellowship

The concept of "fellowship" involves sharing and participating in a partnership concerning a mutual interest or purpose, which for believers is their common faith and life in Christ. This is shown in the Greek word translated as "fellowship" ("koinonia") which emphasizes participation. Believers participate in Christ and church activities, and in each other's lives.

Note that a number of the verses in this section show that fellowship occurs amongst believers across the worldwide church, in addition to the local church context.



Subsections

- Have fellowship together . . .
- . . . Believers have fellowship collectively with God and Jesus Christ
- Participate together in church activities
- Share together in the sufferings that come because of Jesus Christ
- Share together in the joy that comes in being of the church
- Share in each other's troubles . . .
- . . . and share in each other's joy
- Keep in touch about each other's welfare – and keep the others informed of your own
- Note: Believers share together in spiritual blessings and privileges . . .
- . . . Believers will share together in future blessings and privileges

Have fellowship together . . .

1Jn 1:3, 7 ... *that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*  ... *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.* 

Christian fellowship has its roots in sharing a common belief (v. 3) and a common way of life based on this belief (v. 7).

Acts 2:42 *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* 

2Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and *the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* 

The term "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" would appear to refer to the fellowship amongst believers produced by the Holy Spirit (cf. CEV), through their mutual participation in him.

Gal 2:9 ... and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, *they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.* 

James, Peter and John extended their hands to Paul and Barnabas as a sign of fellowship, inclusive of acceptance and friendship.

Ps 55:14 We used to *take sweet counsel together*; within God's house we walked in the throng. 

Here David laments the fact that his enemy is one with whom he had once enjoyed "sweet fellowship together" (AMP, NASB; cf. NIV, NLT) amongst those who gathered at God's temple.

Col 4:7, 10-11 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and *fellow servant^r in the Lord.*  ... ¹⁰*Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him),¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.* 

^r Greek *fellow bondservant*; also verse 12

Arguably the use of "fellow" here suggests that believers have fellowship in working together (vv. 7, 11) and in suffering together (v. 10) for God's kingdom.

Philem 1:6 ... and I pray that *the sharing of your faith* may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.^s 

^s Or *for Christ's service*

The phrase "the sharing of your faith" may well be speaking of the sharing in our faith with fellow believers, including the participation in and fellowship of our faith (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB). Hence the verse's inclusion here. Alternatively, it could be speaking of either: the sharing that is part of our faith, i.e. sharing of our possessions or ourselves with others (cf. NLT); or sharing what we believe, as in proclaiming the gospel to non-believers (cf. NIV).

. . . Believers have fellowship collectively with God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- **2Cor 13:14** 
- *God's people have fellowship with him and Jesus Christ,* p. 813

The fellowship believers have together is not only based on their mutual relationship in Jesus Christ, but is also a fellowship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

1Jn 1:3, 6-7 ... *that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with*



us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.  ... ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 

The fellowship believers have together is both distinct from and beyond that of any other, being a fellowship that “is with the Father and with his Son” (v. 3b). In line with v. 3, note that vv. 6-7 correlate having “fellowship with him” with having “fellowship with one another”.

1Cor 1:9 *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* 

Particularly with Paul’s subsequent denunciation of divisions in the Corinthian church (cf. vv. 10-15) this may well be speaking of believers collectively having fellowship with Jesus Christ and/or with each other through Christ and being part of his body. Alternatively or additionally, believers individually having fellowship with Jesus Christ may be in view.

Phil 3:10 ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may *share his sufferings*, becoming like him in his death, ... 

Especially in light of Paul’s stated desire “to know Christ”, the phrase in question may be speaking primarily of Paul himself sharing sufferings – and consequently fellowship – with Christ. But even so, this is readily applicable to believers together sharing in such suffering – and to the consequent fellowship they have with each other and collectively with Christ. Note that some translations actually use “fellowship” here – e.g. “the fellowship of His sufferings” (NASB, NKJV; cf. NIV).

Matt 18:20 *For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.* 

This and 2 Corinthians 13:11 below speak of Jesus Christ and God’s presence with assembled believers, suggestive of fellowship with them.

2Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers,^t rejoice. *Aim for restoration, comfort one another,^u agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.* 

^t Or *brothers and sisters*

^u Or *listen to my appeal*

✦ **One cannot have true fellowship with unbelievers:**

2Cor 6:14-16 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. *For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?* ¹⁵*What accord has*

Christ with Belial?^v *Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?* ¹⁶*What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* 

^v Greek *Beliar*

This points out some things associated with fellowship, namely having things in common (vv. 14, 15), accord/harmony (v. 15) and agreement (v. 16). All of these believers can and should have with each other, but such things are limited in relationships with non-believers.

Participate together in church activities

See also:

- *Note: Give praise and thanks to God with and among other people*, p. 1260
- *c) Worshiping Together (I): General*, p. 1350

Acts 1:14 *All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.*^w 

^w Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verse 15

Acts 2:46-47 *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.* 

Verse 46 suggests that as well as “attending the temple together”, the believers also ate together (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

1Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? *When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.* 

Church members participate together in church meetings, in which various members contribute in such ways as those mentioned here, to build up the church.

1Cor 16:16 ... be subject to such as these, and to *every fellow worker and laborer.* 



2Cor 8:3-4 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴*begging us earnestly for the favor^x of taking part in the relief of the saints*—

^x The Greek word *charis* can mean *favor* or *grace* or *thanks*, depending on the context

3Jn 1:8 Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may *be fellow workers for the truth*.

Ps 34:3 *Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!*

‡ **Participating in the Lord's Supper signifies believers together participating in the death and body of Jesus Christ:**

1Cor 10:16-17 *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

For comment, see the comment on **1Cor 10:16-17** – under *Participating in the Lord's Supper also symbolizes participating in the blood and body of Jesus Christ*, p. 1444.

Share together in the sufferings that come because of Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Share in each other's troubles . . .*, p. 1309
- *. . . and share Jesus Christ's sufferings*, p. 2009

Rev 1:9 I, John, *your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus*, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

John was imprisoned on the island of Patmos because of his faithfulness to the gospel.

2Cor 1:5-7 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you *patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer*. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

^y Or *For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ*

Phil 3:10 . . . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may *share his sufferings*, becoming like him in his death, . . .

2Tim 2:3 *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*.

Philem 1:23 *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus*, sends greetings to you, . . .

Rom 8:17 . . . and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we *suffer with him* in order that we may also be glorified with him.

As may be the case in Philippians 3:10 above (cf. comment in . . . *Believers have fellowship collectively with God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1306), the focus here and in 1 Peter 4:13 below appears to be primarily on sharing in suffering with Jesus Christ – as opposed to sharing with other believers in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. But even so, they are certainly applicable to the latter.

1Pet 4:13 But rejoice insofar as you *share Christ's sufferings*, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

2Tim 1:8 Therefore *do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord*, nor of me his prisoner, *but share in suffering for the gospel* by the power of God, . . .

Sharing in suffering for the gospel is a key aspect of sharing together in the sufferings that come because of Jesus Christ.

Heb 11:25 . . . *choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God* than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Moses' choice to share in the suffering of "the people of God" is applicable and exemplary to believers in sharing in the suffering of others who suffer because of Jesus Christ.

Share together in the joy that comes in being of the church

See also:

- *. . . and share in each other's joy*, p. 1310

Having relationships with other believers and doing God's work with them, leads us to share in joy with them, for various reasons.



John 4:35-36 Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. ³⁶Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 

Those who work together in bringing people to faith, share together in much gladness over the fruits of their labor.

Acts 2:46-47 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, *they received their food with glad and generous hearts*, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. 

The believers’ glad hearts seem to have been largely due to their fellowship – in which they met together, often ate together and praised God together. It may have also been in part due to them “having favor with all the people” (v. 47a) and/or their growth in numbers (v. 47b).

Phil 1:25-26 Convinced of this, I know that *I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith*, ²⁶so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. 

Here Paul recognized that his direction of and fellowship with the Philippian believers in Christ Jesus would produce joy amongst them (v. 25), even causing them to “glory in Christ Jesus” (v. 26).

Phil 2:28-30 I am the more eager to send him, therefore, *that you may rejoice at seeing him again*, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, ³⁰for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. 

Here Paul again speaks of the Philippians being joyful together, in seeing Epaphroditus again and receiving him amongst themselves.

1Jn 1:3-4 ... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our^z joy may be complete. 

^z Some manuscripts *your*

The context suggests that the joy John speaks of (v. 4) comes from fellowship with other believers (v. 3a) – a fellowship that “is with the Father and with his Son” (v. 3b). Through this fellowship it is a joy that all believers share in – “you can be full of joy with us” (NCV™; cf. AMP).

2Jn 1:12 Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead *I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete*. 

Ps 106:4-5 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people; help me when you save them,^a ⁵that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones, *that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance*. 

^a Or *Remember me, O Lord, with the favor you show to your people; help me with your salvation*

Sharing in God’s help of his people leads to one rejoicing with them.

† **David found great delight in other people of God:**

Ps 16:3 *As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight*.^b 

^b Or *To the saints in the land, the excellent in whom is all my delight, I say:*

Share in each other’s troubles . . .

See also:

▪ [Rom 12:15](#) ↓

As members of the one spiritual body, believers should as much as possible share with other believers in both their sorrows and joys, identifying themselves with those experiencing such things and where appropriate become involved in their situation. This leads to a strengthening of the bonds between the members, and thus the strengthening of the body itself. It also leads to supportive responses to members in need.

1Cor 12:26 *If one member [of the body] suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together*. 

Paul is not so much instructing the Corinthians to suffer and rejoice with each other, but is more making the observation that in a tight knit Christian body this will naturally occur.

Phil 4:14-16 Yet *it was kind of you to share^c my trouble*. ¹⁵And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, *no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only*. ¹⁶*Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again*. 

^c Or *have fellowship in*

By sending him aid – giving of their own resources, possibly sacrificially so – the Philippians shared in Paul’s trouble. In doing so they shared with him in “giving and receiving”



(v. 15). This expression refers to the exchanges between the Philippians and Paul; they gave him aid and in return spiritual blessings were credited to their account (cf. v. 17).

2Cor 11:28-29 And, apart from other things, *there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.* ²⁹*Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?* 

Such was Paul's concern for the churches (v. 28) that he strongly identified with them in their weaknesses and trials (v. 29), effectively sharing in them.

Heb 13:3 *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.* 

Believers are to empathize with suffering believers. In showing empathy, one in a sense projects oneself into the situation of the person concerned. To some extent one then shares in it, both experiencing and being affected by the feelings that the person concerned would have. Doing so motivates us to do what we can to help suffering believers. Note that the final phrase "in the body" likely speaks of being "liable to bodily sufferings" (AMP) rather than being in the body of Christ.

Heb 10:32-34 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and *sometimes being partners with those so treated.* ³⁴*For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.* 

The compassion for those in prison (v. 34) appears to have been expressed in helping them (cf. CEV, NCV) – in effect sharing in their suffering (cf. AMP, GNT, NLT), as was the case in v. 33b.

Job 2:11-13 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together *to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.* ¹²And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. *And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven.* ¹³*And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.* 

Here Job's friends in a real sense share in his troubles with him. Unfortunately later, by their well-intended but often inappropriate words, they effectively added to his troubles.

... and share in each other's joy

See also:

- [1Cor 12:26](#) ↑

Rom 12:15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.* 

Fellow believers may well be primarily in view here.

2Cor 2:3 And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, *for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all.* 

Paul had confidence in the Corinthian's obedience to him and because of this he had anticipated to experience much joy on his return to them. Correspondingly, he had anticipated that they would share in his joy, on seeing their mentor's joy over them.

Phil 2:17-18 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, *I am glad and rejoice with you all.* ¹⁸*Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.* 

Luke 1:57-58 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸*And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.* 

This and the extract below from "The Parable of the Lost Coin" are not speaking specifically of joy experienced amongst believers, but they do mirror such joy which stems from mutual concern, as should exist in churches.

Luke 15:9 And when she has found it, *she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'* 

Keep in touch about each other's welfare – and keep the others informed of your own

See also:

- [Keep each other informed about the work and associated challenges](#), p. 1429

In the first two references below (Phil 2:19-20; 1Thes 3:5-6) Paul speaks of taking steps to find out about the welfare of



other believers, including their spiritual welfare or faith. In the following two (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-9) Paul takes steps to keep other believers informed about his welfare.

Phil 2:19-20 I hope in the Lord Jesus *to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.* ²⁰For I have no one like him, who will be *genuinely concerned for your welfare.* 

As well as Paul, Timothy was keen to know about the Philippians' welfare (v. 20).

1Thes 3:5-7 *For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.* ⁶But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and *has brought us the good news of your faith and love* and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— ⁷for this reason, brothers,^d in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. 

^d Or *brothers and sisters*

Eph 6:21-22 *So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything.* ²²*I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.* 

Note that part of Paul's motivation in keeping other believers informed about his welfare was to encourage them (v. 22; Col 4:8 ↓).

Col 4:7-9 *Tychicus will tell you all about my activities.* He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant^e in the Lord. ⁸*I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are* and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. *They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.* 

^e Greek *fellow bondservant*; also verse 12

✚ **Keep each other informed about the circumstances of fellow believers:**

Heb 13:23 *You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon.* 

Note: Believers share together in spiritual blessings and privileges . . .

See also:

▪ Eph 1:3 ↓

Rom 11:17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and *now share in the nourishing root^f of the olive tree, ...* 

^f Greek *root of richness*; some manuscripts *richness*

The "olive tree" represents Israel, particularly the patriarchs with whom Israel's relationship with God was established. The "wild olive shoot" represents Gentile believers accepted into God's people. The "nourishing root" refers to spiritual blessings that all God's people have, quite possibly in particular to the promises made to the patriarchs (cf. ESB). Because of what Jesus Christ has accomplished, Gentile believers now share with the Jews in their spiritual blessings (cf. Rom 15:26-27 ↓; Eph 3:6 ↓).

Rom 15:26-27 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if *the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings*, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. 

1Cor 9:23 I do it all for the sake of *the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.* 

Eph 3:6 This mystery is^g that *the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* 

^g The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

What the "promise" refers to is not specified but probably relates to an aspect of salvation, centered on and achieved through Jesus Christ. Possibly it may encompass – or at least be applicable to – all that is promised to those who are "in" Jesus Christ.

Eph 4:11-13 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^h and teachers,ⁱ ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for *building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^j to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ...* 

^h Or *pastors*

ⁱ Or *the shepherd-teachers*

^j Greek *to a full-grown man*



The spiritual maturity of Christians together as “the body of Christ” (v. 12) is a wonderful blessing in which they can share.

Phil 1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for *you are all partakers with me of grace*,^k both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

^k Or *you all have fellowship with me in grace*

Phil 2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any *participation in the Spirit*, any affection and sympathy, ...

Christians participate/share together in the Spirit (cf. [Heb 6:4](#) ↓).

Titus 1:4 To Titus, *my true child in a common faith*: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Heb 6:4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and *have shared in the Holy Spirit*, ...

2Pet 1:4 ... by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them *you may become partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about *our common salvation*, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

This speaks of sharing in salvation in the present. This salvation of course has a future aspect, as per the following subsection.

Num 10:32 And *if you do go with us, whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same will we do to you*.

The reference here is more to material blessings rather than spiritual, but it is applicable to the latter and exemplifies how God’s people share in his blessings (as well as being indicative of how they should share material blessings with each other). Likewise, in 1 Samuel 26:19 David refers to sharing in the God-given blessing/s of the Promised Land – “share in the heritage of the LORD”.

... Believers will share together in future blessings and privileges

Acts 20:32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to *give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified*.

This and Colossians 1:12 below are probably referring to at least primarily to future blessings that believers together inherit. They may also present spiritual blessings in view.

2Cor 4:14 ... knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus *will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence*.

Col 1:12 ... giving thanks^l to the Father, who has *qualified you*^m to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

^l Or *patience, with joy giving thanks*

^m Some manuscripts *us*

1Thes 4:17 Then *we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord*.

2Thes 2:14 To this he called you through our gospel, so *that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

This speaks of obtaining glory that we will “share” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT; cf. [1Pet 5:1](#) ↓).

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers,ⁿ *you who share in a heavenly calling*, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ...

ⁿ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

The “heavenly calling” may have in view a call to heaven (cf. NLT; Phil 3:14), with the accompanying wonderful blessings of the afterlife. However it may simply mean a call from God in heaven (cf. GNT, NCV) to follow him.

1Pet 5:1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, *as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed*: ...

Rev 22:19 ... and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away *his share in the tree of life and in the holy city*, which are described in this book.

‡ God has blessed believers with every spiritual blessing:

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*, ...



This implies that in Christ believers share “every spiritual blessing”. The phrase “in the heavenly places” may be indicating that the blessings spoken of are ones that we will experience in the afterlife, although they have already been designated to us. However the phrase may be emphasizing the heavenly and eternal dimension of spiritual blessings that we have now.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Love Each Other (I): General

See also:

- [37. Love](#), p. 1537

Subsections

- [Love one another](#)
- [Love one another more and more](#)
- [Loving other Christians is indicative of being of God and Jesus Christ . . .](#)
- [. . . Not loving other Christians has negative implications](#)
- [Love is vital for Christian service and living](#)
- [Further blessings of loving each other](#)

Love one another

See also:

- [Care about and be concerned for each other](#), p. 1336

John 15:17 These things I command you, so that you will *love one another*. 

1Jn 3:11, 23 For *this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another*.  ... ²³And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and *love one another, just as he has commanded us*. 

2Jn 1:5 And now *I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another*. 

1Pet 2:17 Honor everyone. *Love the brotherhood*. Fear God. Honor the emperor. 

Philem 1:4-5 I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵because I hear of *your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints*, ... 

Rom 16:8 Greet *Ampliatius, my beloved in the Lord*. 

1Cor 16:24 *My love be with you all in Christ Jesus*. Amen. 

Titus 3:15 All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet *those who love us in the faith*. Grace be with you all. 

Loving others “in the faith”, speaks of loving others who share in the faith (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

3Jn 1:1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, *whom I love in truth*. 

Here “love in the truth” (cf. 2Jn 1:1-2) quite possibly refers to loving others who believe in the truth (cf. [Titus 3:15](#) ↑). Alternatively or in conjunction with this, it may be speaking of loving other believers in accordance with the truth. A further possibility is that it simply means “truly love” (AMP, GNT).

Love one another more and more

Phil 1:9 And it is my prayer *that your love may abound more and more*, with knowledge and all discernment, ... 

1Thes 4:9-10 Now *concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another*, ¹⁰*for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia*. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, ... 

1Thes 3:11-12 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹²*and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you*, ... 

2Thes 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers,^o as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and *the love of every one of you for one another is increasing*. 

^o Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and



women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Prov 17:17 A friend *loves at all times*, and a brother is born for adversity.

In conjunction with loving one another more and more, we should love at all times and similarly have "steadfast love" ([Prov 19:22](#) ↓).

Prov 19:22 *What is desired in a man is steadfast love*, and a poor man is better than a liar.

✦ **Have abundant love for other believers:**

2Cor 2:4 For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know *the abundant love that I have for you*.

Loving other Christians is indicative of being of God and Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- [1Jn 3:16](#) ↓; [1Jn 4:21](#) ↓
- *Love for them is linked with loving and caring for other Christians*, p. 1142
- *Knowing God is linked with loving and caring for others*, p. 1210

1Jn 4:7, 12, 16 *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.* ... ¹²No one has ever seen God; *if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.* ... ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. *God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

Love is the essence of God's nature – "God is love" (v. 16; cf. [v. 8](#) ↓). Everyone who loves exhibits God's nature, demonstrating that they have been "born of God" (v. 7b). In addition, loving one another shows that: we know God (v. 7b); we live in God and he lives in us (vv. 12, 16b); and "his love is perfected in us" (v. 12b).

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: *just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* ³⁵*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

John 15:12-14 *This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* ¹³*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* ¹⁴*You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

Loving each other as Jesus Christ loved us (v. 12) means we are friends of Jesus Christ (v. 14) – with the implication that he laid down his life for us, his friends (v. 13). As such we are recipients of both the salvation and the relationship with God that Christ's death has made possible.

1Jn 2:10 *Whoever loves his brother abides in the light*, and in him^p there is no cause for stumbling.

^p Or it

1Jn 3:14a, 18-20 *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.* ... ¹⁸*Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.* ¹⁹*By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;* ²⁰*for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.*

1Jn 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and *everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.*

This verse makes the assertion that everyone who loves God will naturally love his children as well (cf. [1Jn 4:20-21](#) ↓).

2Jn 1:1-2 The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom *I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth,* ²*because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:* ...

Christian love flows from knowledge of God's truth and a life lived in accordance with or obedience to this truth. It follows from this that loving other Christians is indicative that one is of God's truth, and so of God.

... Not loving other Christians has negative implications

1Jn 2:9, 11 *Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.* ... ¹¹*But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

1Jn 3:10, 14-15 *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.* ... ¹⁴*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.* *Whoever*



does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 

Those who do not love other Christians: are “children of the devil” as opposed to “children of God” (v. 10); remain in death (v. 14); and are in a spiritual sense murderers (v. 15). Note that the association of hate with murder (v. 15; cf. Matt 5:21-22) appears to point to hate as being the motive behind murder, with the latter being the fulfillment of the former.

1Jn 3:16-17 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? 

We ought to follow Jesus Christ’s example and unselfishly show love to fellow believers (v. 16). Anyone who does not show love to a fellow believer in need – “closes his heart against him” – cannot have the love of God in him (v. 17).

1Jn 4:8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 

1Jn 4:20-21 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot^a love God whom he has not seen. ²¹And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. 

^a Some manuscripts *how can he*

Fellow Christians: reflect the character of the invisible God, albeit to varying degrees; are highly valued and greatly loved by God; and are associated with God, being of his people. These factors in conjunction with the fact that it is easier to interact with what we can see, mean that if we do not love a fellow Christian we can hardly claim to love God himself.

2Pet 1:7, 9 ... and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.  ... ⁹For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 

In v. 9 Peter refers to having the qualities he lists in vv. 5-7 which climax with love. Peter may be correlating lacking love and the other qualities with sin. He is not actually saying that such a person is not or no longer of God, but the suggestion is that there is a real danger of this being or becoming the case.

† **Loving one’s enemies is also indicative of being of God:**

Matt 5:44-45 But I say to you, *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil

and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 

In addition to loving other Christians, loving our enemies is also a sign of our relationship with God. For as God lovingly cares for the bad as well as the good, those who love their enemies reflect God’s nature – thus showing themselves to be children of God (cf. [1Jn 4:7](#) ).

Love is vital for Christian service and living

1Cor 8:1 Now concerning^r food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but *love builds up*. 

^r The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians’ letter; see 7:1

The phrase “puffs up” is a reference to oneself, whereas “builds up” primarily refers to building up others, particularly those in the church. Note that in the first statement Paul indicates that he is beginning a response to the Corinthians, whom he quotes.

1Thes 1:3 ... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and *labor of love* and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 

Their love had produced their labor. Note that here “love” could be referring to love for God or Christ, rather than love for others. It is applicable to both.

2Pet 1:7-8 ... and godliness with brotherly affection, and *brotherly affection with love*. ⁸For if these qualities^s are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 

^s Greek *these things*; also verses 9, 10, 12

1Thes 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on *the breastplate of faith and love*, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 

This figuratively illustrates that love – along with faith and hope – provides significant spiritual protection for the believer.

Phil 1:9-11 And it is my prayer *that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,* ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. 

Love that is knowledgeable and wise enables one to remain pure (v. 10) and to be “filled with the fruit of righteousness”



(v. 11a). This expression refers either to good deeds (cf. CEV, NCV) or to righteous qualities (cf. GNT).

Further blessings of loving each other

Eph 3:17-19 ... so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, *being rooted and grounded in love*,¹⁸*may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth*,¹⁹*and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* 📖

In v. 17, “love” appears to refer to love that believers have – meaning that the passage is relevant to this subsection. However, it could instead refer to God’s love (cf. NLT) or Jesus Christ’s love (cf. CEV). In v. 18, “the breadth and length and height and depth” is often interpreted to be speaking of Christ’s love (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV) or God’s love (cf. NLT).

Col 2:1-2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,²*that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, ...* 📖

As Christians exist together united in love, they increasingly experience and comprehend spiritual blessings and truths.

1Pet 4:8 *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.* 📖

This quotes Proverbs 10:12 – “... love covers all offenses.” It does not mean that loving others atones for sin, but that love forgives and “buries” the sins of others – particularly wrongs against oneself.

1Jn 4:17-18 *By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.*¹⁸*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* 📖

This is speaking of having the love that comes from God, expressed in loving others. Such love, an expression and extension of God’s love, makes judgment from him inconceivable and so annuls any fear of judgment. Conversely, whoever fears has “not really learned to love” (CEV, v. 18b); they do not have perfect love (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

2Jn 1:3 *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son, in truth and love.* 📖

Here “in... love” could denote either living in God’s love or loving others; in any case the two are interrelated. As we live in love and truth, we experience the grace, mercy and peace of God and Jesus Christ.

Prov 3:3-4 *Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.*⁴*So you will find favor and good success^t in the sight of God and man.* 📖

^t Or *repute*

Note that here and in 21:21 below, love for others amongst God’s people does not appear to be primarily in view.

✦ Our love is a great benefit to other believers:

Philem 1:7 *For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.* 📖

The love Philemon had shown other believers had refreshed them, and had also given Paul great joy and comfort.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Love Each Other (II): How

See also:

- *II. Caring for the Body*, p. 1322
- *What love is*, p. 1538

Subsections

- Love is expressed with actions
- Love each other as Jesus Christ loved us, even laying down his life
- Love each other genuinely and earnestly
- Love each other as brothers (and sisters)
- Keep each other in your hearts . . .
- . . . Long for each other
- Greet or send greetings to each other . . .
- . . . and welcome each other
- Note: Obedience to God and other aspects of the faith are essential for love



Love is expressed with actions

See also:

- *God is love – as epitomized in him giving his only Son, to save us*, p. 74
- *Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them*, p. 819
- *Love is vital for Christian service and living*, p. 1315
- *Note: Obedience to God and other aspects of the faith are essential for love*, p. 1320
- *d) Help Each Other*, p. 1336
- *Do things in love*, p. 1539

1Jn 3:17-18 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

2Cor 8:7-8, 24 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you^u—see that you excel in this act of grace also. ⁸I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. ... ²⁴So give proof before the churches of your love and of our boasting about you to these men.

^u Some manuscripts *in your love for us*

Paul had known the Corinthians to be earnest and loving to him (v. 7; text note), but now he wanted them to prove their love against the earnestness and love of others (v. 8, 24) by giving towards helping needy fellow believers. As such their love would be manifested or expressed in their action.

2Cor 12:15 I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

Paul's love for the Corinthians (v. 15b) would be shown in what he did for them (v. 15a).

1Thes 1:3 ... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and *labor of love* and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonians' love was evidenced by their labor, the manifestation of their love.

1Thes 2:8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

Such sharing of their lives (by Paul and his associates) would have largely involved practical expressions of their affectionate desire or love (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

3Jn 1:5-6 Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do *in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are*, ⁶who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.

Gal 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

The "law of Christ" quite possibly refers primarily to Christ's commands to love each other as he has loved us (cf. John 13:34; 15:12), although Paul may instead have in view Christ's teachings in general. By taking action in bearing one another's burdens, we live out or fulfill this law.

‡ **What love is and is not, and does and does not do:**

1Cor 13:4-7 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;^v ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

^v Greek *irritable and does not count up wrongdoing*

For comment, see the comment on **1Cor 13:4-7** – under *What love is*, p. 1538.

Love each other as Jesus Christ loved us, even laying down his life

See also:

- *Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them*, p. 819

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you *love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another*.

John 15:12-13 This is my commandment, that you *love one another as I have loved you*. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus disciples were to love each other as he had loved them, a love which he would soon show to be unsurpassed by laying down his life for them.

Eph 5:2 And *walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us*, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1Jn 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, *love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ...*



Phil 1:8 For God is my witness, how *I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

1Jn 2:8 At the same time, *it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because^w the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.*

^w Or *that*

The “command” is the command to love others (cf. vv. 9-11), fulfilled in Jesus in the love he showed and to be evident in the lives of his followers.

1Sam 20:14-15 If I am still alive, *show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; ¹⁵and do not cut off^x your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.*

^x Or *but if I die, do not cut off*

Along with loving each other as Jesus Christ loved us, we should seek to show the steadfast love of God to each other, as Jonathan asks here of David.

✦ **Since God so loved us that he sent his Son to die for us, we ought to love one another:**

1Jn 4:9-11, 19 *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ... ¹⁹We love because he first loved us.*

Verse 19 suggests that our love for other believers is prompted by and an emulation of God’s love for us.

Love each other genuinely and earnestly

Rom 12:9 *Let love be genuine.* Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

2Cor 6:4, 6 ... but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ... ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, *genuine love*; ...

2Cor 8:8 I say this not as a command, but *to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.*

1Pet 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth *for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ...*

1Pet 4:8 *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

1Jn 3:18 Little children, *let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

The final phrase “in truth” is probably referring to expressing love sincerely and truly – “true caring” (NCV™) – and/or in a way that is in accordance with “the truth” (cf. v. 19).

✦ **Timothy’s genuine interest in others:**

Phil 2:20 *For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.*

Love each other as brothers (and sisters)

See also:

- [Philem 1:12](#) ↓
- [God’s people are brothers and sisters of each other](#), p. 772

1Pet 3:8 Finally, all of you, *have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.*

Heb 13:1 *Let brotherly love continue.*

Rom 12:10 *Love one another with brotherly affection.* Outdo one another in showing honor.

Phil 4:1 Therefore, *my brothers,^y whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

^y Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21

Philem 1:15-16 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶no longer as a slave^z but more than a slave, as *a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.*

^z Greek *bondservant*; twice in this verse

1Pet 2:17 Honor everyone. *Love the brotherhood.* Fear God. Honor the emperor.

2Pet 1:5-7 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,^a and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with *brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*

^a Or *excellence*; twice in this verse



✦ **Be friends:**

3Jn 1:15 Peace be to you. *The friends greet you. Greet the friends, every one of them.* 

Keep each other in your hearts . . .

When Paul talks of having others in his heart, he implies that they are an integral part of himself and his consciousness.

2Cor 7:3 I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that *you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.* 

The latter part of the verse points to the closeness that Paul felt towards the Corinthians, having them in his heart.

Phil 1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because *I hold you in my heart*, for you are all partakers with me of grace,^b both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 

^b Or *you all have fellowship with me in grace*

2Cor 6:11-13 We have spoken freely to you,^c Corinthians; *our heart is wide open.* ¹²You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³In return (I speak as to children) *widen your hearts also.* 

^c Greek *Our mouth is open to you*

Opening wide one's heart to others, is akin to making room in one's heart for others (cf. CEV).

Philem 1:12 *I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.* 

In describing Onesimus as "my very heart" Paul speaks of his strong love and closeness to him, akin to having Onesimus in his heart.

. . . Long for each other

Phil 4:1 Therefore, *my brothers,*^d *whom I love and long for*, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. 

^d Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness, how *I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.* 

Paul appears to refer to sharing in Jesus Christ's affection or love – through his union with Christ – expressing such affection in his great yearning/longing for the Philippians.

1Thes 2:17 But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, *we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, ...* 

1Thes 3:6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that *you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you—* 

2Tim 1:4 *As I remember your tears, I long to see you*, that I may be filled with joy. 

✦ **The Ephesians' grief over the prospect of never seeing Paul again:**

Acts 20:37-38 *And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again.* And they accompanied him to the ship. 

Greet or send greetings to each other . . .

Rom 16:14-16 *Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers^e who are with them. ¹⁵Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.* 

^e Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 17

"Greet" is used by Paul no less than 18 times in vv. 3-16. Note that a "holy kiss" (v. 16a; cf. **1Cor 16:20** ↓; **1Pet 5:14** ↓) was apparently a common form of greeting in the early church, signifying the bonds and warmth of believers' unity in Christ.

1Cor 16:19-20 *The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. ²⁰All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.* 

Philem 1:23-24 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, *sends greetings to you, ²⁴and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.* 

Heb 13:24 *Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings.* 

1Pet 5:13-14 She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, *sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. ¹⁴Greet one another with the kiss of love.* Peace to all of you who are in Christ. 



3Jn 1:15 Peace be to you. *The friends greet you. Greet the friends, every one of them.* 

... and welcome each other

See also:

▪ [1Cor 16:19](#) 

Acts 15:4 When they came to Jerusalem, *they were welcomed by the church* and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. 

Acts 18:27a And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and *wrote to the disciples to welcome him.* 

Rom 14:1 *As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.* 

Rom 15:5-7 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷*Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.* 

Gal 4:14 ... and though my condition was a trial to you, *you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.* 

Col 4:10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—*if he comes to you, welcome him*), ... 

Phil 2:29 *So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, ...* 

Philem 1:17 So if you consider me your partner, *receive him as you would receive me.* 

‡ A classic Israelite greeting:

Ruth 2:4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And *he said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered, "The LORD bless you."* 

Note: Obedience to God and other aspects of the faith are essential for love

See also:

▪ [God gives his people love . . .](#), p. 880

▪ [. . . God enables his people to love](#), p. 880

1Pet 1:22 *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ...* 

The importance for love of purity – which is attained through obedience to the truth – is also shown in 1 Timothy 1:5 below.

1Jn 5:2 *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.* 

2Jn 1:5-6 And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we *love one another*. ⁶*And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.* 

Verse 6 appears to be saying that love is lived out by walking in obedience to God's commands.

1Tim 1:5 The aim of our charge is *love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* 

2Jn 1:1-2 The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom *I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ²because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: ...* 

As commented earlier, Christian love flows from knowledge of God's truth and a life lived in accordance with or obedience to this truth.

Col 1:4-5a ... since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵*because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.* 

The very real hope of the wonderful blessings in the afterlife, spurs believers on in their love for others – as well as in their faith.

Phil 1:9 And it is my prayer that *your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ...* 

The word "knowledge" probably refers to knowledge of God and his ways. Believers should exhibit love that reflects such knowledge (cf. [2Jn 1:1-2](#) ) – and also spiritual discernment – rather than a love which is based merely on sentiment or emotion.



Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Caring for the Body

The care that church members ought to show each other should be one of the defining characteristics of every church, evidencing Christian love. This care should include both spiritual and practical care, with the former largely involving prayer and encouragement.

a) Pray for Each Other (I): General

See also:

- *We help others by praying for them*, p. 1215
- *Pray for church members* [instructions for leaders], p. 1485

Subsections

- [Pray earnestly for other Christians](#)
- [Pray constantly for other Christians](#)
- [Pray for those facing persecution](#)
- [Pray for those spreading the gospel](#)
- [Always thank God for other Christians because of their faith and love](#)
- [Thank and praise God because of the service of other Christians](#)

Pray earnestly for other Christians

Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but *earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church*. 📖

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, *always struggling on your behalf in his prayers*, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. 📖

1Thes 3:10 ... as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith? 📖

Deut 9:18-19, 25-26 Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke him

to anger. ¹⁹For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But *the LORD listened to me that time also*. 📖 ... ²⁵*“So I lay prostrate before the LORD for these forty days and forty nights, because the LORD had said he would destroy you. ²⁶And I prayed to the LORD, ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.* 📖

Along with falling prostrate before God for forty days and nights, Moses' fasting (v. 18) points to the earnestness of his accompanying supplication to God (vv. 19, 26).

Pray constantly for other Christians

See also:

- [Col 4:12](#) ↑; [1Thes 3:10](#) ↑; [Deut 9:18-19, 25-26](#) ↑
- [2Thes 1:11](#) ↓
- [Pray constantly](#), p. 1222

When Paul speaks of always or continually praying for his readers (cf. *Always thank God for other Christians because of their faith and love*, p. 1324), he is using hyperbole to portray his persistence in prayer for them.

Rom 1:9-10 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that *without ceasing I mention you* ¹⁰*always in my prayers*, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. 📖

Eph 6:17-18 ... and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸*praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ...* 📖

Col 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, *we have not ceased to pray for you*, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ... 📖

2Tim 1:3 I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as *I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day*. 📖

Heb 13:18 *Pray for us*, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. 📖

The first clause quite possibly has the sense of: "Keep on praying for us." (GNT; cf. AMP)



1Sam 7:8 And the people of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”

Unlike the previous references which mention ongoing, tenacious prayer, this and the following verse from Nehemiah 1:6 refer to instances of concentrated prayer for a particular situation.

Neh 1:6 ... let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned.

Pray for those facing persecution

See also:

- [2Thes 3:2](#) ↴

Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

Rom 15:30-31 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ...

2Cor 1:10-11 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Paul does not indicate exactly what he is referring to by the phrase “deadly peril” (v. 10), although in v. 8 he speaks of “the affliction we experienced in Asia”. Probably it was some kind of persecution.

Phil 1:18b-19 Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...

Paul speaks of the Philippians’ prayers for him while he was imprisoned because of his work for God’s kingdom (cf. v. 17; [Col 4:18](#) ↴).

Col 4:18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

2Thes 1:4-5, 11 Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all

your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. ⁵This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— ... ¹¹To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ...

The persecution that the Thessalonians were suffering (vv. 4-5) appears to be at least part of the reason for Paul praying for them.

Pray for those spreading the gospel

See also:

- [Pray for them in their work for the kingdom, asking God to aid them in the work](#), p. 1327
- [Pray for the proclamation of the gospel, including others who proclaim it](#), p. 1753

Acts 13:2-3 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Presumably the prayer was focused on Barnabas and Saul and the work ahead of them (v. 2) in proclaiming the gospel.

Eph 6:18b-20 To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Col 4:3-4 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

1Thes 5:25 Brothers, pray for us.

Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for him and his companions in spreading the word.

2Thes 3:1-2 Finally, brothers,^a pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored,^b as happened among you, ²and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

^a Or brothers and sisters; also verses 6, 13

^b Or glorified



Always thank God for other Christians because of their faith and love

See also:

▪ [1Thes 1:2-3](#) ↴

Eph 1:15-16 For this reason, *because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^c toward all the saints,* ¹⁶*I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ...* 📖

^c Some manuscripts omit *your love*

Philem 1:4-5 *I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers,* ⁵*because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ...* 📖

2Thes 1:3 *We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers,^d as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.* 📖

^d Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

Rom 1:8 *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.* 📖

1Thes 2:13 *And we also thank God constantly^e for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.* 📖

^e Or *without ceasing*

Paul thanked God continually essentially because of the Thessalonians’ faith – with them having “received” and “accepted” Paul’s message as “the word of God”, as “believers”.

1Thes 3:7-9 ... for this reason, brothers,^f in all our distress and affliction *we have been comforted about you through your faith.* ⁸*For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.* ⁹*For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ...* 📖

^f Or *brothers and sisters*

‡ Paul always thanked God for the Thessalonians because God had chosen them:

2Thes 2:13 *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the*

firstfruits^g to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 📖

^g Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

Note that Paul’s reason for thanking God for the Thessalonians involves their coming to faith – their “belief in the truth” – which is line with the theme of this subsection.

Thank and praise God because of the service of other Christians

2Cor 8:16-17 *But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you.* ¹⁷*For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going^h to you of his own accord.* 📖

^h Or *he went*

We should thank God for the care and earnestness shown by others in their ministry.

Phil 1:3-5 *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.* 📖

1Thes 1:2-3 *We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantlyⁱ mentioning you in our prayers, ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.* 📖

ⁱ Or *without ceasing*

Gal 1:22-24 *And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” ²⁴And they glorified God because of me.* 📖

The churches glorified God for Paul not only because of his preaching but also because of the amazing turn around in the life of their former adversary.

Judg 5:2, 9 *That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the LORD!* 📖 ... ⁹*My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless the LORD.* 📖

‡ Always thank God for others because of his grace given to them:

1Cor 1:4-5 *I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—* 📖



*Pray for persecuted Christians***b) Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask****Subsections**

- Ask that other believers will live as God wants
- Ask God to forgive them and show mercy when they do sin
- Pray for their spiritual growth and maturity
- Pray for them in their work for the kingdom, asking God to aid them in the work
- Ask God to help and take care of them
- Pronounce godly blessings on other believers . . .
- . . . Pronouncements of blessings of God's and Jesus Christ's presence
- Note: Prayer for the blessing and peace of Jerusalem

Ask that other believers will live as God wants

2Cor 13:7 But we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but *that you may do what is right*, though we may seem to have failed.

Paul was more concerned that the Corinthians live godly lives than about others' incorrect perceptions of himself.

Col 1:9-10 And so, from the day we heard, *we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*¹⁰*so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

Paul prays that the Colossians would have knowledge of God's will (v. 9), so as to live a life worthy of the Lord and be pleasing to him (v. 10).

2Thes 1:11 *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ...*

Here Paul essentially prays that God would make the Thessalonians worthy of the life to which he had called them to live (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT), with the implication that they would live accordingly.

1Ki 8:36 ... then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you *teach them the good way in which they should walk*, and grant rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

In this rendering Solomon refers to God teaching his people the right way to live rather than actually asking him to do so, but the Hebrew can be interpreted as at least implying a request that God do so (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT).

1Chr 29:18-19 O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, *keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you.*¹⁹*Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all,* and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision.

The phrase “such purposes and thoughts” (v. 18) probably refers to the desire to serve God, as the people had just exhibited in their generous giving toward the work on the temple.

‡ Jesus prayed that Simon Peter's faith would not fail:

Luke 22:31-32 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you,^j that he might sift you like wheat,³²but *I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.* And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

^j The Greek word for *you* (twice in this verse) is plural; in verse 32, all four instances are singular

Ask God to forgive them and show mercy when they do sin

See also:

- [Pray for church members](#) [instructions for leaders], p. 1485
- [Ask God for forgiveness and restoration](#), p. 1844

Num 14:19-20 *Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.*²⁰Then the LORD said, “I have pardoned, according to your word.

1Ki 8:33-34, 38-40, 49-51 When your people Israel are defeated before the enemy because they have sinned against you, and if they turn again to you and acknowledge your name and pray and plead with you in this house,³⁴*then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them again to the land that you gave to their fathers.* ...³⁸whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by



all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house, ³⁹*then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways* (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind), ⁴⁰*that they may fear you all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our fathers.* ⁴⁹*then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause* ⁵⁰*and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them* ⁵¹*(for they are your people, and your heritage, which you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace).* 

In v. 39, Solomon appears to be asking God to deal mercifully with those whose hearts are truly repentant, while harshly with those who are not.

Dan 9:16-19 “O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, *let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us.* ¹⁷*Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord,^k make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.* ¹⁸*O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name.* For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but *because of your great mercy.* ¹⁹*O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.”* 

^k Hebrew *for the Lord’s sake*

Joel 2:17 Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, “*Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.* ¹ Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” 

¹ Or *reproach, that the nations should rule over them*

Apparently as a consequence of the people’s sin (cf. vv. 12-13), an awesome plague of locusts had devastated the land. Thus here Joel relates God’s call for the priests to pray for mercy on the people’s behalf.

Amos 7:1-2 This is what the Lord GOD showed me: behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth

after the king’s mowings. ²*When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, “O Lord GOD, please forgive! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!”* 

1Jn 5:16 *If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God^m will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.* 

^m Greek *he*

For comment, see the comment on [1Jn 5:16](#) – under *Restoring a person who has sinned*, p. 1494.

Job 42:7-9 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. ⁸Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And *my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly.* For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” ⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them, *and the LORD accepted Job’s prayer.* 

✦ Paul’s desire or prayer that Jesus Christ would show mercy to Onesiphorus for all his help:

2Tim 1:16, 18 *May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains,*  ... ¹⁸*may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.* 

Note that Paul is addressing Timothy here – rather than directly offering a prayer to God.

Pray for their spiritual growth and maturity

See also:

▪ [Col 1:9-10](#) ↓

Eph 1:16-19 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,* ¹⁸*having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of*



his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ...

Spiritual knowledge and insight feature in some of Paul's prayers for the spiritual growth of his readers (cf. Eph 3:16-19 ↓; Phil 1:9-11 ↓; Col 1:9-10 ↓), as they are key to other aspects of spiritual growth.

Eph 3:14-19 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every familyⁿ in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

ⁿ Or *fatherhood*; the Greek word *patria* is closely related to the word for *Father* in verse 14

Phil 1:9-11 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The phrase “the fruit of righteousness” (v. 11a) could refer to either good deeds (cf. CEV, NCV) or to righteous qualities (cf. GNT). The concept of being “filled with the fruit” seems to favour the second interpretation.

2Cor 13:9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. *Your restoration is what we pray for.*

Here Paul appears to have in view the Corinthian's “restoration to maturity” (NLT) – that they would be “made complete” (NASB, NKJV; cf. NCV) and “become perfect” (GNT, NRSV; cf. AMP, NIV).

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

1Thes 3:12-13 ... and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Like the next two references – and a number of other verses in the following subsections – this is, strictly speaking, a

blessing (the invoking of God's favor). In a real sense such blessings are prayers – and certainly can be used as such.

1Thes 5:23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Thes 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

It is not clear as to whether Paul is referring here to the Thessalonians having a greater appreciation of God's love and Christ's perseverance for them, or to their lives increasingly reflecting these – the latter being more relevant to this subsection. However, even if the former is the case, it can be inferred that the latter is implied.

Pray for them in their work for the kingdom, asking God to aid them in the work

See also:

- *Pray for those spreading the gospel*, p. 1323
- *Pray for the proclamation of the gospel, including others who proclaim it*, p. 1753
- *Pray for the salvation of unbelievers*, p. 1753

Acts 14:23, 26 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. ... ²⁶and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

In committing Christian workers by prayer to the Lord and to the grace of God, we are essentially praying for them in their work and thus also the work itself.

Rom 15:30-31 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to *strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf*, ³¹that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ...

Col 1:9-10 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

To be precise Paul is praying indirectly for the Colossians' work. Paul prays that God would fill them with the knowledge of his will (v. 9), with the result that they would bear fruit for God's kingdom in their work (v. 10).



2Thes 1:11 *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ...* 

2Thes 2:16-17 *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.* 

Paul prays that they would be comforted and given strength in everything they do and say for the Lord.

Philem 1:6 *... and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.^o* 

^o Or for Christ's service

With the expression "every good thing that is in us" Paul may have in view things we have been equipped with for serving Christ (cf. text note). Regarding the meaning of "the sharing of your faith", see *Further reasons*, p. 1059.

Deut 33:11 Bless, O LORD, his substance, and *accept the work of his hands*; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those who hate him, that they rise not again. 

The request "accept the work of his hands" is in effect asking God to help them (the Levites) to do work which is pleasing to God, in their work as spiritual leaders of their people.

Ask God to help and take care of them

See also:

- *Pray for those facing persecution*, p. 1323

Deut 33:7 And this he said of Judah: "*Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him in to his people. With your hands contend^p for him, and be a help against his adversaries.*" 

^p Probable reading; Hebrew *With his hands he contended*

Judah's leading role in military campaigns appears to be in view. The clause "bring him in to his people" is most likely a request that God would bring the fighting men safely back to the people, in response to his "voice" or prayer.

1Ki 8:52, 59 *Let your eyes be open to the plea of your servant and to the plea of your people Israel, giving ear to them whenever they call to you.*  ... ⁵⁹*Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, ...* 

Verse 52 is from Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (cf. vv. 22-53). Verse v. 59 is from his subsequent address to the people, where he refers to a prime purpose of his prayer, i.e. that God may uphold the cause of his people "as each day requires".

Ps 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and *spread your protection over them*, that those who love your name may exult in you. 

Ps 25:22 *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.* 

Ps 28:9 *Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever.* 

Ps 36:10 *Oh, continue your steadfast love to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart!* 

David asks God to manifest his love and righteousness to his people in caring for them (cf. v. 11).

Ps 80:14-15 Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; *have regard for this vine, ¹⁵the stock that your right hand planted, and for the son whom you made strong for yourself.* 

The "vine" (v. 14) – like the "stock" and the "son" (v. 15) – is the people of Israel.

Ps 125:4 *Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts!* 

3Jn 1:2 Beloved, *I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health*, as it goes well with your soul. 

John prays that all may go well with his friend Gaius – including his health – just as he is doing well spiritually.

✦ Commit others to God:

Acts 20:32 And now *I commend you to God and to the word of his grace*, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 

Pronounce godly blessings on other believers . . .

See also:

- [Num 6:22-27](#) ⇅; [Ruth 2:4](#) ⇅

Pronouncing godly blessings on people is in effect asking God to grant the blessings (cf. [2Chr 30:27](#) ⇅).

Ps 20:1-5 *May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! ²May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! ³May*



he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! Selah ⁴May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans! ⁵May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions!

Ps 134:3 May the LORD bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!

Eph 6:23-24 Peace be to the brothers,^a and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

^a Or brothers and sisters

Jude 1:2 May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

2Chr 30:27 Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to his holy habitation in heaven.

Note that the blessing of the people by the priests/Levites and the later phrase "their prayer", equate blessing others with prayer.

Deut 33:13-16 And of Joseph he said, "Blessed by the LORD be his land, with the choicest gifts of heaven above,^r and of the deep that crouches beneath, ¹⁴with the choicest fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months, ¹⁵with the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills, ¹⁶with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwells in the bush. May these rest on the head of Joseph, on the pate of him who is prince among his brothers.

^r Two Hebrew manuscripts and Targum; Hebrew with the dew

2Sam 15:20b Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the LORD show^s steadfast love and faithfulness to you.

^s Septuagint; Hebrew lacks may the LORD show

Ps 3:8 Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah

Note that here and in Deuteronomy 33:11a below, the speaker actually asks God to bless the people, rather than pronouncing a blessing on them as such.

Deut 33:11 Bless, O LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those who hate him, that they rise not again.

"Bless, O LORD, his substance" (v. 11) may be a general blessing, to bless the people of the tribe of Levi – making them strong (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

... Pronouncements of blessings of God's and Jesus Christ's presence

Ruth 2:4 And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem. And he said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered, "The LORD bless you."

"The LORD be with you!" alludes to God's care and blessing (cf. Num 6:24-26 ↓), as reflected in the harvesters' responding greeting.

2Thes 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

Rom 15:33 May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

2Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.^t

^t The Greek for you is plural

Similarly in Galatians 6:18 (cf. Phil 4:23; Philem 1:25) Paul says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen."

‡ The priestly blessing, involving God's presence:

Num 6:22-27 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²³"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, ²⁴The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶the LORD lift up his countenance^u upon you and give you peace. ²⁷"So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."

^u Or face

The clauses "the LORD make his face to shine upon you" (v. 25) and "the LORD lift up his countenance upon you" (v. 26) allude to God's presence accompanied by his kindness and attentive care. Verse 27a is speaking of the preceding blessing either invoking God's presence amongst the people or designating them as God's people. For further comment on v. 27, see *God's people are called and identified by his name and Jesus Christ's name*, p. 768.

Note: Prayer for the blessing and peace of Jerusalem

Ps 51:18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; ...

Ps 122:6-9 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they be secure who love you! ⁷Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" ⁸For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!" ⁹For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.



Ps 125:5 But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the LORD will lead away with evildoers! *Peace be upon Israel!*

Ps 128:5-6 The LORD bless you from Zion! *May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!* ⁶May you see your children's children! *Peace be upon Israel!*

The second exclamation in v. 5 is indirectly a prayer for Jerusalem.

Isa 62:1, 6-7 *For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.* ... ⁶On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, ⁷and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.

In v. 1, although it could be God or even the Messiah, Isaiah may well be the speaker. As such he would be in view as the one who "will not stop praying for her" (NLT), i.e. for Jerusalem. Quite probably God is the speaker in vv. 6-7, where Jerusalem's watchmen are exhorted to pray for her (cf. AMP, NCV, NLT).

✦ **A blessing of peace and mercy upon "the Israel of God":**

Gal 6:16 And as for all who walk by this rule, *peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Encourage Each Other

See also:

- *Encourage each other in doing God's work*, p. 1428

The Hebrew and Greek words translated "encourage" often imply meanings such as "strengthen", "exhort" and "comfort". Believers are to strengthen each other, particularly in regard to faith and work for the kingdom; they are to exhort each other to press on and to live as God wants; and they are to comfort each other in difficult circumstances.

Subsections

- Encourage each other
- Strengthen each other
- Encourage and strengthen each other by what you say . . .
- . . . Exhort others to continue in God's grace
- Encourage and strengthen each other by what you do . . .
- . . . Do not do anything that will cause another to "stumble"
- Comfort each other
- Comfort those in need by visiting them

Encourage each other

See also:

- [Acts 14:22](#) ↓

1Thes 5:11, 14 Therefore *encourage one another and build one another up*, just as you are doing. ... ¹⁴And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,^v *encourage the fainthearted*, help the weak, be patient with them all.

^v Or *disorderly, or undisciplined*

Heb 3:13 But *exhort one another every day*, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

We are to strongly encourage others in the faith, even doing so daily.

Heb 10:24-25 And *let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works*, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but *encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

The encouragement spoken of (v. 25) is applicable to – if not at least in part referring to – spurring or encouraging one another on "to love and good works" (v. 24).

Acts 16:40 So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And *when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.*

Acts 20:1-2 After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and *after encouraging them*, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. ²When he had gone through those regions and *had given them much encouragement*, he came to Greece.



Col 4:8 *I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ...*

1Cor 16:17-18 I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, ¹⁸*for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours.* Give recognition to such men.

Rom 12:6-8 *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:* if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷*if service, in our serving;* the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸*the one who exhorts, in his exhortation;* the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads,^w with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

^w Or *gives aid*

All Christians are to exhort one another, but this reference indicates that some are especially equipped to do so with a spiritual gift.

✦ Exhort others daily so none may be hardened by sin:

Heb 3:12-13 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³*But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

Strengthen each other

See also:

- [1Thes 5:11](#)
- [Isa 35:4](#)
- [Use your spiritual gift to build up the church](#), p. 1434
- [Strengthen members in the faith](#), p. 1485
- [Exhort and urge members on in aspects of the Christian life](#), p. 1486

1Sam 23:16 And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and *strengthened his hand in God.*

Job 4:3-4 Behold, you have instructed many, and *you have strengthened the weak hands.* ⁴Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and *you have made firm the feeble knees.*

Job had strengthened many who had been weakened and discouraged (cf. [Isa 35:3-4](#)).

Luke 22:32 ... but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, *strengthen your brothers.*

Acts 14:21-22 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²*strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith,* and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Acts 18:23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, *strengthening all the disciples.*

Acts 11:23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and *he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ...*

1Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. *Let all things be done for building up.*

1Thes 3:2-3 ... and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker^x in the gospel of Christ, *to establish and exhort you in your faith,* ³*that no one be moved by these afflictions.* For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.

^x Some manuscripts *servant*

✦ Love builds up others:

1Cor 8:1 Now concerning^y food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but *love builds up.*

^y The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1

The phrase "builds up" here refers to building up others in the church.

Encourage and strengthen each other by what you say . . .

See also:

- [Job 4:3-4](#) ; [1Cor 14:26](#)
- [1Pet 5:12](#)

2Chr 32:6-8 And he set combat commanders over the people and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and *spoke encouragingly to them, saying,* ⁷*"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed*



before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. ⁸With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. 

Job 16:5 *I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain.* 

Isa 35:3-4 *Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”* 

Acts 13:15-16 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.” ¹⁶So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: “Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. 

Paul responded to the invitation to speak a message of encouragement with a message featuring an exposition regarding Jesus’ fulfillment of OT messianic prophecies (cf. vv. 26-41).

Acts 15:30-32 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. ³²And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, *encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words.* 

The letter had been sent by the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem in response to wrong teaching that had disturbed and troubled the believers at Antioch.

Acts 27:22, 25, 36 Yet now *I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.*  ... ²⁵So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.  ... ³⁶Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. 

The bulk of those to whom these words were directed were not believers; nevertheless this is a great example of encouraging others by what one says.

2Cor 12:19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that *we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved.* 

Eph 4:29 *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* 

Talk that will “give grace” is talk that will benefit and be a blessing to those who hear.

1Thes 4:18 Therefore *encourage one another with these words.* 

The reference here is to “words” about Jesus Christ’s return (vv. 13-17).

Prov 12:25 Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. 

1Cor 14:3-4 On the other hand, *the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.* ⁴The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but *the one who prophesies builds up the church.* 

Those who prophesy build up and encourage others by what they say. In regard to the term “prophesies”, see [The various spiritual gifts . . .](#), p. 1432; . . . [Examples of the Holy Spirit enabling believers to speak in other languages and to prophesy](#), p. 1432

. . . Exhort others to continue in God’s grace

See also:

- . . . [and live in God’s grace](#), p. 1074

Acts 13:43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, *urged them to continue in the grace of God.* 

Continuing in God’s grace primarily involves remaining true to God and holding to the faith. As such one remains under God’s grace, staying right with him (just as one received God’s grace in originally being made right with him). It also encompasses relying on God’s grace for God to meet one’s needs, notably spiritual needs.

1Pet 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, *exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.* 

The word “this” may be referring to their Christian faith, or in particular to the teaching in Peter’s letter. In any case, the final statement is an exhortation to stand firm in God’s grace, in accordance with the “exhorting” Peter had done throughout his letter.



2Cor 6:1 Working together with him, then, *we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.* 

By urging the Corinthians “not to receive the grace of God in vain” (v. 1), Paul appears to be appealing to the Corinthians not to forfeit the salvation (cf. v. 2) that God’s grace has provided (cf. **Heb 12:15** ↓). However, note that a number of commentators have a somewhat different interpretation.

Heb 12:15-16 *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.* 

✦ **Exhort and encourage others to live lives worthy of God:**

1Thes 2:11-12 For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹²*we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.* 

Encourage and strengthen each other by what you do . . .

Note that while the following references to encouraging and strengthening all refer to or are at least applicable to actions, they are not all confined to actions (as opposed to words).

Rom 14:19 So then *let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.* 

Rom 15:2 *Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.* 

Phil 1:14 *And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word^z without fear.* 

^z Some manuscripts add *of God*

Paul’s faithful and courageous example in prison had encouraged others to likewise courageously promote the gospel.

Col 2:1-2 For I want you to know *how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, ...* 

Paul’s “struggle” (v. 1) may have been largely in prayer, as at the time of writing he was confined in chains. As such, one of

the main purposes of his prayers for them was that they would be encouraged (v. 2).

Acts 4:36-37 Thus *Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.* 

The name given to Joseph by the apostles would have reflected his character. As such its meaning (v. 36b) indicated that he was an encouragement to others – as demonstrated by his notable act of generosity (v. 37).

Rom 1:11-12 For I long to see you, *that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.* 

In v. 12 Paul qualifies what he has just said in v. 11, indicating that he hoped that there would be mutual encouragement between the believers in Rome and himself. Partly in light of this, a number of commentators interpret “impart to you some spiritual gift” (v. 11) as not referring to Paul bestowing on them a spiritual gift. Rather they think Paul means either that he intended to use a spiritual gift of his own to strengthen them or that he would confer on them a spiritual blessing.

. . . Do not do anything that will cause another to “stumble”

Rom 14:13-15, 20-23; 15:1 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather *decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.  ... ²⁰Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.^a ²²The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.^b  ^{15:1}We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.* 

^a Some manuscripts add *or be hindered or be weakened*

^b Some manuscripts insert here 16:25-27



We should not do things (here consuming particular kinds of food or drink) that even though they may be acceptable biblically, other “weak” Christians consider wrong. For by so doing we can influence these Christians to act accordingly, which would for them be going against their conscience and beliefs. Hence they would be acting out of step with their faith (v. 23) – or stumbling – which is sin. Regarding “destroy” (vv. 15, 20; cf. **1Cor 8:11** ↓), though it often denotes eternal destruction, here it may be used with a transient connotation or to indicate serious spiritual harm. Verse 22b, in view of what precedes it, may be speaking of a “strong” Christian not condemning himself by offending others. However, v. 23 suggests that it is talking about a “weak” Christian not condemning himself through his actions by approving something that is inconsistent with his beliefs.

1Cor 8:4, 7-13 Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” ...⁷However, not all possess this knowledge. But *some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.* ⁸Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But *take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.* ¹⁰*For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating^c in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged,^d if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?* ¹¹*And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.* ¹²*Thus, sinning against your brothers^e and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.* ¹³*Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*

^c Greek *reclining at table*

^d Or *fortified*; Greek *built up*

^e Or *brothers and sisters*

Note that in speaking of “eating in an idol’s temple” (v. 10) Paul may be referring to feasting in part of such a temple in a context which did not involve worship of idols. Alternatively Paul may be figuratively referring to eating food that had previously been sacrificed to idols in a temple.

1Cor 10:27-29a, 31-33 If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁸*But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—* ²⁹*I do not mean your conscience, but his.* ...³¹So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³²*Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,* ³³just

as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

2Cor 6:3 *We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ...*

Note that here Paul may not necessarily be speaking about an obstacle or “stumbling block” (NIV®) to a fellow believer in their faith. He may more generally be referring to not causing a person – believer or non-believer – to be offended by some action of his so as to become closed to him and his ministry.

Heb 12:13 ... *and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.*

The first clause is quoting Proverbs 4:26. Paul uses it to urge the readers to make straight, righteous paths – so that not only would they not stumble spiritually, but that the spiritually weak among them would not be further weakened or disabled through the influence of their sin. Making such “paths” would in fact help the weak, bringing spiritual healing.

2Cor 7:2 Make room in your hearts^f for us. We have wronged no one, *we have corrupted no one*, we have taken advantage of no one.

^f Greek lacks *in your hearts*

Deut 1:26-28 “Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. ²⁷And you murmured in your tents and said, ‘Because the LORD hated us he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. ²⁸Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying, “The people are greater and taller than we. The cities are great and fortified up to heaven. And besides, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.””

The Israelite spies, lacking faith in God, indicated that they did not think the people could conquer the inhabitants of the promised land (v. 28), thereby discouraging the people (v. 28a) and causing them to stumble (vv. 26-27).

† **A grave warning against causing a believer to sin:**

Matt 18:5-7 Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶but *whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,* ⁷*it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.* ⁷“Woe to the world for temptations to sin!^h For it is necessary that temptations come, but *woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!*



^g Greek *causes . . . to stumble*; also verses 8, 9

^h Greek *stumbling blocks*

Comfort each other

2Cor 1:3-7 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, *so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.ⁱ ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that *as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.* 

ⁱ Or *For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ*

The comfort God gives to believers in their sufferings for Christ, prepares them to give comfort to other believers who suffer. So Paul could say in v. 6 that both his affliction and the subsequent comfort from God were for the comfort of his readers.

2Cor 7:5-7 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, *comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you,* as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. 

Titus and the Corinthians both brought comfort to Paul, comfort which Paul attributed ultimately to God.

Col 4:11 ... and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and *they have been a comfort to me.* 

Note that the phrase "men of the circumcision" indicates that these men were Jews.

1Thes 3:6-7 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you— ⁷for this reason, brothers,^j in all our distress and affliction *we have been comforted about you through your faith.* 

^j Or *brothers and sisters*

Philem 1:7 *For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.* 

Paul had been comforted by what Philemon had done for other believers, which had also encouraged or cheered them (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT). Later in v. 20 Paul similarly asks Philemon: "Refresh my heart in Christ" – by complying with a request (cf. vv. 17-21).

Ruth 2:8-9, 13 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now, listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. ⁹Let your eyes be on the field that they are reaping, and go after them. Have I not charged the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink what the young men have drawn."  ... ¹³Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for *you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants.*" 

1Cor 14:3 On the other hand, *the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.* 

✚ **Forgive and comfort those sorrow over their sin:**

2Cor 2:5-7 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. ⁶For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, ⁷so you should rather turn to *forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.* 

Comfort those in need by visiting them

See also:

▪ [2Cor 7:5-7](#) ↑ 

1Chr 7:22 And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and *his brothers came to comfort him.* 

Job 2:11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, *they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.* 

Job 42:11 *Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil^k that the LORD had brought upon him.* And each of them gave him a piece of money^l and a ring of gold. 



^k Or *disaster*

^l Hebrew *a qesitah*; a unit of money of unknown value

John 11:19 ... and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

2Tim 1:16-17 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, ¹⁷but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—

Onesiphorus went to some lengths to visit Paul, so as to refresh him – “comforting and reviving and bracing me like fresh air” (AMP).

✚ Visit those who are imprisoned:

Matt 25:36, 39-40 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, *I was in prison and you came to me.* ... ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, *Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,^m you did it to me.*

^mOr *brothers and sisters*

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Help Each Other

See also:

- *Serve each other*, p. 1426

Subsections

- [Care about and be concerned for each other](#)
- [Consequently, help each other](#)
- [Meet each other's needs . . .](#)
- [. . . Share what you have with those in need](#)
- [Help others who are doing God's work](#)
- [Note: What one does for another Christian, one does for Jesus Christ](#)

Care about and be concerned for each other

1Cor 12:25 ... that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may *have the same care for one another.*

2Cor 8:16 But thanks be to God, who *put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you.*

2Cor 11:28-29 And, apart from other things, *there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.* ²⁹*Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?*

Such was Paul's concern for the churches (v. 28) that he strongly identified with them in their weaknesses and trials (v. 29), effectively sharing in them. The final phrase may be speaking of “intense concern” (NASB), “distress” (GNT, cf. NCV), or even “anger” (NLT, cf. CEV).

Phil 2:20 For I have no one like him, who *will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.*

Phil 4:10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length *you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me*, but you had no opportunity.

✚ Look out for each other's interests:

Phil 2:4 *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Consequently, help each other

See also:

- [Rom 16:2 ↓](#); [Phil 4:16 ↓](#)

We should help fellow believers in whatever way we can, as a consequence of the care and concern we should have towards each other (as spoken of in the previous subsection). Such help of course includes helping those who are in need of material or physical assistance (which is prominent in this and the following two subsections). It also includes helping others in a spiritual sense (cf. [Acts 18:27 ↓](#); [1Thes 5:14 ↓](#); [Col 2:19 ↓](#)).

Acts 18:27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. *When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ...*



Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you that *by working hard in this way we must help the weak* and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' 📖

Particularly with the reference in the preceding verses to providing his own material needs (cf. vv. 33-34), here "the weak" probably refers to the poor (cf. NLT).

1Cor 12:28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then *gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.* 📖

Church members with a gift of helping are especially equipped and responsible for helping others.

Gal 6:2 *Bear one another's burdens,* and so fulfill the law of Christ. 📖

1Thes 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,ⁿ encourage the fainthearted, *help the weak,* be patient with them all. 📖

ⁿ Or *disorderly, or undisciplined*

As in Acts 20:35 above, here Paul also urges his readers to "help the weak". While it could refer to the poor, here it may instead have in view those who are weak in the faith – i.e. spiritually immature or morally weak.

Heb 6:10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in *serving the saints, as you still do.* 📖

Serving other believers (as per the above cross reference) is of course indicative of helping them (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV).

Col 2:18-19 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,^o puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind,¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom *the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.* 📖

^o Or *about the things he has seen*

Presumably the "joints and ligaments" are members of the church, the "body". As such one can infer from this that church members are to be channels of nourishment and support – and so help one another.

1Chr 12:33 Of Zebulun 50,000 seasoned troops, equipped for battle with all the weapons of war, *to help David^p with singleness of purpose.* 📖

^p Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *David*

1Thes 5:15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but *always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.* 📖

✦ **We should do good especially to other Christians:**

Gal 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, *let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.* 📖

Meet each other's needs . . .

Rom 16:2 ... that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and *help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.* 📖

2Cor 9:12 *For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints* but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 📖

2Cor 11:9 And *when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need.* So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 📖

Phil 2:25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and *your messenger and minister to my need, ...* 📖

Phil 4:16 *Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.* 📖

Titus 3:13 Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; *see that they lack nothing.* 📖

James 2:15-16 *If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food,¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good^a is that?* 📖

^a Or *benefit*

Matt 10:41-42 *The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward.⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.* 📖

This speaks of rewards for providing for the needs of God's people.



Acts 11:29 So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers^r living in Judea. 

^r Or brothers and sisters

1Tim 5:10 ... and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. 

1Tim 5:16 If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows. 

... Share what you have with those in need

See also:

- *Share with others*, p. 1544

Note that most of the verses in the previous subsection are also pertinent to the theme of this subsection and vice versa.

Acts 2:44-45 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 

Acts 4:32, 34-35 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.  ... ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 

Note that the provision in the early Jerusalem church for the needy amongst them is further illustrated with the reference to a "daily distribution" of food (6:1) amongst needy widows.

Rom 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 

Rom 15:26-27 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. 

1Cor 16:1-2 Now concerning^s the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. 

^s The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1; also verse 12

2Cor 8:3-4 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor^t of taking part in the relief of the saints— 

^t The Greek word *charis* can mean *favor* or *grace* or *thanks*, depending on the context

2Cor 8:13-15 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack." 

Paul speaks of the concept of "fairness" or equality, through whoever having plenty at a particular time supplying the needs of those who do not (v. 14). He reinforces it by referring to the giving of manna by God to the Israelites in the desert (v. 15); although some gathered much and others gathered little, all had enough. Paul is quite possibly using the quotation to imply that similarly now some have much and some have little, and steps should be taken to ensure that all have enough.

2Cor 9:13 By their approval of this service, they^u will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ... 

^u Or you

Eph 4:28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 

Philem 1:6 ... and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ^v 

^v Or for Christ's service

The phrase "the sharing of your faith" may be speaking of the sharing that is part of our faith, i.e. sharing of our possessions or ourselves with others (cf. NLT). Hence the verse's inclusion here. Alternatively, it could be speaking of either: the sharing in our faith with fellow believers, including the participation



in and fellowship of our faith (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB); or sharing what we believe with non-believers (cf. NlrV).

‡ **The love of God is not in one who does not share with a needy fellow believer:**

1Jn 3:17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 

Help others who are doing God's work

See also:

- [Pray for those spreading the gospel](#), p. 1323
- [Pray for them in their work for the kingdom, asking God to aid them in the work](#), p. 1327
- [Do God's work together](#), p. 1427

Rom 16:1-2 I commend to you our sister *Phoebe, a servant^w of the church at Cenchreae*,² that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and *help her in whatever she may need from you*, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. 

^w Or *deaconess*

2Cor 1:11 You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many. 

Phil 4:3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion,^x help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. 

^x Or *loyal Syzygus*; Greek *true yokefellow*

2Tim 1:16-18 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for *he often refreshed me* and was not ashamed of my chains,¹⁷ but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—¹⁸ may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and *you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus*. 

The last clause likely refers to earlier help that Onesiphorus had given to Paul (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

2Tim 4:11 Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for *he is very useful to me for ministry*. 

Philem 1:13 I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that *he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel*, ... 

‡ **The other Levites were to help the priests in their ministry:**

Num 18:2 And with you *bring your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may join you and minister to you while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony*. 

Note: What one does for another Christian, one does for Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Jesus Christ identifies himself with God's people](#), p. 779

Matt 25:31-46 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For *I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.*’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,^y you did it to me.’ ⁴¹“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” 

^y Or *brothers and sisters*

Most interpret “these brothers of mine” to be referring to Christians. It has also been interpreted to refer to the poor and even to the Jews in particular.



Matt 10:40 *Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.* 

Matt 18:5 *Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ...* 

Here Jesus seems to be referring primarily to his followers, who should humble themselves like little children (cf. vv. 3-4). In speaking of welcoming such a “child” in his name, Jesus appears to be speaking of welcoming a believer either: as being of him (cf. Luke 9:48); for his sake (cf. AMP); or on his behalf (cf. NLT). The alternatives are to some extent interrelated. To welcome a believer as such, Jesus states, is in effect to welcome Jesus himself.

Gal 4:14 ... and though my condition was a trial to you, *you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.* 

This is not actually implying that what one does for another Christian, one does for Jesus Christ. But it is an excellent example of believers acting in accordance with this teaching.

✦ **By the same token, sinning against a fellow Christian is sinning against Christ:**

1Cor 8:9-12 But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if

anyone sees you who have knowledge eating^z in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged,^a if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹And so *by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.* ¹²*Thus, sinning against your brothers^b and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.* 

^z Greek *reclining at table*

^a Or *fortified*; Greek *built up*

^b Or *brothers and sisters*

“Thus” (v. 12) suggests that the reason why sinning against a fellow Christian is sinning against Christ is that: because Christ died for them (v. 11) by sinning against them we are in a sense being disrespectful of Christ’s death. Alternatively Paul may be using the reference to Christ’s death to underline their association with Christ, because of which sinning against them is sinning against Christ.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Worshiping God

I. General

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I. General

See also:

- [25. Exalting God](#), p. 1237
- [28. Serving God](#), p. 1383

Worshiping God is one of the most important and fundamental duties of believers. It involves honoring him by acknowledging his worthiness, including his divine characteristics and wondrous deeds. This is done through such things as praise and thanksgiving, offered with adoration and reverence.

It is also done through offering our resources and even ourselves to God. The former is born out in the second half of this chapter. The latter is done largely through serving God. As such the following chapter on serving God is also pertinent to worshiping him.

a) Worship God

Subsections

- [We must worship God](#)
- [Worship God alone – do not worship anything or anyone else](#)
- [Worship God for his glory and sovereignty](#)
- [Worship God for his marvelous deeds – including his creation of everything](#)
- [Worship God because of his care of his people](#)

We must worship God

Ps 29:2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; *worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.*^a 

^a Or *in holy attire*

The last clause appears to indicate that we should worship God being mindful of or in view of “all his holy splendor” (NLT). The alternative rendering in the text note offers another possible meaning.

Ps 132:7 “Let us go to his dwelling place; *let us worship at his footstool!*” 

The use of “footstool” may allude to God’s throne (cf. GNT). It and the reference to “his dwelling place” have in view

worshiping God in his presence. As such the psalmist would have been speaking of worshiping God at the temple.

1Sam 1:28 Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.” And *he worshiped the LORD there.* 

Neh 9:3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; *for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God.* 

Luke 2:37 ... and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.^b *She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.* 

^b Or *as a widow for eighty-four years*

Acts 16:14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, *who was a worshiper of God.* The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. 

Acts 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, *I worship the God of our fathers*, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, ... 

Acts 26:6-7a And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers,⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as *they earnestly worship night and day.* 

Acts 27:23 For this very night there stood before me an angel of *the God to whom I belong and whom I worship*, ... 

Worship God alone – do not worship anything or anyone else

See also:

- [Serve God only – do not serve anything or anyone else . . .](#), p. 1390

Ps 97:7 All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols; *worship him, all you gods!* 

The reference to “gods” appears to refer to the aforementioned “images” and “idols”. The psalmist underlines the inappropriateness of worshiping other “gods”, by calling on such “gods” themselves to worship the true God.



Isa 26:13 O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but *your name alone we bring to remembrance*. 

The term “remembrance” is suggestive of such things as worship (cf. NLT) and honor (cf. NCV, NLT).

Dan 3:15-18, 27-28 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good.^c But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?^d ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.^d ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that *we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.*”  ... ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside^e the king’s command, and *yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.*” 

^c Aramaic lacks *well and good*

^d Or *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king.*

^e Aramaic *and changed*

Matt 4:8-10 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, “*All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.*” ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “*Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”*” 

Acts 10:25-26 When Peter entered, *Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.* ²⁶But Peter lifted him up, saying, “*Stand up; I too am a man.*” 

Rev 19:9-10 And the angel said^f to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” ¹⁰Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “*You must not do that! I am a fellow servant^g with you and*

your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. 

^f Greek *he said*

^g Greek *fellow bondservant*

‡ **Worship of other things rather than worshipping God leads to further ungodliness:**

Rom 1:21-26a For although they knew God, *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* ²²*Claiming to be wise, they became fools,* ²³*and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.* ²⁴*Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,* ²⁵*because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.* ²⁶*For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.* 

Note that further resultant kinds of ungodliness are listed in (vv. 29-31).

Worship God for his glory and sovereignty

See also:

- [God’s glory](#) [reasons to exalt God], p. 1267
- [God’s reign](#) [reasons to exalt God], p. 1277

Most of the references in the following subsection also reflect the fact that we should worship God because he is the sovereign God. Note that in addition to the following two subsections, *II. Reasons to Exalt God*, p. 1267, contains a number of other things for which we should worship God.

2Chr 7:3 *When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”* 

Here the Israelites worshiped God in response to a manifestation of his glory. The occasion was the dedication of the temple. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple (v. 1) and was visible above it. This manifestation of God’s glory signified his presence in the temple, which was to be the primary place of his presence amongst his people. Not surprisingly the Israelites responded with worship at this awesome display of God’s glory and greatness.



Ps 96:6-10 *Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! ⁹Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; ^htremble before him, all the earth! ¹⁰Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”*

^h Or in holy attire

“Ascribe” (cf. vv. 7, 8) means “attribute” or “impute”.

Ps 97:1-9 *The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! ²Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. ³Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around. ⁴His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles. ⁵The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. ⁷All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols; worship him, all you gods! ⁸Zion hears and is glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments, O LORD. ⁹For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.*

Ps 99:1-5 *The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! ²The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. ³Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he! ⁴The King in his might loves justice. ⁱYou have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. ⁵Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!*

ⁱ Or The might of the King loves justice

Rev 5:13-14 *And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

God’s sovereignty is largely in view in the worship here as indicated by: every creature participating in it; the reference to God sitting on the throne; and the content of the praise, with “glory and might” being ascribed to him and Jesus Christ “forever and ever!”

Rev 11:16-17 *And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.”*

✦ **Worship God because he is holy:**

Ps 99:9 *Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for the LORD our God is holy!*

Note that vv. 1-5 above also speak of worshiping and praising God in view of his holiness (cf. [Rev 15:4](#) ↓), in conjunction with his sovereignty. This also appears to be the case above in 96:9.

Worship God for his marvelous deeds – including his creation of everything

See also:

- [Ps 97:1-9](#) ↑; [Ps 99:4-5](#) ↑
- [Ps 95:6](#) ↓
- [c\) What God Does in the World](#) [reasons to exalt God], p. 1274
- [d\) What God Does for His People](#) [reasons to exalt God], p. 1280

Note that the adjacent subsections also speak of deeds for which God is to be worshiped – deeds indicative of his reign and his care of his people.

Ps 86:9-10 *All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. ¹⁰For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.*

Rev 15:3-4 *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant^j of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!^k ⁴Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

^j Greek *bondservant*

^k Some manuscripts *the ages*

This reflects the fact that we should worship God for his deeds not only because they are great and marvelous (v. 3a), but also because they are righteous (v. 4a), with God’s ways being just and true (v. 3b; cf. [Ps 9:4](#) ↑).



Neh 9:6 ¹ “You are the LORD, you alone. *You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.*”

¹ Septuagint adds *And Ezra said*

Rev 4:10-11 ... the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and *worship him* who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹“*Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.*”

God’s creation of all things (v. 11) appears to be the prime reason for the worship. But God’s sovereignty (“him who is seated on the throne”, v. 10a) and eternity (“him who lives forever and ever”, v. 10a) may well also be in view.

Rev 14:7 And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and *worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.*”

Worship God because of his care of his people

Ex 4:31 *And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.*

The elders worshiped God because of his care and concern for them, which they learned of through what Aaron had said regarding the mission to free them (cf. vv. 29-30; **Ex 12:26-27** ↓).

Ex 12:26-27 And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ ²⁷you shall say, ‘*It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.*’” *And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.*

The people’s worship appears to be in response to the impending manifestation of God’s power and intervention to secure their redemption, in which God would deal an awesome blow to their enemies while sparing them.

Judg 7:14-15 And his comrade answered, “This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; *God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp.*” ¹⁵*As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped.* And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand.”

On receiving such confirmation that God would enable his men to defeat his people’s oppressors (cf. vv. 19-25), Gideon worshiped God.

Ps 95:6-7a Oh come, *let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!* ⁷*For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*

The final clause speaks of God’s people as the sheep “under his care” (NIV®, NLT; cf. CEV, GNT). As such, these verses indicate that we should worship God because he is our God and we are his people, for whom he cares.

Ps 138:2-3 *I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.* ³*On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased.*

^mOr *you have exalted your word above all your name*

ⁿ Hebrew *you made me bold in my soul with strength*

David worships God, bowing down towards his temple and giving him thanks, for the display of his love and faithfulness (v. 2a) in answering and delivering David (v. 3). Note that in answering David, God showed his faithfulness to his word or promises – in effect exalting his word along with his name (v. 2b).

Rev 7:10-11 ... and crying out with a loud voice, “*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!*” ¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, *and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ...*

The worship (v. 11b) appears to be in response to the cry proclaiming that salvation belongs to God and Jesus Christ (v. 10). It can be inferred from this that we should worship God because of the salvation that he provides for his people.

† God listens to those who worship him:

John 9:31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but *if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.*

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Worshiping before God

See also:

- *We must live righteously to acceptably worship God . . .*, p. 1379

Subsections

- Worship before God, in his presence
- Worship God in spirit and by the Holy Spirit
- Worship God in reverence and awe . . .
- . . . Even bow and fall down before God
- Worship God with praise
- Worship God with thanksgiving
- Worship God through prayer and even with fasting

Worship before God, in his presence

See also:

- *Come before God, meeting with him*, p. 1206
- *Pray before God, in his presence*, p. 1216

Note that most of the following references to worshiping before God or in his presence, have in view worshiping God in the temple or the tabernacle. The temple (and before it the tabernacle) signified God's presence on earth, amongst his people. Believers are still to worship before God, being conscious of his presence – and as such these verses are still pertinent. But God's people are not restricted as to where they can do so (cf. [John 4:20-21](#) ↓).

1Sam 1:19a They rose early in the morning and *worshiped before the LORD*; then they went back to their house at Ramah. 

2Sam 12:20 Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And *he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped*. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. 

1Chr 16:29 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; *bring an offering and come before him! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness*;^o ... 

^o Or *in holy attire*

2Chr 20:18 Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem *fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD*. 

Ps 132:7 “*Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!*” 

Mic 6:6a “With what shall *I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?*” 

Luke 2:37 ... and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.^p *She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.* 

^p Or *as a widow for eighty-four years*

1Sam 11:15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. *There they sacrificed peace offerings before the LORD*, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly. 

✦ **Worship of God is no longer based in the temple in Jerusalem:**

John 4:20-21 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you [Jews] say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 

Under the first covenant with its priesthood, God's people were to worship him at Jerusalem – in the tabernacle and later in the temple. (The woman who was a Samaritan refers here to the opposing Samaritan practice of worshiping God on Mount Gerizim.) But with Jesus Christ instituting the new covenant through his death and resurrection, believers are no longer bound to such a restriction. The context of these verses (cf. [vv. 23-24](#) ↓) suggests that this is partly at least to allow God's people to worship him in a way that is more appropriate to his nature. God himself is spirit and so is not restricted to a temple. Thus in accordance with this, believers are to worship him “in spirit” (the theme of the following subsection) regardless of location.

Worship God in spirit and by the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit*, p. 797
- *Pray in the Holy Spirit*, p. 1219

To worship “in spirit” is primarily an inward activity, rather than being centered on the performing of rituals (which was



such a prominent part of OT worship). It involves one's spirit – and thus one's mind and will. To begin with, the heart and/or conscience of the worshiper must be right before God. Then one must be honest and open in approaching God (cf. [John 4:23-24](#) ↓), and fully focused on God; obviously this needs to be done willingly. Not least, the worshiper must worship by the Holy Spirit (cf. [Phil 3:3](#) ↓). This involves being conscious of the Spirit, relying on the Spirit's enablement to commune with God and being open to the Spirit's promptings.

John 4:23-24 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. 📖

To worship in truth (cf. Ps 145:18; Heb 10:22) – which is vital for worshiping in spirit – means that one's worship must be genuine, without pretense or hypocrisy. Jesus also may have had in mind the Samaritans' deficient, false worship (cf. v. 22). Note that some understand the exhortations here to worship "in spirit" to be speaking in particular of worshiping by the Holy Spirit (cf. CEV, GNT).

Mark 7:6-8 And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' ⁸You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." 📖

With Jesus saying that "their heart is far from me" (v. 6), it is clear that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law did not worship in spirit (cf. CEV). In stark contrast their worship had been hardened and corrupted by their own rules and traditions. Such hypocritical, spiritless worship is in vain (v. 7a).

Luke 1:46-47 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ... 📖

This appears to be illustrative of worshiping – or rejoicing at least – in spirit.

Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God⁴ and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— 📖

⁴ Some manuscripts *God in spirit*

Eph 5:18-20 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks

always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 📖

The exhortations to "be filled with the Spirit" (v. 18) and to sing and make music "to the Lord with your heart" (v. 19b), along with the reference to "spiritual songs" (v. 19a), underline the need to worship in spirit and by the Holy Spirit – even if not actually saying to do so.

Rev 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ... 📖

A number of commentators consider that "I was in the Spirit" denotes a state of spiritual exaltation. However, particularly as it was "the Lord's Day", John may have been speaking of "worshiping in the Spirit" (NLT).

✦ **Worshiping God "with your spirit":**

1Cor 14:15-16 What am I to do? *I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.* ¹⁶Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider^r say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? 📖

^r Or of him that is without gifts

Here worshiping God "with your spirit" is not necessarily exactly the same as worshiping him "in spirit". One could argue that to worship God "in spirit" involves doing so "with your spirit". But it also does or can involve the mind, whereas it appears that the latter does not – at least not as used in this passage. Particularly in view of the context (cf. vv. 13-14, 18), in using the terms "with my spirit" and "with your spirit", Paul appears to be speaking of praying and praising God in tongues as opposed to with his mind. Worshiping God in tongues is not identical to doing so "in spirit", although it is one way of doing so for the believers who do have such a gift. Note that some commentators understand Paul to be saying here that he prays and praises God with both his spirit and his mind together, which would be at least akin to doing so "in spirit".

Worship God in reverence and awe . . .

Heb 12:28-29 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire. 📖

The description of God as a "consuming fire" points to his power and preparedness to fierily devour or destroy that which is opposed to him and incompatible with his holiness.



2Ki 17:35-36 The LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them, “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them,³⁶ but you shall fear the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice. 

The last statement speaks of worship. What precedes it implies that fear of God evokes and accompanies such worship. As such this indicates that we should worship God in fear (cf. [Ps 5:7 ↓](#)), which involves reverence and awe.

Ps 5:7 But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. *I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.* 

Ps 96:9 *Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!* 

^s Or *in holy attire*

In the light of what precedes it, “tremble” appears to refer to trembling in worship – “tremble and worship the Lord” (CEV). As such it is indicative of worshiping God with reverence and awe.

Jonah 1:16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. 

As commented above in regard to 2 Kings 17:35-36, here fear of God appears to have both evoked the worship (the offering of a sacrifice and vows) and accompanied the worship.

Ps 2:11 *Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* 

This reflects the need for reverence or fear in worship by the exhortations to serve (“Worship” – NASB) God “with fear” and to “rejoice with trembling”. For serving God is interrelated with worshiping him and rejoicing is an aspect of worship.

... Even bow and fall down before God

See also:

- [2Ki 17:36 ↑](#); [Ps 5:7 ↑](#)

The Hebrew for “bow down” can be translated as “worship”, indicative of the fact that bowing down before God signifies and accompanies worship of him. Bowing and falling down before God are also signs of submission and humility – and indicate reverence of him. As such they signify reverent worship of God.

Ex 34:8 And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. 

2Chr 20:18 Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. 

2Chr 29:28-29 The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshiped. 

Neh 8:6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 

Ps 95:6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! 

Job 1:20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. 

Rev 5:14 And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. 

Rev 7:11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ... 

Worship God with praise

See also:

- [Rev 7:11-12 ↓](#)
- *d) How to Give Praise and Thanks (I): General*, p. 1256
- *e) How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing*, p. 1261

Gen 24:26-27a The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD ²⁷and said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. 

Such blessing of God (cf. [Job 1:21 ↓](#)) is often associated with praise (cf. GNT, NIV, NLT).

2Chr 29:30 And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped. 



Job 1:20-21 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and *fell on the ground and worshiped*. ²¹And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; *blessed be the name of the LORD.*”

Heb 13:15 Through him then *let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God*, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

As sacrifices are a form of worship, offering sacrifices of praise – or thanksgiving (cf. [Jonah 2:9](#)) – are likewise a form of worship.

Rev 19:4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures *fell down and worshiped God* who was seated on the throne, *saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”*

“Hallelujah” is a call to praise God, often used itself as an expression of praise to God.

Ps 29:2 *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.*^t

^t Or *in holy attire*

Praise of God is evident in the first half of the verse, here spoken of as accompanying worship of God. A similar comment can be made regarding Revelation 4:10-11 immediately below, with praise evident in v. 11.

Rev 4:10-11 ... the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and *worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,* ¹¹“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Worship God with thanksgiving

Rev 11:16-17 And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and *worshiped God*, ¹⁷saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.”

2Chr 7:3 When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and *worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”*

Jer 33:11a ... the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices

of those who sing, as they *bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD: “Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!”*

Thank offerings were a voluntary offering and so a form of worship, to be given in a spirit of thanksgiving.

Ps 50:14 *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,*^u and perform your vows to the Most High, ...

^u Or *Make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*

Jonah 2:9 *But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!*

Rev 7:11-12 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and *worshiped God*, ¹²saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Here “thanks” is mentioned along with a number of other things that are ascribed to God in worship of him.

✦ Worship God earnestly and persistently:

Acts 26:6-7a And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as *they earnestly worship night and day.*

Worship God through prayer and even with fasting

See also:

- *Prayer is portrayed as an offering to God and Jesus Christ,* p. 1214

Worship is often done through prayer – in fact prayer itself is indicative of worship. Fasting sharpens our focus on God in prayer and worship of him.

Luke 1:10 *And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.*

This speaks of people assembled for worship (cf. NIV) outside the temple sanctuary. It is not actually saying that they were worshiping while praying, but arguably it is implied.

Luke 2:36-37 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was



eighty-four.^v She did not depart from the temple, *worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day.* 

^v Or as a widow for eighty-four years

Acts 10:4 And he stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “*Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.*” 

Cornelius’s prayers and alms are portrayed as being akin to sacrifices offered up (“have ascended”) to God. As such they were a form of worship of God.

Acts 13:2 While *they were worshipping the Lord and fasting*, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 

✦ **Separate yourself from unclean practices in order to worship God:**

Ezra 6:21 It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by *every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Worshiping Together (I): General

Subsections

- Worship God together
- Offer praise and thanksgiving together
- Pray together
- Repent together for corporate sin
- Offerings should be made during collective worship
- Have order and propriety in collective worship

Worship God together

See also:

- [Luke 1:10](#) 

Ps 95:6 *Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!* 

This and 132:7 immediately below are calls to worship God which speak of worshipping together with others.

Ps 132:7 “*Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!*” 

2Chr 35:18 No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. None of the kings of Israel had kept *such a Passover as was kept by Josiah, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* 

Here the people worshiped God together in celebrating the Passover.

Neh 8:6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And *they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.* 

Neh 9:1, 3 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month *the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads.*  ... ³And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it *they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God.* 

Acts 13:1-2 Now there were in *the church at Antioch* prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger,^w Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While *they were worshipping the Lord* and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 

^w *Niger* is a Latin word meaning *black, or dark*

Offer praise and thanksgiving together

See also:

- [Neh 8:6](#) 
- *Note: Give praise and thanks to God with and among other people,* p. 1260

Ex 15:1 *Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, “I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider^x he has thrown into the sea.*” 

^x Or *its chariot*; also verse 21



2Chr 5:13 ... and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD), and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever," the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ...

Neh 12:24 And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers who stood opposite them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch by watch.

Ezra 3:10-11 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. ¹¹And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Ps 34:3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

Ps 68:26 "Bless God in the great congregation, the LORD, O you^y who are of Israel's fountain!"

^y The Hebrew for you is plural here

Ps 95:1-2 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! ²Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

Ps 122:1, 4 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" ... ⁴to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for^z Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

^z Or as a testimony for

Isa 38:20 The LORD will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the LORD.

Acts 2:46-47a And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people.

Note that "breaking bread" (cf. v. 42) likely refers to celebrating the Lord's Supper, another act of worship that believers do together. Acts 20:7 also speaks of believers coming together to break bread – "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread ..."

Rom 15:5-6 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God's people should glorify him together as one – both by their unity and in praising God together.

† David and all of Israel celebrated together before God:

2Sam 6:5 And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the LORD, with songs^a and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

^a Septuagint, 1 Chronicles 13:8; Hebrew fir trees

David and all the Israelites were celebrating the ark of the covenant being brought to Jerusalem.

Pray together

2Chr 20:4-6, 13 And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. ⁵And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, ⁶and said, "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. ... ¹³Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

Acts 1:14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.^b

^b Or brothers and sisters. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verse 15

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 4:24, 31 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,



... ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. 

Acts 12:5, 12 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.  ... ¹²When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. 

Acts 20:36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 

Acts 21:5 When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed ... 

1Tim 2:8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ... 

The admonition to pray “without anger or quarreling” implies that Paul is probably referring to praying together (cf. GNT, NLT).

✦ Jesus’ promise for when two or more pray together:

Matt 18:19-20 Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. 

Repent together for corporate sin

When a group of God’s people fail him, it is appropriate that they repent together. Note that in a sense repentance is an aspect of our worship of God or is at least associated with it (cf. **Neh 9:3** ↓). For repentance is a facet of our devotion to God, reflective of our reverence and adoration for him.

Num 21:7 And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. 

Note that repenting together may involve prayer for restoration from consequences of sin, as Moses offers here on behalf of the people (cf. **Joel 2:15-17** ↓).

Ezra 10:1, 10-12 While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly.  ... ¹⁰And Ezra

the priest stood up and said to them, “You have broken faith and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. ¹¹Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.” ¹²Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, “It is so; we must do as you have said. 

Neh 9:1-3 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. ²And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. ³And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God. 

Joel 1:13-14 Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. ¹⁴Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. 

In this and the following passage from Joel, the people are called on to seek God’s mercy regarding the punishment for the people’s sin, in conjunction with repenting.

Joel 2:15-17 Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. ¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, “Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.^c Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” 

^c Or reproach, that the nations should rule over them

The command to “consecrate the congregation” (v. 16) in effect meant to “prepare them for a sacred meeting” (GNT) with God, setting them apart from all that was not godly, making them “fit to worship” (CEV) God. In the OT this “required going through certain kinds of ceremonies” (CEV text note).

Zeph 2:1-2 Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation, ²before the decree takes effect^d —before the day passes away like chaff— before there comes upon you the burning anger of the LORD, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the LORD. 



^d Hebrew *gives birth*

Verse 1 is a call to gather together in repentance, as reflected by v. 2.

✦ **Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other's restoration:**

James 5:16 Therefore, *confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.* The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.^e 📖

^e Or *The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power*

Offerings should be made during collective worship

See also:

- *Offerings to God were a prominent part of feasts and festivals*, p. 1360
- *a) Offerings for Atonement for Sinners*, p. 1362

1Cor 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.* 📖

The reference to "the first day of every week" probably has church meetings in view, for collections of offerings of such sums of money.

2Chr 29:30b-32 And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped. ³¹Then Hezekiah said, "You have now consecrated yourselves to^f the LORD. Come near; bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the LORD." And the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings. ³²The number of the burnt offerings that the assembly brought was 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 lambs; all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. 📖

^f Hebrew *filled your hand for*

Deut 16:16-17 *Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.* 📖

The feasts (cf. **Num 29:39** ↓) were times of collective worship.

Num 29:39 "These you shall offer to the LORD at your appointed feasts, in addition to your vow offerings and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your grain offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings." 📖

Have order and propriety in collective worship

See also:

- *Controversial passages on women not speaking in church*, p. 1497

1Cor 14:26b-33a, 39-40 *When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. 📖 ... ³⁹So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But all things should be done decently and in order.* 📖

Note that v. 26b speaks of the strengthening of the church as one of the main aims of these directions regarding having order in collective worship.

1Cor 11:17-18, 20-22, 33-34 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because *when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part,^g ... ²⁰When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. 📖 ... ³³So then, my brothers,^h when you come together to eat, wait forⁱ one another— ³⁴if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.* About the other things I will give directions when I come. 📖

^g Or *I believe a certain report*

^h Or *brothers and sisters*

ⁱ Or *share with*



The divisions (v. 18) seemed to have been apparent during the Corinthian's meetings, meaning that they could not get along with each other during worship (cf. CEV). The judgment (v. 34) would be as a consequence for such irreverent participation in the Lord's Supper.

1Tim 2:8-10 *I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.*

These verses are from a passage containing instructions on public worship, though some of these instructions obviously have a wider application.

✦ Instruction on heads being covered:

1Cor 11:3-10, 13-16 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife^j is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵but every wife^k who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. ⁷For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.^l ... ¹³Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

^j Greek *gunē*. This term may refer to a woman or a wife, depending on the context

^k In verses 5-13, the Greek word *gunē* is translated wife in verses that deal with wearing a veil, a sign of being married in first-century culture

^l Or messengers, that is, people sent to observe and report

Some consider these instructions to be culturally based, as a woman having her hair uncovered was apparently a sign of loose morals in the society of the day. As such these instructions would not necessarily be pertinent to today's societies. Others consider that the teachings in vv. 3, 7-10 are indicative that all of the associated instructions are timeless. Regarding the reference to "the angels" (v. 10), Paul appears

to be speaking of their presence and witness to our actions as further reason to ensure that our actions are appropriate. Note that vv. 14-15 appear to primarily be pointing to a need to distinguish between the sexes, with the implication that where appropriate – as in this matter of head coverings – such differences should be taken into account and appropriately addressed.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Worshiping Together (II): OT Feasts and Festivals

See also:

- *Note: Procedures for the Day of Atonement, involving the high priest entering the Most Holy Place*, p. 392
- *On the Sabbath God's people assemble for worship . . .*, p. 1457

Although not observed by Christians, the feasts and festivals given in the OT law for the Israelites to participate in, exemplify the need for God's people to come together to worship God. The reasons and regulations for them also contain principles that are relevant to the worship of God in all eras. Note the above cross references concerning the annual Day of Atonement and the Sabbath, which were also times of sacred gatherings of the Israelites.

Subsections

- The Israelites were to celebrate together three annual festivals or feasts
- Celebration of God's deliverance: The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread
- Celebration of God's provision: The Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost); . . .
- . . . and the Feast of Booths
- Israel was also to celebrate new moon festivals
- The feasts and festivals were generally times of rejoicing
- The feasts and festivals included sacred assemblies and days of no regular work
- Offerings to God were a prominent part of feasts and festivals



The Israelites were to celebrate together three annual festivals or feasts

The three annual festivals required all the people – or at least the men – to gather together. These festivals were: the Passover and The Feast of Unleavened Bread; the Feast of Weeks (also called the Feast of Harvest – and Pentecost, in the NT); and the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Ingathering). They were all linked with agricultural seasons, although the first was primarily rooted in God's deliverance from Egypt, the main focus of its celebration.

Ex 23:14-17 *Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me.* ¹⁵*You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt.* None shall appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶*You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.* ¹⁷*Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God.* 

Ex 34:18a, 22-24 *You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread.*  ... ²²*You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end.* ²³*Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel.* ²⁴*For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.* 

Note God's promise in v. 24 to protect the Israelites' land while they gathered in one place to celebrate the festivals.

Deut 16:16-17 *Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths.* They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷*Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.* 

2Chr 8:12-13 Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built before the vestibule, ¹³as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and *the three annual feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths.* 

✦ Believers are not bound to observing the OT festivals and feasts:

Col 2:16-17 *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.* ¹⁷*These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.* 

The religious festivals and celebrations were merely a shadow of the things that were to be realized in Christ. This is true in that they were part of the old covenant, which as a whole foreshadowed the new covenant realized in Christ. Additionally Paul may have had in mind parallels between particular elements of the two covenants. One obvious such parallel is between that of the redemption that came through the Passover (involving the sacrifice of a lamb) and the complete redemption that came through Christ (involving the sacrifice of himself).

Celebration of God's deliverance: The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

See also:

- ... *The Passover and God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt*, p. 327

This occurred during the month of Abib (March/April). The Passover was observed in the evening, on the anniversary of the departure from Egypt. It commemorated God passing over the houses of the Israelites on the night he struck down the firstborn of Egypt, in attaining the release of the Israelites. The Feast of Unleavened Bread commenced the following day. The name of this feast is derived from the requirement to eat bread made without yeast for seven days, as the Israelites did when they hurriedly prepared to leave Egypt.

Ex 12:1-3, 5-13, 24-27 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²*"This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.* ³*Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household.*  ... ⁵*Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats,* ⁶*and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.* ⁷*"Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.* ⁸*They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.* ⁹*Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts.* ¹⁰*And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning*



you shall burn. ¹¹In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. ¹⁴... ²⁴You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. ²⁵And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. ²⁶And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' ²⁷you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. 

^m Hebrew *between the two evenings*

The young male lamb (vv. 3, 5-7) was to be sacrificed as a substitute for each family, in particular each firstborn male, with its shed blood symbolizing redemption. In v. 8 the bitter herbs apparently symbolized the bitterness of the people's slavery, and the bread without yeast was both necessary for and symbolized their imminent, hasty departure from Egypt (cf. vv. 28-34, 39).

Ex 12:14-17 *This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. ¹⁵Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. ¹⁷And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever.* 

Lev 23:4-8 "These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them. ⁵In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight,^a is the LORD's Passover. ⁶And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. ⁷On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. ⁸But you shall present a food

offering to the LORD for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work." 

ⁿ Hebrew *between the two evenings*

Note that a "convocation" is a large formal assembly.

Deut 16:1-8 *Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. ²And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the LORD your God, from the flock or the herd, at the place that the LORD will choose, to make his name dwell there. ³You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. ⁴No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the flesh that you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain all night until morning. ⁵You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, ⁶but at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt. ⁷And you shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose. And in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. ⁸For six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it.* 

✦ The offering of the first fruits of the harvest:

Lev 23:10-14 *Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, ¹¹and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ¹²And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD. ¹³And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah^o of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin.^p ¹⁴And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.* 

^o An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters

^p A *hin* was about 4 quarts or 3.5 liters

This offering of the first fruits of the harvest – sometimes known as "The Feast of Firstfruits" – appears to have been



connected to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The barley crop was in view. A “sheaf” (v. 10-12) is a bundle of grain stalks tied together after reaping. The waving of it before God was followed by a series of sacrifices. These actions were an acknowledgment that the whole harvest was a blessing from God. They were also a dedication of the whole harvest – possibly implying that the sustenance that it would give was to be used for living in a way that was honorable to him.

Celebration of God’s provision: The Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost); . . .

The Feast of Weeks (or the Feast of Harvest) was celebrated in the month of Sivan (May/June), fifty days after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. “Pentecost” – the Greek term for this feast – is derived from the number fifty. This feast marked the wheat harvest. It lasted only one day.

Ex 23:16a *You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field.* 

Ex 34:22 *You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end.* 

Lev 23:15-21 *You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering.* ¹⁶*You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD.* ¹⁷*You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the LORD.* ¹⁸*And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.* ¹⁹*And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings.* ²⁰*And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.* ²¹*And you shall make proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.* 

Note that the Sabbath referred to in v. 15 is that concerned in the offering of the first fruits of the harvest (v. 11 ).

Num 28:26 *On the day of the firstfruits, when you offer a grain offering of new grain to the LORD at your Feast of Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work, ...* 

Deut 16:9-11 *You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain.* ¹⁰*Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.* ¹¹*And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there.* 

. . . and the Feast of Booths

See also:

- **Ex 34:22** 

This festival was held in the month of Tishri (September/October), commencing five days after the Day of Atonement (cf. *Note: Procedures for the Day of Atonement, involving the high priest entering the Most Holy Place*, p. 392) and lasting for seven days. It marked the fruit harvest, including the grapes. It also commemorated the wilderness wanderings, when the people lived in booths (i.e. temporary shelters) – and probably God’s provision during that time.

Ex 23:16b *You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.* 

Lev 23:33-36, 39-43 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* ³⁴*“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths^a to the LORD.* ³⁵*On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work.* ³⁶*For seven days you shall present food offerings to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work.*  *...³⁹“On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest.* ⁴⁰*And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God*



seven days. ⁴¹You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴²You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

^q Or tabernacles

Deut 16:13-15 You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. ¹⁴You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. ¹⁵For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

✦ **The celebration of the Feast of Booths by the returned exiles:**

Neh 8:13-18 On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law. ¹⁴And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths^r during the feast of the seventh month, ¹⁵and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, “Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.” ¹⁶So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. ¹⁷And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in the booths, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. ¹⁸And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.

^r Or temporary shelters

Israel was also to celebrate new moon festivals

Num 28:11, 14 At the beginnings of your months, you shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; ... ¹⁴Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, a third of a hin for a ram, and a quarter of a hin for a lamb. This is the burnt offering of each month throughout the months of the year.

Ps 81:3 Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day.

The reference to a “feast” may be to one of the three main feasts (cf. NIV), but it could simply be speaking of a New Moon celebration as a feast (cf. CEV).

1Chr 23:30-31 And they were to stand every morning, thanking and praising the LORD, and likewise at evening, ³¹and whenever burnt offerings were offered to the LORD on Sabbaths, new moons, and feast days, according to the number required of them, regularly before the LORD.

The term “new moons” denotes “New Moon festivals” (AMP, CEV, NCV, NIV; cf. GNT, NLT).

Ezek 46:1, 3 Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened. ... ³The people of the land shall bow down at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the new moons.

Note that this is from Ezekiel’s account of his vision of a future temple. His account included associated worship practices, which largely mirrored those given through Moses.

1Sam 20:5 David said to Jonathan, “Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit at table with the king. But let me go, that I may hide myself in the field till the third day at evening.”

Amos 8:4-5 Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, ⁵saying, “When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel^s great and deal deceitfully with false balances, ...

^s An ephah was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters; a shekel was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

The quotation attributed to wicked people indicates that, like the Sabbath, the New Moon festivals were times when normal work stopped.



‡ **The New Moon festival of the seventh month (also known as the Feast of Trumpets):**

Num 29:1-5 *On the first day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a day for you to blow the trumpets,*²*and you shall offer a burnt offering, for a pleasing aroma to the LORD: one bull from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish;*³*also their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, three tenths of an ephah^t for the bull, two tenths for the ram,*⁴*and one tenth for each of the seven lambs;*⁵*with one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you; ...* 

^t An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters

The Feast of Trumpets marked the beginning of the agricultural year. This festival would later be identified with the new year.

The feasts and festivals were generally times of rejoicing

Lev 23:40-41a And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and *you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.*⁴¹*You shall celebrate it [the Feast of Booths] as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year.* 

Deut 16:10-15 Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.¹¹*And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there.*¹²You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.¹³*You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress.*¹⁴*You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns.*¹⁵*For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.* 

Neh 8:17 And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity *made booths and lived in the booths*, for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. *And there was very great rejoicing.* 

Zec 8:19 Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth *shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.* Therefore love truth and peace. 

The fasts referred to commemorated events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. This prophecy promises that these times of sorrow will be transformed into times of joy. The verse reflects the fact that Israel's festivals were to be joyful occasions.

The feasts and festivals included sacred assemblies and days of no regular work

See also:

▪ [Lev 23:37](#) ; [Num 28:18](#) 

Lev 23:1-2, 4-8 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,²*Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts.*  ...⁴*These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them.*⁵In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight,^a is the LORD's Passover.⁶And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.⁷*On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work.*⁸But you shall present a food offering to the LORD for seven days. *On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work.* 

^a Hebrew *between the two evenings*

As noted earlier, a "convocation" is a large formal assembly.

Lev 23:24-25 "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, *you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation.*²⁵*You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the LORD.*" 

Lev 23:33-36, 39 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,³⁴*Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day*



of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths^v to the LORD. ³⁵*On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work.* ³⁶For seven days you shall present food offerings to the LORD. *On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work.*  ... ³⁹*On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest.* 

^v Or tabernacles

Deut 16:5-8 *You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, ⁶but at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt. ⁷And you shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose. And in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. ⁸For six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it.* 

The feasts were not to be celebrated in just any town (v. 5). For the feasts the people were to gather together at the place God would choose (v. 6a) – which would be in Jerusalem – to hold solemn assemblies (v. 8).

Neh 8:18 And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. *They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule.* 

✦ **As with the feasts, the Sabbath was proclaimed as a day of rest and holy assembly:**

Lev 23:3 Six days shall work be done, but on *the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places.* 

The Hebrew word translated as “Sabbath” means to “to cease”. Thus to observe the Sabbath one ceases from work and rests.

Offerings to God were a prominent part of feasts and festivals

See also:

▪ [Lev 23:8](#) ; [Lev 23:36](#) ; [Deut 16:5-7](#) 

Ex 23:14-15, 19a *“Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. ¹⁵You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed.*  ... ^{19a}*The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.* 

Deut 16:16-17 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. *They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.* 

Num 10:10 *On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the LORD your God.* 

Lev 23:37-38 *These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day, ³⁸besides the LORD’s Sabbaths and besides your gifts and besides all your vow offerings and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.* 

Num 28:11-24 *At the beginnings of your months, you shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; ¹²also three tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull, and two tenths of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram; ¹³and a tenth of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering for every lamb; for a burnt offering with a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD. ¹⁴Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, a third of a hin for a ram, and a quarter of a hin for a lamb. This is the burnt offering of each month throughout the months of the year. ¹⁵Also one male goat for a sin offering to the LORD; it shall be offered besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. ¹⁶On the fourteenth day of the first month is the LORD’s Passover, ¹⁷and on the fifteenth day of*



this month is a feast. Seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. ¹⁸On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work, ¹⁹but *offer a food offering, a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old; see that they are without blemish;* ²⁰also their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil; three tenths of an ephah shall you offer for a bull, and two tenths for a ram; ²¹a tenth shall you offer for each of the seven lambs; ²²also one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you. ²³You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning, which is for a regular burnt offering. ²⁴In the same way you shall offer daily, for seven days, the food of a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. It shall be offered besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. 

Num 29:39 *“These you shall offer to the LORD at your appointed feasts, in addition to your vow offerings and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your grain offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings.”* 

2Chr 2:4 Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the LORD my God and dedicate it to him for the burning of incense of sweet spices before him, and for the regular arrangement of the showbread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed feasts of the LORD our God, as ordained forever for Israel. 

2Chr 8:12-13 Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built before the vestibule, ¹³as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths. 

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Offerings

Making offerings to God of money and/or goods is an integral part of worshiping God. Moreover, the Bible gives a number of good reasons to give offerings to God. It also gives guidelines on what to give and how to give to God. Additionally, the Bible emphasizes the need for our lives to please God in order for our offerings to be acceptable to him.

Note that this section contains many OT verses speaking of offerings required by the OT law. Some kinds of OT offerings, or sacrifices, were specifically for sin (cf. *a) Offerings for Atonement for Sinners*, p. 384). These have no current application for Christians as Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for sin once and for all. In contrast, other types of offerings were given for reasons such as thanksgiving to God and for the service of God. These offerings have their parallels in Christian worship offerings today – in the giving of money and other resources to God. Moreover, many of the OT regulations concerning these offerings provide reasons for and important principles involved in giving to God that are applicable today.

a) Reasons to Give to God

Subsections

- We are required to give offerings to God
- Offerings are an important part of worshiping God
- Offerings acknowledge God's provision for us . . .
- . . . In fact, all we have to give God has been given to us by him and ultimately belongs to him
- Offerings express thanksgiving to God for his deliverance
- Offerings support the service of God
- Offerings are often to help the needy – bringing thanks and glory to God
- By giving to God, we ourselves will be blessed
- Note: God has given us the ultimate gift – Jesus Christ himself

We are required to give offerings to God

See also:

- [1Chr 16:29](#) ↓
- *We should in fact offer ourselves to God, in service to him*, p. 1382
- *Offer spiritual sacrifices to God*, p. 1371

2Ki 17:36 ... but you shall fear the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice. 📖

Ps 96:8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; *bring an offering, and come into his courts!* 📖

Ezek 20:40 For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land. There I will accept them, and there *I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings.* 📖

Ex 25:1-3 *The LORD said to Moses, ²"Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. ³And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, ...* 📖

The reference is to offerings of materials for the building of the tabernacle.

Lev 7:37-38 *This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering, ³⁸which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.* 📖

Note that in v. 38 "he" refers to God rather than to Moses (cf. AMP, CEV, NASB, NKJV).

Lev 23:37 These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall *proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings*, each on its proper day, ... 📖

Offerings are an important part of worshiping God

See also:

- [2Ki 17:36](#) ↑
- [Deut 26:9-10](#) ↓



- *Offerings to God were a prominent part of feasts and festivals*, p. 1360

1Sam 1:3 Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. 

1Chr 16:29 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;^a ... 

^a Or in holy attire

2Chr 29:28 The whole assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. 

2Chr 32:12 Has not this same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, “Before one altar you shall worship, and on it you shall burn your sacrifices?” 

God was only to be worshiped with sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem (cf. *All offerings were only to be made at the place God chose for his presence amongst his people*, p. 388), in which was the altar for burning sacrifices.

Isa 19:21 And the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them. 

Ezek 46:2 The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the gate from outside, and shall take his stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. 

Ex 10:24-26 Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, “Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind.”²⁵ But Moses said, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.”²⁶ Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the LORD our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there.” 

Here “serve” is akin to “worship” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

✦ God is honored by offerings or gifts:

Prov 3:9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; ... 

God is honored by offerings or gifts in the respect and homage attributed to him by such offerings. Additionally, in the case of gifts being made to the needy (cf. *Offerings are often to help the needy – bringing thanks and glory to God*, p. 1366), God is honored by the needs of the needy being met in his name, as accentuated by their thanksgiving to him for such help.

Offerings acknowledge God’s provision for us . . .

Ex 23:14-16, 19a “Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. ¹⁵You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.  ... ¹⁹“The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. 

As noted earlier, the three major OT festivals were all linked with agricultural seasons. In each of these festivals, offerings from the harvest were made as an acknowledgement to God of his provision – and also as an expression of thanksgiving for his provision.

Deut 16:9-10 You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. ¹⁰Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. 

The final clause (cf. **Deut 16:17** ↓) indicates that the people were to bring an offering of an amount that was in proportion to the size of the harvest that God had blessed them with.

Deut 16:15-17 For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful. ¹⁶“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-



handed. ¹⁷Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you. 

Deut 26:9-10 And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.' And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God. 

Gen 28:22b And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you. 

... In fact, all we have to give God has been given to us by him and ultimately belongs to him

See also:

▪ [Gen 28:22](#) 

1Chr 29:14, 16 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.  ... ¹⁶O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own. 

Matt 22:21 They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 

We are to give to God what belongs to God. This indicates that what we should give to him actually belongs to him in the first place – as does in fact everything that we have.

Rom 11:35-36 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. 

There is nothing that we can give to God that would leave him indebted to us, for all things come from God in the first place – and exist through him and for him.

Job 1:21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." 

Although this verse is not referring to giving to God, it nevertheless indicates that all we have to give God has been given to us by him. It also reflects that all we have ultimately belongs to God, with Job's words suggesting that God has the right to take away all we have.

✦ **Hannah's gift to God of Samuel, her child that God gave her:**

1Sam 1:27-28a For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. ²⁸Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD. 

Offerings express thanksgiving to God for his deliverance

Ps 54:6-7 With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good. ⁷For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies. 

Ps 56:12-13 I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. ¹³For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life. 

As the name indicates, thank offerings (v. 12) signified thanksgiving to God, prominently for God's deliverance (v. 13) – as reflected elsewhere in this subsection. Note that the reference to performing vows (v. 12a) suggests that when facing danger, David had vowed to make thank offerings to God when God had delivered him (cf. [Ps 116:8-9, 12-17](#) ↓).

Ps 107:19, 21-22 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.  ... ²¹Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! ²²And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy! 

Ps 116:8-9, 12-17 For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; ⁹I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.  ... ¹²What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me? ¹³I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, ¹⁴I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. ¹⁵Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. ¹⁶O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds. ¹⁷I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. 

In v. 13, "the cup of salvation" refers to an offering of wine to thank God for his salvation (cf. CEV, GNT, NIRV), made as part of a thank offering (v. 17). In v. 14, the vows probably at least included ones which were made during the psalmist's dire predicament, promising offerings (v. 17) for deliverance by God. In v. 17, "the sacrifice of thanksgiving" is likely a "thanksgiving sacrifice" (NRSV; cf. CEV, NCV, NIV), as



opposed to simply giving thanks (which is also in a sense a sacrifice).

Jer 33:10-11 Thus says the LORD: In this place of which you say, 'It is a waste without man or beast,' in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man or inhabitant or beast, there shall be heard again ¹¹the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as *they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD: "Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!" For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD.* 

Ezra 8:35 At that time *those who had come from captivity, the returned exiles, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel, twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and as a sin offering twelve male goats. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.* 

These offerings may well have been made primarily in thanksgiving for the people's release from captivity and return to Jerusalem.

✦ Thanksgiving offerings were made to express thankfulness:

Lev 7:11-12 And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. ¹²*If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil.* 

This underlines the concept that a thank offering was made "as an expression of thankfulness" (NIV®, v. 12). The passage deals with the process of making such thank offerings rather than reasons for them. In addition to God's deliverance (as per the above references) they were made in response to other blessings of God – such as his provision (as per the previous two subsections).

Offerings support the service of God

See also:

- *Note: Priests and Levites were given parts of the people's offerings, God being their inheritance*, p. 399
- *Give your leaders material support . . .*, p. 1501
- *. . . Leaders deserve material support*, p. 1502

Ex 35:20-22, 24, 29 Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. ²¹And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone

whose spirit moved him, and *brought the LORD's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments.* ²²So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, *every man dedicating an offering of gold to the LORD.*  ... ²⁴*Everyone who could make a contribution of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD's contribution. And every one who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work brought it.*  ... ²⁹All the men and women, the people of Israel, *whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD.* 

Lev 7:14 And from it he shall offer one loaf from *each offering, as a gift to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings.* 

The description of such an offering as being "a gift to the LORD" arguably suggests that it is seen as being a gift for the LORD's service – particular with the subsequent reference to it belonging to the priest (cf. **2Chr 31:4-6** ↓).

Num 7:2-5 ... the chiefs of Israel, heads of their fathers' houses, who were the chiefs of the tribes, who were over those who were listed, approached ³and *brought their offerings before the LORD, six wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two of the chiefs, and for each one an ox. They brought them before the tabernacle.* ⁴*Then the LORD said to Moses,* ⁵*"Accept these from them, that they may be used in the service of the tent of meeting, and give them to the Levites, to each man according to his service."* 

1Chr 29:2, 7 *So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones and marble.*  ... ⁷*They gave for the service of the house of God 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics^b of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of bronze and 100,000 talents of iron.* 

^b A daric was a coin weighing about 1/4 ounce or 8.5 grams

2Chr 31:4-6 And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem *to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the LORD.* ⁵As soon as the command was spread abroad, *the people of Israel gave in abundance* the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil,



honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. ⁶And the people of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, and the tithe of the dedicated things that had been dedicated to the LORD their God, and laid them in heaps. 

The offerings allowed the priests and Levites to devote themselves to God's work (v. 4).

2Ki 12:4-5 Jehoash said to the priests, "*All the money of the holy things that is brought into the house of the LORD, the money for which each man is assessed—the money from the assessment of persons—and the money that a man's heart prompts him to bring into the house of the LORD, ⁵let the priests take, each from his donor, and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered.*" 

Note that "the money for which each man is assessed" appears to refer to allotted amounts owed by males in accordance with regulations regarding the periodic census (cf. Ex 30:11-16).

2Ki 22:4-6 Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people. ⁵And let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house ⁶(that is, to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons), and let them use it for buying timber and quarried stone to repair the house. 

Ezra 7:16 ... with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill offerings of the people and the priests, vowed willingly for the house of their God that is in Jerusalem. 

Offerings are often to help the needy – bringing thanks and glory to God

Deut 26:12-13a "When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled, ¹³then you shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover, I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me.' 

These gifts were ultimately an offering to God (to help the needy) as indicated by them: being a tenth or a "tithe", typically the amount set aside for God; and being termed a "sacred portion" (v. 13a).

Rom 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. 

The churches in Macedonia and Achaia had "taken up an offering" (NLT; cf. GNT, NIV) for the poor believers in Jerusalem. As such it was an offering to God to help the needy amongst his people.

2Cor 9:12-13 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³By their approval of this service, they^c will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ... 

^c Or you

The "service" was giving towards the needs of the poor believers in Jerusalem, as referred to in the latter part of v. 13. As such their gifts were ultimately a service to or on behalf of God, as suggested by the reference to "many expressions of thanks to God" (v. 12).

2Chr 31:8 When Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. 

The Israelites had generously given the firstfruits of all that their fields produced to support the priests and other Levites in their work (cf. vv. 4-6 ). The Levites were "needy" in that they were in need of such support and were at times listed with other needy groups (cf. Deut 26:12-13a ). The people's generous giving brought blessing – or praise (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV) – to God.

By giving to God, we ourselves will be blessed

See also:

- [2Chr 31:8 !\[\]\(3896df7b6d31b2b68c3bfdacd5323f67_img.jpg\)](#)
- [Defending and providing for the needy bring one blessing . . .](#), p. 1594
- [Blessings include one's own needs being met . . .](#), p. 1595
- [. . . There will also be reward in the afterlife](#), p. 1596

Luke 6:38 ...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. 



2Cor 9:6-8 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and *whoever sows bountifully^d will also reap bountifully.* ⁷Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for *God loves a cheerful giver.* ⁸*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^e in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.* 📖

^d Greek *with blessings*; twice in this verse

^e Or *all contentment*

In v. 7 cheerful givers are noted as being loved by God – a superlative blessing. Verse 8 teaches that God blesses those who give with all that they need for themselves (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) and for abundant good works, such as further sharing with others.

2Cor 9:14 ... while *they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.* 📖

Those who give are blessed by prayers for them by the appreciative recipients of the gifts. Note that the latter part of the verse suggests that such giving is ultimately as a manifestation of God's grace to the giver himself.

Phil 4:16-19 Even in Thessalonica *you sent me help for my needs once and again.* ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift, but I seek *the fruit that increases to your credit.*^f ¹⁸I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus *the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.* ¹⁹*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* 📖

^f Or *I seek the profit that accrues to your account*

The phrase "increases to your credit" (v. 17) points to blessings being credited to them, to be bestowed upon them when appropriate. The often-quoted promise in v. 19 is in its context shown to have been made to people who had given generously to meet the needs of others, specifically the needs of Paul as he spread the gospel. With this promise Paul points to the magnitude of God's provision to them, it being in accordance with "his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Prov 3:9-10 *Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce;* ¹⁰*then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.* 📖

Mal 3:10-12 *Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.* ¹¹*I will rebuke the devourer^g for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts.* ¹²*Then all nations will*

call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts. 📖

^g Probably a name for some crop-destroying pest or pests

Ex 20:24 An altar of earth you shall make for me and *sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.* 📖

One can infer from this that God will bless those who make offerings to him. "In every place where I cause my name to be remembered" probably refers to wherever the altar and offerings to God would be made (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

✦ **The miraculous blessing of the widow who sacrificially provided for the prophet Elijah:**

1Ki 17:10-16 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." ¹¹And as she was going to bring it, *he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."* ¹²And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, *I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.*" ¹³And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son." ¹⁴*For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth."* ¹⁵And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶*The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.* 📖

The poor widow in a real sense gave to God, sacrificially providing for God's prophet Elijah. As a result she was miraculously blessed.

Note: God has given us the ultimate gift – Jesus Christ himself

See also:

- [e\) Epilogue: God's Vast Blessing of His People](#), p. 1287

Arguably the main reason why we should give to God is his unmatched generosity to us. As spoken of earlier in this section, all we have has in fact being given to us by God. The above cross reference further testifies to God's amazing generosity to his people. But the most remarkable expression



of his generosity was his ultimate gift of his Son Jesus Christ, to die on our behalf.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world,^h that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 

^h Or *For this is how God loved the world*

John 6:32-33 Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but *my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.* ³³*For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*” 

God’s gift of “the true bread from heaven” (v. 32) is Jesus Christ, who in turn gives “life” to the world (v. 33).

2Cor 9:14-15 ... while they long for you and pray for you, because of *the surpassing grace of God upon you.* ¹⁵*Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!* 

As noted earlier, v. 14 speaks of generosity as being the manifestation of God’s surpassing grace. By its insertion immediately following this, v. 15 implies that God’s “inexpressible gift” of his Son is a reason and motivating factor for Christians to give to God, in accordance with and in appreciation of his incredible gift to them.

Eph 1:22-23 And he put all things under his feet and *gave him as head over all things to the church,* ²³*which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.* 

✦ **Jesus Christ gave up being rich and became poor, so that we might become rich:**

2Cor 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. 

The phrase “he became poor” (v. 9) refers to Jesus Christ giving up his heavenly glory – ultimately so as to give up his life for us. He did this so that we might become spiritually rich.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) What to Give to God

Subsections

- Give the “firstfruits” to God
- Give the best to God . . .
- . . . Do not give what is inferior to God
- Give all that you can
- The practice of giving an amount in proportion to one’s income – such as a tenth
- Offer spiritual sacrifices to God
- Note: The OT grain and peace offerings

Give the “firstfruits” to God

See also:

- [Ex 23:19](#) ↓; [Num 18:12](#) ↓; [Gen 4:3-5](#) ↓

The OT speaks of giving to God the first portion of what we produce, largely in the requirement for the Israelites to offer the first of their crops, i.e. the “firstfruits”. Today many believers emulate this by giving to God a portion of their wage on first receiving it. By this God’s provision and goodness is acknowledged in a way that honors him (cf. [Prov 3:9](#) ↓) – putting him first, rather than simply offering him the leftovers that we can spare. Note also that offering the firstfruits to God was a statement, made in faith, that the rest of the harvest would take place – a principle also applicable today.

Prov 3:9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; ... 

Lev 23:10-11 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall *bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest,* ¹¹*and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD,* so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. 

Note that a sheaf is a bundle of grain stalks tied together after reaping. The waving of it before God was followed by a series of sacrifices. These actions were an acknowledgment that the whole harvest was a blessing from God. They were also a dedication of the whole harvest – possibly implying that the sustenance that it would give was to be used for living in a way that was honorable to him.



Deut 26:10 And behold, now *I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.* And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God. 

2Chr 31:5a As soon as the command was spread abroad, *the people of Israel gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field.* 

Neh 10:35-37 *We obligate ourselves to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the LORD; ³⁶also to bring to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God, the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and of our flocks; ³⁷and to bring the first of our dough, and our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and to bring to the Levites the tithes from our ground, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our towns where we labor.* 

✦ **The offering of the firstborn, to commemorate God's deliverance of from Egypt:**

Ex 13:1-2, 11-16 The LORD said to Moses, ²*Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.*  ... ¹¹*When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, ¹²you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. ¹³Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem. ¹⁶It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.'* 

Consecrating every firstborn male to God commemorated God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (vv. 14, 16) – in which God took the life of every firstborn male amongst the Egyptians (v. 15) while sparing those of the Israelites. It also was an acknowledgement that the firstborn males belonged to God who had spared their lives. The sons of course could not be sacrificed and so were to be redeemed by giving to

God a redemption price – five silver shekels (cf. Num 18:16). Unclean animals also could not be sacrificed and so likewise were to be redeemed.

Give the best to God . . .

Ex 23:19a *"The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.* 

Num 18:12, 29 *All the best of the oil and all the best of the wine and of the grain, the firstfruits of what they give to the LORD, I give to you.  ... ²⁹Out of all the gifts to you, you shall present every contribution due to the LORD; from each its best part is to be dedicated.* 

Verse 12 speaks of offerings that the people were to give being allocated to the priests and Levites, to support them. Verse 29 speaks of how in turn the Levites were to present offerings from the offerings that had been given to them. In both cases the best was to be given – "the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain" (v. 12) and "the best and holiest part" (v. 29).

Deut 12:11 ... then to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and *all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the LORD.* 

Ezek 20:40 For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land. There I will accept them, and there *I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings.* 

Gen 4:3-5 In the course of time *Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.* So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. 

It is not explicitly stated why God had regard for Abel's offering but not for Cain's offering. What may be in view is that Abel gave the best of the first of his flock – "the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions" – whereas no such comparable description is made of Cain's offering. (For further explanation, see Hebrews 11:4 and comment below in *Give in a way that is acceptable to God*, p. 1373.)



... Do not give what is inferior to God

See also:

- *Animals brought as offerings were to be without any blemish*, p. 389

Lev 1:3 *If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD.* 

Lev 22:17-25 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸“Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel *presents a burnt offering as his offering, for any of their vows or freewill offerings that they offer to the LORD,* ¹⁹*if it is to be accepted for you it shall be a male without blemish, of the bulls or the sheep or the goats.* ²⁰*You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you.* ²¹*And when anyone offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering from the herd or from the flock, to be accepted it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it.* ²²*Animals blind or disabled or mutilated or having a discharge or an itch or scabs you shall not offer to the LORD or give them to the LORD as a food offering on the altar.* ²³*You may present a bull or a lamb that has a part too long or too short for a freewill offering, but for a vow offering it cannot be accepted.* ²⁴*Any animal that has its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut you shall not offer to the LORD; you shall not do it within your land,* ²⁵*neither shall you offer as the bread of your God any such animals gotten from a foreigner. Since there is a blemish in them, because of their mutilation, they will not be accepted for you.”* 

Regarding the exception in v. 23, such animals were not as seriously defected or flawed (cf. **Deut 15:21** ↓) as those with the defects listed in the surrounding verses. However to use them in fulfillment of a vow would be to devalue the original cost associated with the vow.

Deut 15:21 *But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.* 

Num 6:14 *... and he shall bring his gift to the LORD, one male lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish as a sin offering, and one ram without blemish as a peace offering, ...* 

Num 28:11 *At the beginnings of your months, you shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; ...* 

Mal 1:8, 13-14 *When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.*  ... ¹³But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. *You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD.* ¹⁴*Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.* 

‡ **David’s refusal to give to God that which cost him nothing:**

1Chr 21:22-24 And David said to Ornan, “Give me the site of the threshing floor that I may build on it an altar to the LORD—give it to me at its full price—that the plague may be averted from the people.” ²³Then Ornan said to David, “Take it, and let my lord the king do what seems good to him. See, I give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for the wood and the wheat for a grain offering; I give it all.” ²⁴But King David said to Ornan, “No, but I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” 

Give all that you can

See also:

- *Give generously*, p. 1375
- *Even sell your possessions to give to the poor*, p. 1592

Mark 12:41-44 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²*And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.*ⁱ ⁴³And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, *this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.* ⁴⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance, but *she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.*” 

ⁱ Greek *two lepta*, which make a *kodrantes*; a *kodrantes* (Latin *quadrans*) was a Roman copper coin worth about 1/64 of a *denarius* (which was a day’s wage for a laborer)

It would appear that Jesus is speaking of the widow’s action as being exemplary.



Acts 11:29 So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothersⁱ living in Judea. 

ⁱ Or brothers and sisters

The phrase “everyone according to his ability” is understood to mean “as much as they could” (NLT, cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

2Cor 8:1-3, 11-12 We want you to know, brothers,^k about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and *their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.* ³*For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,*  ... ¹¹So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it *out of what you have.* ¹²For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable *according to what a person has*, not according to what he does not have. 

^k Or brothers and sisters

In the light of v. 3, with the phrases “out of what you have” (v. 11) and “according to what a person has” (v. 12), Paul may well be meaning that they should give what they are able, in accordance with what they have. Alternatively he could simply be speaking more generally of giving in proportion to one’s income, as do the verses in the following subsection.

Luke 12:33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. 

The practice of giving an amount in proportion to one’s income – such as a tenth

See also:

- [2Cor 8:11-12](#) 

1Cor 16:2 On the first day of every week, each of you is to *put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper*, so that there will be no collecting when I come. 

The expression “as he may prosper” refers to giving “in proportion to what you have earned” (GNT). The reference to “the first day of every week” quite possibly has church meetings in view, for the making of offerings of such sums of money.

Gen 28:22b And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you. 

Deut 16:17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you. 

Lev 27:30 Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD’s; it is holy to the LORD. 

A tithe – a tenth – of the land’s produce was to be set apart to God as holy (cf. NLT). In addition to being a form of worship, it was also an acknowledgement that the land, from which the people benefited, ultimately belonged to God.

Deut 14:22 You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. 

2Chr 31:5 As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And *they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.* 

Mal 3:8-10 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰*Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.* And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. 

The people were to bring the tithes of their produce so that there would be sufficient food stored in the temple, the food being for the priests along with the needy. Not doing so was in effect robbing God (vv. 8-9).

Offer spiritual sacrifices to God

See also:

- [Prayer is portrayed as an offering to God and Jesus Christ](#), p. 1214
- [We should in fact offer ourselves to God, in service to him](#), p. 1382

Spiritual sacrifices specifically mentioned in this subsection are: thanksgiving (Ps 50:14; Jonah 2:9); ourselves (Rom 12:1); praise (Heb 13:15); and a penitent spirit (Ps 51:17).

1Pet 2:5 ... you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to *offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* 

Ps 50:14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,¹ and perform your vows to the Most High, ... 

¹ Or Make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God



Jonah 2:9 But *I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!* 

Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^m by the mercies of God, to *present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*ⁿ 

^mOr *brothers and sisters*

ⁿ Or *your rational service*

We ought to offer “ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him” (GNT cf. AMP, CEV).

Heb 13:15 Through him then *let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.* 

Ps 51:16-17 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. ¹⁷*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* 

In confessing and repenting of his adultery with Bathsheba, David speaks of his deeply humbled state and great remorse. These are the sacrifices that God requires of us for sin – as opposed to merely formal sacrifices (v. 16).

✦ **Doing good and sharing with others are also sacrifices that are pleasing to God:**

Heb 13:16 Do not neglect *to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.* 

Note: The OT grain and peace offerings

See also:

- *The major offerings for making atonement: The burnt offering; . . .*, p. 385
- *. . . the sin offering; . . .*, p. 386
- *. . . and the guilt offering*, p. 386

The five major offerings were the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering (or fellowship offering), the sin offering and the guilt offering. As their names suggest, the latter two were used in making atonement for sin. This was also one of the prime uses of the burnt offering. As such these three kinds of offerings are dealt with in chapter 9, as per the above cross references. As noted earlier, offerings for sin have no current application for Christians, but the other types of offerings have their parallels in Christian worship offerings today.

Lev 2:1-3 *When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it² and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.* ³*But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings.* 

The grain offering was to express thanksgiving to God, for the harvest and/or for other blessings. It was usually offered with animal sacrifices. The “memorial portion” (v. 2; cf. v. 16 ↓) represented or signified the offering as a whole – “a token that it has all been offered to the LORD” (GNT). It was burnt on the altar, while the rest was given as food to God's priests.

Lev 2:13-16 *You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.* ¹⁴*If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain.* ¹⁵*And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering.* ¹⁶*And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the LORD.* 

Note that the inclusion of salt – “the salt of the covenant” – may well have been an allusion to and a reminder of God's covenant with the people.

Lev 3:1-5 *If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers an animal from the herd, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD.* ²*And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar.* ³*And from the sacrifice of the peace offering, as a food offering to the LORD, he shall offer the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails,* ⁴*and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys.* ⁵*Then Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering, which is on the wood on the fire; it is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.* 

A portion of the peace offering was offered to God (vv. 3-5; cf. Lev 7:29-31a ↓); a further portion was eaten by the priests (cf. Lev 7:31-34 ↓); and the remainder was eaten by the one making the offering (cf. Lev 7:15-18 ↓) and by relatives or friends. This sharing of the offering between God, the priests (the mediators between God and his people) and the one



making the offering expressed peace between the latter and God.

Lev 7:11-18 *And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the LORD. ¹²If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil. ¹³With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with loaves of leavened bread. ¹⁴And from it he shall offer one loaf from each offering, as a gift to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings. ¹⁵And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. ¹⁶But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten. ¹⁷But what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned up with fire. ¹⁸If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall bear his iniquity.* 

Peace offerings could be made as a thanksgiving sacrifice (vv. 12-15), as a freewill offering or in fulfillment of a vow (vv. 16-18), the latter being where one had vowed to make such an offering. Thus peace offerings could be made to express gratitude or devotion to God.

Lev 7:29-34 *Speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. ³⁰His own hands shall bring the LORD's food offerings. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before the LORD. ³¹The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons. ³²And the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifice of your peace offerings. ³³Whoever among the sons of Aaron offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right thigh for a portion. ³⁴For the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed I have taken from the people of Israel, out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel.* 

✦ Drink offerings:

1Chr 29:21 And they offered sacrifices to the LORD, and on the next day offered burnt offerings to the LORD, 1,000 bulls,

1,000 rams, and 1,000 lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. 

Drink offerings were offerings of wine poured out on the altar of burnt offering, in connection with a burnt offering, a grain offering or a peace offering.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) How to Give to God

See also:

- *Offerings should be made during collective worship*, p. 1353

Subsections

- Give in a way that is acceptable to God
- Give willingly
- Give joyfully
- Give generously
- Give regularly . . .
- . . . and give on special occasions
- Note: The practice of making of vows to God, which have to be kept

Give in a way that is acceptable to God

See also:

- 1Chr 29:17 ; 2Cor 9:7 
- . . . *Our offerings are not acceptable to God if our lives do not please him*, p. 1380
- . . . *but giving to the needy must be done in an appropriate manner*, p. 1595

Lev 19:5-7 *When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted. ⁶It shall be eaten the same day you offer it or on the day after, and anything left over until the third day shall be burned up with fire. ⁷If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is tainted; it will not be accepted, ...* 



Lev 1:3-4 If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. *He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD.* ⁴*He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.* 

Verse 3b is speaking of how in order for an offering (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT, v. 4) and the person giving it to be acceptable to God, offerings had to be presented and made at the one place specified by him.

Mal 3:3-4 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will *bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.*^o ⁴*Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD* as in the days of old and as in former years. 

^o Or *and they will belong to the LORD, bringers of an offering in righteousness*

To be pleasing to God and so acceptable, our offerings must be accompanied by righteous living – as discussed in the first two subsections (cross-referenced above) of the next chapter section.

Heb 11:4 *By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.* 

This points to the difference in attitude between Abel and Cain as being the reason – or part thereof – for God’s acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice but not Cain’s. In offering his sacrifice Abel was acting in faith, presumably encompassing faith in the God-given significance of the sacrifice and God’s acceptance of it as such. In contrast, Cain may have simply offered his sacrifice as a matter of course or only as an obligation, perhaps even grudgingly.

Give willingly

Ex 35:5, 20-22, 29 Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. *Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD’s contribution: gold, silver, and bronze;*  ... ²⁰*Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. ²¹And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD’s contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. ²²So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an*

offering of gold to the LORD.  ... ²⁹*All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD.* 

Freewill offerings were voluntary offerings – spoken of here in regard to voluntarily giving materials for the building of the tabernacle. Note that the people’s willingness is underlined in 36:6 which says that “the people were restrained from bringing” after they had supplied more than enough.

2Ki 12:4-5 Jehoash said to the priests, “All the money of the holy things that is brought into the house of the LORD, the money for which each man is assessed—the money from the assessment of persons—and *the money that a man’s heart prompts him to bring into the house of the LORD,* ⁵let the priests take, each from his donor, and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered.” 

1Chr 29:5b-6, 9, 17 *Who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself^p today to the LORD?”* ⁶*Then the leaders of fathers’ houses made their freewill offerings,* as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the officers over the king’s work.  ... ⁹*Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the LORD.* David the king also rejoiced greatly.  ... [David:] ¹⁷*I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you.* 

^p Or *ordaining himself*; Hebrew *filling his hand*

In v. 5b, David calls on the people to willingly consecrate themselves to the LORD, here referring to dedicating themselves (cf. CEV) to “the service of the Lord” (NCV™) by giving precious materials (cf. vv. 3-5a, 7-8) for the building of the temple. Note that v. 17 mentions another important aspect of giving gifts to God in an acceptable manner – one must do so in “uprightness”, which is inclusive of being sincere and having no ulterior motives.

Rom 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia *have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor* among the saints at Jerusalem. 

2Cor 8:3-4 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, *of their own accord, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor^q of taking part in the relief of the saints* ... 

^q The Greek word *charis* can mean *favor* or *grace* or *thanks*, depending on the context



2Cor 8:10-12 And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started *not only to do this work but also to desire to do it*. ¹¹So now finish doing it as well, so that *your readiness in desiring it* may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. ¹²*For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has*, not according to what he does not have.

Verse 12 underlines that willingness (i.e. “readiness” to give) is crucial to one’s gift being acceptable to God – along with it being given in accordance with what one has.

2Cor 9:5, 7 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift^r you have promised, so *that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction*.^s ...⁷*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*.

^r Greek *blessing*; twice in this verse

^s Or *a gift expecting something in return*; Greek *greed*

A “cheerful giver” is “one who gives gladly” (GNT).

Give joyfully

See also:

- [2Cor 9:7](#)

The joy that should accompany the presentation of offerings comes largely from being mindful of and grateful for the reason that they are being offered – reasons such as God’s provision and deliverance.

Num 10:10 *On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings*. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the LORD your God.

Deut 16:10-11 Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God *with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you*. ¹¹*And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there*.

1Chr 29:17b In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, *offering freely and joyously to you*.

2Chr 24:10 And *all the princes and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished*.^t

^t Or *until it was full*

Ps 27:5-6 For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. ⁶And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and *I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy*; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

‡ **Enthusiasm in giving inspires others to do likewise:**

2Cor 9:2 ... *for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them*.

Give generously

See also:

- [Give all that you can](#), p. 1370
- [b\) Generosity](#), p. 1543

2Chr 31:4-5 And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the LORD. ⁵As soon as the command was spread abroad, *the people of Israel gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything*.

2Cor 8:3 *For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ...*

2Cor 8:7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you^u—see that you *excel in this act of grace* also.

^u Some manuscripts *in your love for us*

Paul calls on the Corinthians to “abound *and* excel in this gracious work” (AMP) of giving to the poor – “to be generous... in this service” (GNT; cf. CEV).

2Cor 8:20 We take this course so that no one should blame us about *this generous gift* that is being administered by us, ...

2Cor 9:5-6 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift^v you



have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.^w *The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully^x will also reap bountifully.* 

^v Greek *blessing*; twice in this verse

^w Or *a gift expecting something in return*; Greek *greed*

^x Greek *with blessings*; twice in this verse

Ex 36:3-6 And they received from Moses *all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning*, ⁴so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, ⁵and said to Moses, *“The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do.”* ⁶So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, *“Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.”* *So the people were restrained from bringing, ...* 

Num 31:52 *And all the gold of the contribution that they presented to the LORD, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was 16,750 shekels.*^y 

^y A *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

This large amount of gold had been acquired from the Midianites after defeating them in battle. Following the realization that not one of their soldiers had been lost (cf. vv. 48-50), the army commanders presented it as a gift “to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD” (v. 50), presumably as “a payment for our lives” (GNT) in recognition of God’s deliverance of them.

1Chr 29:2-5a *So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones and marble.* ³Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: ⁴3,000 talents^z of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house,^a ⁵and for all the work to be done by craftsmen, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. 

^z A *talent* was about 75 pounds or 34 kilograms

^a Septuagint; Hebrew *houses*

Mark 14:3-9 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,^b as he was reclining at table, *a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.* ⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for *more than three hundred denarii*^c and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? *She has done a beautiful thing to me.* ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” 

^b *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

^c A *denarius* was a day’s wage for a laborer

The woman’s action – involving great cost (vv. 3, 5) – was in effect an offering to Jesus. In v. 8 Jesus refers to the Jewish practice of anointing a body with oils to prepare it for burial. He indicates that the woman’s action did this – at least in a symbolic sense – thus affording him this honor that he would be denied on his forthcoming death as a criminal. As such the woman’s anointing of Jesus foreshadowed his death, with the costliness of her doing so possibly pointing to the priceless worth of Jesus’ death.

† **God is able and willing to enable us to be generous:**

2Cor 9:8-11, 13-14 *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^d in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.* ⁹As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.  ... ¹³By their approval of this service, they^e will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and *the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,* ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of *the surpassing grace of God upon you.* 

^d Or *all contentment*

^e Or *you*



Give regularly . . .

1Cor 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.* 

Ex 29:42 *It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there.* 

This and the following references speak of offerings made by or on behalf of the Israelites as a whole. Nevertheless, the regularity of such offerings is an exemplary model for believers today, both individually and corporately.

Num 28:1-6 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the people of Israel and say to them, ‘My offering, my food for my food offerings, my pleasing aroma, *you shall be careful to offer to me at its appointed time.*’ ³And you shall say to them, *This is the food offering that you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs a year old without blemish, day by day, as a regular offering.* ⁴*The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight;* ⁵also a tenth of an ephah^f of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with a quarter of a hin^g of beaten oil. ⁶*It is a regular burnt offering, which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD.* 

^f An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters

^g A *hin* was about 4 quarts or 3.5 liters

2Ki 16:15a And King Ahaz commanded Uriah the priest, saying, “On the great altar burn *the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering* and the king’s burnt offering and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their grain offering and their drink offering. 

Num 28:9-11 On the Sabbath day, two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering: ¹⁰*this is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.* ¹¹*At the beginnings of your months, you shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; ...* 

. . . and give on special occasions

See also:

- *Offerings to God were a prominent part of feasts and festivals*, p. 1360

Num 10:10 On the day of your gladness also, and *at your appointed feasts and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings.* They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the LORD your God. 

The people were to make offerings to God at the appointed feasts and festivals (cf. [Num 29:39](#) ↓).

Num 29:39 “*These you shall offer to the LORD at your appointed feasts, in addition to your vow offerings and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your grain offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings.*” 

Lev 9:3-4 And say to the people of Israel, “*Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both a year old without blemish, for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for today the LORD will appear to you.*” 

The special occasion was the commencement of the priests’ ministry, on which God would appear in his glory to the people (cf. vv. 23-24).

1Chr 29:21-22 And they offered sacrifices to the LORD, and on the next day offered burnt offerings to the LORD, 1,000 bulls, 1,000 rams, and 1,000 lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. ²²And they ate and drank before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and they anointed him as prince for the LORD, and Zadok as priest. 

The offering of thousands of sacrifices marked the occasion of Solomon’s anointing as king.

1Ki 8:63 Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. 

2Chr 29:35 Besides the great number of burnt offerings, there was the fat of the peace offerings, and there were the drink offerings for the burnt offerings. Thus the service of the house of the LORD was restored. 



The occasion was the rededication of the temple – after its purification – and the reestablishment of the temple worship practices, under King Hezekiah.

Ezra 6:17 *They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.* 

Note: The practice of making of vows to God, which have to be kept

Vows are voluntary promises made to God, usually as an act of worship, expressing devotion or thanksgiving. Regarding thanksgiving, vows may be made either in response to something one has received or as a promise to God if he would grant a request. A vow usually involves offering something to God, but can instead involve doing something or abstaining from something. (An example of a vow involving doing something is given in Acts 18:18b, which says that Paul “cut his hair, for he was under a vow.”) The practice is not compulsory and is rarely mentioned in the NT.

Lev 22:18-19 Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel presents a *burnt offering as his offering, for any of their vows* or freewill offerings that they offer to the LORD, ¹⁹if it is to be accepted for you it shall be a male without blemish, of the bulls or the sheep or the goats. 

Lev 27:2-3, 9, 14-15, 28 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, If anyone makes a *special vow to the LORD involving the valuation of persons*, ³then the valuation of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old shall be fifty shekels^h of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.  ... ⁹“If the vowⁱ is an animal that may be offered as an offering to the LORD, all of it that he gives to the LORD is holy.  ... ¹⁴“When a man *dedicates his house as a holy gift to the LORD*, the priest shall value it as either good or bad; as the priest values it, so it shall stand. ¹⁵And if the donor wishes to redeem his house, he shall add a fifth to the valuation price, and it shall be his.  ... ²⁸“*But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the LORD, of anything that he has, whether man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD.* 

^h A *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

ⁱ Hebrew *it*

One could make a vow to dedicate persons to God by giving what was deemed as an equivalent value for them (cf. vv. 2-8). Some other things dedicated to God could be redeemed

or bought back by payment of what they were worth plus a fifth (cf. vv. 13, 15, 19). However things “devoted” to God – likewise a form of vow – were absolutely his and could not be redeemed (v. 28).

1Sam 1:11, 27-28a *And she vowed a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.”  ... ²⁷For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him. ²⁸Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.” *

Here Hannah speaks of her son Samuel, who would become Israel’s last and greatest judge.

Deut 23:21-23 *If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. ²²But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. ²³You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.* 

This and the following extracts indicate that vows must be kept. Note that v. 22 points out that making vows is not mandatory (cf. [Eccl 5:5](#) ↓).

Ps 50:14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,^j and perform your vows to the Most High, ... 

^j Or *Make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*

Ps 61:8 So will I ever sing praises to your name, as I perform my vows day after day. 

Ps 66:13-14 *I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you, ¹⁴that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.* 

As with 50:14 above, the offerings are spoken of as being made to fulfill the vows that had been taken (cf. NLT).

Eccl 5:4 *When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow.* 

Hos 14:2 Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, “Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows^k of our lips. 

^k Septuagint, Syriac *pay the fruit*

† So, be cautious about making a vow:

Eccl 5:1-3, 5-6 ¹ *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice*



of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. ^{2m} Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few. ³For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words. ... ⁵It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶Let not your mouth lead you^m into sin, and do not say before the messenger^o that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

¹ Ch 4:17 in Hebrew

^m Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

ⁿ Hebrew *your flesh*

^o Or *angel*

In view of the context, vv. 1-3 most probably has in view the making of rash vows. Proverbs 20:25 similarly cautions against making rash vows and dedications: "It is a snare to say rashly, "It is holy," and to reflect only after making vows." The saddest example of what turned out to be a rash vow is Jephthah's vow (cf. Judges 11:30-40).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Righteousness and Making Offerings

Subsections

- We must live righteously to acceptably worship God . . .
- . . . Our offerings are not acceptable to God if our lives do not please him
- God desires righteousness more than offerings and sacrifices
- We should in fact offer ourselves to God, in service to him

We must live righteously to acceptably worship God . . .

See also:

- Jer 14:10, 12

Ps 15:1-5 *O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? ²He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; ³who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor*

takes up a reproach against his friend; ⁴in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; ⁵who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

Verse 1 speaks of coming before God in his temple in worship (cf. GNT, NLT) and for fellowship with him. Psalms 24:3 below is of a similar vein.

Ps 24:3-4 *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.*

Mal 3:3-4 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and *they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.*^p ⁴*Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.*

^p Or *and they will belong to the LORD, bringers of an offering in righteousness*

Isa 1:13-16 *Bring no more vain offerings; [your] incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. ¹⁴Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. ¹⁶Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ...*

Verses 13b-14 speak of worship-related gatherings and celebrations which amounted to meaningless, intolerable worship of God in the light of the people's evil deeds (vv. 15b-16a). Amos 5:21, 23-24 below has a similar theme.

Amos 5:7, 21, 23-24 *O you who turn justice to wormwood^q and cast down righteousness to the earth! ... ²¹"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. ... ²³Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. ²⁴But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

^q Or *to bitter fruit*



... Our offerings are not acceptable to God if our lives do not please him

See also:

- [Isa 1:13](#) ↑
- [Isa 1:11, 16-17](#) ↓; [Jer 7:21](#) ↓; [Mal 2:11-12](#) ↓

Prov 15:8 *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.* 📖

Prov 21:27 *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent.* 📖

God is in view as the one who detests such sacrifices.

Isa 66:3 *He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; ...* 📖

This is implying that when one lives in a way that is abhorrent to God, such acts of worship become contemptible. The point is made by comparing these acts of worship with detestable sins – some of which possibly are pagan religious activities.

Jer 6:19-20 Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because *they have not paid attention to my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it.* ²⁰*What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba, or sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to me.* 📖

Jer 14:10, 12 Thus says the LORD concerning this people: *"They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the LORD does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins."* 📖 ... ¹²*Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.* 📖

Because of their sin God would not accept the people (v. 11) or their offerings (v. 12).

Hos 8:12-13 *Were I to write for him my laws by the ten thousands, they would be regarded as a strange thing.* ¹³*As for my sacrificial offerings, they sacrifice meat and eat it, but the LORD does not accept them.* Now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt. 📖

In v. 13a, "them" refers to the sacrifices – though it is also very much applicable to the people themselves (cf. [Jer 14:10, 12](#) ↑).

Amos 5:12, 22 *For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins— you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.* 📖 ... ²²*Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.* 📖

Hag 2:12-14 *'If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?'* *The priests answered and said, "No."* ¹³*Then Haggai said, "If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?"* *The priests answered and said, "It does become unclean."* ¹⁴*Then Haggai answered and said, "So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean.* 📖

Ungodly lives make what we do and our offerings unacceptable to God (vv. 13-14), rather than our offerings making ungodly lives acceptable to him (v. 12) – as illustrated here by the OT ceremonial laws referred to (vv. 12-13).

Mal 2:13-14 And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because *he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.* ¹⁴*But you say, "Why does he not?"* *Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.* 📖

✚ Offerings should not be made to the detriment of God's commands:

Mark 7:9-13 And he said to them, *"You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!* ¹⁰*For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.'* ¹¹*But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban" (that is, given to God)'*— ¹²*then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother,* ¹³*thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.* And many such things you do." 📖

^r Or an offering



God desires righteousness more than offerings and sacrifices

See also:

- ... *It is no good expressing commitment to God and Jesus Christ without obeying them*, p. 1167

It is more important to God that we live righteously, being godly and obedient, than to make offerings or sacrifices.

1Sam 15:22 And Samuel said, “*Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.*”

Ps 40:6-8 *In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear.^s Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. ⁷Then I said, “Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: ⁸I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”*

^s Hebrew *ears you have dug for me*

God desires obedience to his will more than offerings and sacrifices. Verses 7-8 point to David’s readiness and willingness to do God’s will – as opposed to simply relying on offerings to please God (v. 6).

Hos 6:6 *For I desire steadfast love^t and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

^t Septuagint *mercy*

Mic 6:6-8 “*With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with^u thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,^v and to walk humbly with your God?*

^u Or *Will the LORD accept*

^v Or *steadfast love*

Mark 12:33 *And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.*

Isa 1:11, 16-17 *What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. ... ¹⁶Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my*

eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.

Righteousness (v. 17) should be a higher priority for us than offerings (v. 11). For even a multitude of sacrifices gives God no pleasure without righteousness in the lives of those offering the sacrifices.

Jer 7:21-23 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “*Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh.* ²²For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, *I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. ²³But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.’*

This implies that obedience to God (v. 23) is more important than offerings and sacrifices (vv. 21-22). This is reflected in v. 21 implying that because of the people’s disobedience, their offerings and sacrifices were pointless – and as such they may as well have eaten the meat themselves rather than burning it as an offering. Additionally vv. 22-23 speak of obedience being an earlier and higher priority.

Mal 2:11-12 *Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. ¹²May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant^w of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts!*

^w Hebrew *any who wakes and answers*

The last part of v. 11 is referring to marrying foreign women who worshiped other gods. Judgment for such disobedience could not be averted simply by bringing an offering to God (v. 12).

‡ **Relationships with others should be set right prior to offering gifts to God:**

Matt 5:23-24 *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*



We should in fact offer ourselves to God, in service to him

Rom 6:13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but *present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.* 

Having been brought to life by God, we should offer our lives in service to him. The phrase “your members” speaks of one’s bodily parts (cf. “your bodies”, [Rom 12:1](#) ↓) as encompassing all one’s faculties and capacities.

Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^x by the mercies of God, to *present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*^y 

^x Or *brothers and sisters*
^y Or *your rational service*

We ought to offer “ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him” (GNT cf. AMP, CEV).

2Cor 8:5 ... and this, not as we expected, but *they gave themselves first to the Lord* and then by the will of God to us. 

Phil 2:17 *Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.* 

A drink offering was an offering of wine poured out on a sacrifice or the altar. Paul pictures his life as being poured out as an offering to God (cf. [2Tim 4:6](#) ↓), with the apparent likelihood of his death resulting from his service to God. The “sacrificial offering of your faith” speaks of the Philippians’

own sacrifice to God in their service to him (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT) – the sacrifice which Paul’s life was being poured out upon, metaphorically speaking.

2Tim 4:6 For *I am already being poured out as a drink offering*, and the time of my departure has come. 

Rom 15:15-16 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so *that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable*, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 

This is speaking of Paul effectively making an “offering” to God of those whom he has brought to faith – rather than the Gentiles offering themselves. However it does reflect the assertion that believers’ lives are to be lived as offerings to God.

Luke 11:39-41 And the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹But *give as alms those things that are within*, and behold, everything is clean for you. 

If we dedicate our hearts and minds to God (“those things that are within”) then our acts – which are a product of our hearts and minds – will be “clean”, acceptable to God.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Serving God

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I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights

All of God's people are necessarily his servants – and so need to be prepared to serve him. This requires devotion to God and to his work.

As well as instructing us to serve God, the Bible provides plenty of encouragement to persevere in doing so. The Bible also gives insights into being guided by God, something which is very much applicable to serving God as well as to other areas of our lives.

a) Be Prepared to Serve God

Subsections

- We are called to serve God and Jesus Christ
- Be willing to do God's work
- Ensure that you are ready to do God's work
- Live a godly life in readiness for doing God's work
- Consecrate yourself to serve God . . .
- . . . Be holy and set apart
- Note: The purification of the priests and Levites for consecration and preparedness for God's service

We are called to serve God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Submit yourself to God*, p. 1178
- *Serve God only – do not serve anything or anyone else . . .*, p. 1390

Ex 23:25 *You shall serve the LORD your God, and he^a will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you.* 

^a Septuagint, Vulgate *I*

Deut 6:13 It is the LORD your God you shall fear. *Him you shall serve* and by his name you shall swear. 

2Chr 35:3b *Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel.* 

Rom 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit,^b *serve the Lord.* 

^b Or *fervent in the Spirit*

Col 3:23-24 Whatever you do, *work heartily, as for the Lord* and not for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. *You are serving the Lord Christ.* 

1Thes 1:9 For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to *serve the living and true God, ...* 

1Tim 4:6 If you put these things before the brothers,^c you will *be a good servant of Christ Jesus*, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 

^c Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Heb 9:14 ... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^d conscience from dead works to *serve the living God.* 

^d Some manuscripts *your*

1Pet 2:16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but *living as servants^e of God.* 

^e Greek *bondservants*

Josh 24:14-24 “Now therefore fear the LORD and *serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness*. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and *serve the LORD.* ¹⁵And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But *as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*” ¹⁶Then the people answered, “*Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, ¹⁷for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. ¹⁸And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. *Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.*” ¹⁹But*



Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. ²⁰If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good." ²¹And the people said to Joshua, "No, but *we will serve the LORD.*" ²²Then Joshua said to the people, "*You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him.*" And they said, "We are witnesses." ²³He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel." ²⁴And the people said to Joshua, "*The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.*"

☰

Joshua's response in v. 19 may have been alluding to the people's past failures. Probably he was testing their sincerity and pushing them to face up to the difficulty of the task.

✦ Be ambassadors for Christ:

2Cor 5:20 Therefore, *we are ambassadors for Christ*, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ☰

As Christ's ambassadors we serve him by urging others on his behalf to be reconciled to God.

Be willing to do God's work

See also:

- [2Cor 9:2](#) ↕; [Eph 6:14-15](#) ↕
- [We should in fact offer ourselves to God, in service to him](#), p. 1382

1Pet 5:1-2 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²shepherd the flock of God that is among you, *exercising oversight*,^f *not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you*;^g not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ... ☰

^f Some manuscripts omit *exercising oversight*

^g Some manuscripts omit *as God would have you*

Judg 5:2, 9 That the leaders took the lead in Israel, *that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the LORD!* ☰ ... ⁹My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel *who offered themselves willingly among the people.* Bless the LORD. ☰

1Chr 28:9a "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and *serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind*, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. ☰

2Chr 17:16 ... and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, *a volunteer for the service of the LORD*, with 200,000 mighty men of valor. ☰

Ex 36:2 And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the LORD had put skill, *everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work.* ☰

This provides an example of willingness (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV) to do God's work.

Neh 2:18 And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And *they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work.* ☰

The people's willingness to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem is shown by their apparently prompt, determined reply – followed by action.

Neh 4:6 So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, *for the people had a mind to work.* ☰

Ps 40:8 *I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.* ☰

Isa 6:8 And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" Then I said, "*Here am I! Send me.*" ☰

Luke 1:38 And Mary said, "*Behold, I am the servant^h of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*" And the angel departed from her. ☰

^h Greek *bondservant*; also verse 48

Note that Mary's willingness, as a "servant of the Lord", is not so much in regard to actively doing God's work as in passively accepting God's will for her.

Rom 1:14-15 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians,ⁱ both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵So *I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.* ☰

ⁱ That is, non-Greeks

2Cor 8:17 *For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going^j to you of his own accord.* ☰

^j Or *he went*

Titus 2:14 ... who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are *zealous for good works.* ☰



✦ Not being willing can have adverse consequences:

Jonah 1:1-4 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²*“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil^k has come up before me.”* ³*But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.* ⁴*But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.* ☞

^k The same Hebrew word can mean *evil* or *disaster*, depending on the context; so throughout Jonah

Not dissimilarly Exodus 4:12-14 provides an example of unwillingness to serve God resulting in one being open to God’s wrath. In regard to Moses’ reluctance to do what God asked him it says, “... the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses ...” (v. 14).

Ensure that you are ready to do God’s work

2Tim 4:1-2 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²*preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* ☞

Titus 3:1 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to *be ready for every good work, ...* ☞

Note that this seems to be speaking of works or deeds related to civil matters, rather than work that is specifically for God – but it is certainly applicable to and indeed an aspect of the latter.

2Cor 9:1-5 Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about *the ministry for the saints*, ²*for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year.* And your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I am sending¹ the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so *that you may be ready, as I said you would be.* ⁴*Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident.* ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift^m you have promised, so *that it may be ready as a willing gift*, not as an exaction.ⁿ ☞

¹ Or *I have sent*

^mGreek *blessing*; twice in this verse

ⁿ Or *a gift expecting something in return*; Greek *greed*

Giving towards the needs of others – here in particular needy believers – is very much part of Christian “ministry” (v. 1) or service (cf. vv. 12-13). We ought to be ready and prepared to serve God in this way.

Eph 6:14-15 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵*and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.* ☞

This “readiness given by the gospel of peace” (v. 15) appears to refer to a readiness to proclaim this gospel (cf. CEV, GNT, NRSV) produced in believers by the gospel. This involves a good grasp of its truths and a willingness and boldness to speak it.

1Pet 1:13 Therefore, *preparing your minds for action*,^o and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ☞

^o Greek *girding up the loins of your mind*

1Pet 3:15 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, *always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ...* ☞

Jer 1:17 But you, *dress yourself for work*;^p *arise, and say to them everything that I command you.* Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. ☞

^p Hebrew *gird up your loins*

✦ The offering of the Levites for God’s service:

Num 8:11 ... and *Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the people of Israel, that they may do the service of the LORD.* ☞

The presentation of the Levites as a wave offering to God appears to have been to signify the Levites being offered to God as living sacrifices (cf. Rom 12:1), ready to assist the priests in doing God’s work.

Live a godly life in readiness for doing God’s work

See also:

- *Serve God in holiness and righteousness*, p. 1420

Zec 3:7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.* ☞



This promise is made to the high priest Joshua, representative of either priests and/or the nation of Israel. It underlines the critical need for godliness in order to serve God.

2Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God^a may be competent, equipped for every good work. 

^a That is, a messenger of God (the phrase echoes a common Old Testament expression)

This may be saying that Scripture is useful for such things as providing “training in righteousness” to prepare the “man of God” for “every good work”. As such it correlates being trained in righteousness with being “equipped for every good work” – and so is relevant to this subsection. Alternatively it may simply be speaking of the “man of God” using Scripture in doing such good work as training others in righteousness.

Titus 1:7-8 For an overseer,^r as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 

^r Or bishop; Greek *episkopos*

2Pet 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,^s and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these qualities^t are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 

^s Or excellence; twice in this verse

^t Greek *these things*; also verses 9, 10, 12

Doing God’s work appears to be in view – or at least encompassed – by the reference to not “being ineffective or unfruitful” (v. 8). To do God’s work effectively one must possess and grow in such godly and righteous characteristics.

Ezek 44:12-16 Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn concerning them, declares the Lord God, and they shall bear their punishment. ¹³They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my holy things and the things that are most holy, but they shall bear their shame and the abominations that they have committed. ¹⁴Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, to do all its service and all that is to be done in it. ¹⁵“But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the

charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me. And they shall stand before me to offer me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord God. ¹⁶They shall enter my sanctuary, and they shall approach my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge. 

The sinfulness of the first group of Levites did not disqualify them from serving God altogether (v. 14), but it did exclude them from the most important and most holy work (vv. 13, 16), which was assigned to the Levites who had been faithful to God (vv. 15-16).

✦ **To take part in God’s work, one’s heart must be right before him:**

Acts 8:17-21 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” ²⁰But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 

Consecrate yourself to serve God . . .

See also:

- *God purifies his people, making them holy, to do his work . . .*, p. 963
- *. . . God effectively makes them priests, to serve him*, p. 964
- *Prepare yourself to come before God, as shown in the OT practice of consecration*, p. 1204
- *Note: The purification of the priests and Levites for consecration and preparedness for God’s service*, p. 1389

In the OT the act of consecration involved rituals signifying that the person involved was setting themselves apart from all that was not holy in order to be holy or sacred, so as to be fit and ready to serve God. As God himself is holy, it is essential that those who serve him are likewise holy (cf. [Lev 21:8](#) ). Although the rituals involved in the OT practice of consecration are not pertinent to Christians, the concept of setting oneself apart from all that is not holy in order to serve God is very much applicable.

Ex 28:41 And you shall put them on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. 



1Sam 7:1 And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And *they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of the LORD.* 

1Chr 15:11-12 Then David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab, ¹²and said to them, “You are the heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites. *Consecrate yourselves, you and your brothers, so that you may bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it.* 

2Chr 29:5, 34 ... and said to them, “Hear me, Levites! *Now consecrate yourselves, and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the Holy Place.*  ... ³⁴*But the priests were too few and could not flay all the burnt offerings, so until other priests had consecrated themselves, their brothers the Levites helped them, until the work was finished—for the Levites were more upright in heart than the priests in consecrating themselves.* 

Note that v. 5 speaks not only of the need for the Levites to consecrate themselves to serve God, but also of the need to consecrate the temple so that it would be fit to be a place of the presence of the holy God. Regarding v. 34, not enough priests had prepared themselves, by consecration, to do the work; however the Levites had.

. . . Be holy and set apart

See also:

- *Serve God in holiness and righteousness*, p. 1420
- *d) Be Holy (II): Being Set Apart*, p. 1875

Lev 21:6-8 *They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. For they offer the LORD’s food offerings, the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy.* ⁷They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled, neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband, for *the priest is holy to his God.* ⁸*You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy.* 

Verse 8b indicates that those who serve God need to be holy because he himself is holy. The latter part alludes to the fact that their holiness ultimately comes from him.

2Chr 35:3 And he said to *the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the LORD*, “Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. You need not carry it on your shoulders. *Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel.* 

Being “holy to the LORD”, the Levites were fit to serve God and his people (as per the final statement). One way they served as such is mentioned in the first statement – they taught the people.

Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^u by the mercies of God, to *present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*^v 

^u Or *brothers and sisters*

^v Or *your rational service*

2Tim 2:20-21 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹*Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable,^w he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.* 

^w Greek *from these things*

The meaning of the illustration in v. 20 is somewhat debatable. The articles for “honorable” or menial (cf. AMP) purposes are often understood to refer to less than faithful people in the church or false teachers in particular. In the first clause of v. 21 Paul probably has at least partly in mind ridding oneself from the influence of false teachers, which are mentioned earlier (cf. vv. 16-18). The thrust of v. 21 is clear: One must cleanse oneself from corruptive influences in order to be holy and ready to do God’s work.

Num 8:14-15 Thus *you shall separate the Levites from among the people of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine.* ¹⁵*And after that the Levites shall go in to serve at the tent of meeting, when you have cleansed them and offered them as a wave offering.* 

Parallels can be made with how the Levites were to be set apart from the other Israelites to be devoted to God’s service (cf. **Num 16:9 ↓**; **1Chr 23:13 ↓**) and how believers need to set themselves apart to devotedly serve God. For believers this involves setting themselves apart from any worldly influences that might hinder them in devotedly serving God (cf. **d) Be Holy (II): Being Set Apart**, p. 1875).

Num 16:9 ... is it too small a thing for you that *the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do service in the tabernacle of the LORD and to stand before the congregation to minister to them, ...* 



Note that this speaks of God's role in setting apart the priests.

1Chr 23:13 The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. *Aaron was set apart to dedicate the most holy things, that he and his sons forever should make offerings before the LORD and minister to him and pronounce blessings in his name forever.* 

Note: The purification of the priests and Levites for consecration and preparedness for God's service

In the following references, those being consecrated for God's service or preparing themselves to approach God were not necessarily unclean according to the laws concerning uncleanness. Rather these practices appear to be in recognition of the relative uncleanness of persons – and others whom they live among – in relation to the ultimate holiness and purity of God. To serve or to approach God, one must be holy or pure like God, or at least to the extent that one can be.

Ex 30:18-21 “You shall also make a basin of bronze, with its stand of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it, ¹⁹with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. ²⁰When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering^x to the LORD, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. ²¹They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations.” 

^x Or an offering by fire

As reflected also in the following passages, ceremonial washing was a prominent aspect of the purification and consecration of the priests and Levites. Note that not purifying themselves before entering the Tent of Meeting or approaching the altar to present an offering, meant death (vv. 20-21)

Ex 29:1-4 *Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.* Take one bull of the herd and two rams without blemish, ²and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil. You shall make them of fine wheat flour. ³You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, and bring the bull and the two rams. ⁴*You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with water.* 

Note that there are further instructions regarding the priests' ordination in the subsequent verses (vv. 5-9).

Num 8:5-7, 21-22 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁶“Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them. ⁷Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification upon them, and let them go with a razor over all their body, and wash their clothes and cleanse themselves.  ... ²¹And the Levites purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes, and Aaron offered them as a wave offering before the LORD, and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them. ²²And after that the Levites went in to do their service in the tent of meeting before Aaron and his sons; as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them. 

Lev 16:24 *And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people.* 

Note both here and in the following reference (Ezra 6:20), the latter part of the verse speaks of the godly work for which the priests or Levites had purified themselves (as per the first part of the verse).

Ezra 6:20 *For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were clean. So they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for their fellow priests, and for themselves.* 

‡ The people were required to consecrate themselves, purifying themselves, for the day God would appear to them:

Ex 19:10-11, 14-15 ... the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments ¹¹and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.  ... ¹⁴So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. ¹⁵And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.” 

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Be Devoted to God's Work

See also:

- *a) Do God's Work – the Best You Can*, p. 1409
- *Serve God with all your heart*, p. 1422

Subsections

- Devote yourself to God's work
- Serve God only – do not serve anything or anyone else . . .
- . . . Seek to please God rather than people
- Put God and Jesus Christ before everyone else
- Put God's and Jesus Christ's interests before your own interests and other matters
- Give up your life to live for God and Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Be willing even to endanger your life
- Be willing to give up everything – even life's most basic and dearest things

Devote yourself to God's work

See also:

- *Work hard at helping church members* [instructions for church leaders], p. 1489

Acts 6:4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. 

Note that some of the verses in this subsection speak of believers being devoted to particular aspects of God's work, even in a full-time capacity.

1Cor 16:15 Now I urge you, brothers^y—you know that the household^z of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— 

^y Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 20

^z Greek *house*

1Tim 4:13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 

1Tim 5:10 ... and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. 

Any good work done by his people is honoring to God and aids the cause of his kingdom. As such, doing any good work is doing God's work.

Titus 3:8, 14 The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may *be careful to devote themselves to good works*. These things are excellent and profitable for people.  ...¹⁴And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. 

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. 

Serve God only – do not serve anything or anyone else . . .

See also:

- *Worship God alone – do not worship anything or anyone else*, p. 1342
- *Note: Do not work for things that do not satisfy or do not last – and so are in effect meaningless*, p. 1402

In being devoted to God's work, serving God is to take priority over serving anyone else. Bear in mind that in serving others, especially God's people, we are serving God – and we should serve others with this in mind. As shown in the following verses, we are not to serve anything or anyone that is counter to God.

Deut 6:13 It is the LORD your God you shall fear. *Him you shall serve* and by his name you shall swear. 

Josh 24:16, 20-21 Then the people answered, "*Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods*,  ...²⁰*If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.*"²¹And the people said to Joshua, "*No, but we will serve the LORD.*" 

1Sam 7:3-4 And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then *put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only*, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."⁴*So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroth, and they served the LORD only.* 

Dan 3:17-18, 28 If this be so, *our God whom we serve* is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will



deliver us out of your hand, O king.^a ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that *we will not serve your gods* or worship the golden image that you have set up.” ¹⁹... ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered *his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside^b the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.*”

^a Or *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king.*

^b Aramaic and changed

Matt 4:8-10 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “*You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.*”

Rom 1:25-26a ... because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and *served the creature rather than the Creator*, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

Note that this indicates that worshiping and serving other things rather than God, brings God’s judgment (v. 26a; cf. vv. 21-29; Josh 24:20 ↑; Ex 20:5 ↓).

Ex 20:4-6 You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵*You shall not bow down to them or serve them*, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands^c of those who love me and keep my commandments.

^c Or *to the thousandth generation*

Deut 4:19 And *beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them*, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

2Ki 17:35-36 The LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them, “*You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them*, ³⁶but you shall fear the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You

shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice.

... Seek to please God rather than people

Gal 1:10 For *am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant^d of Christ.*

^d Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

1Thes 2:4 ... but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so *we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.*

Acts 4:18-20 So they called them and *charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.* ¹⁹But Peter and John answered them, “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,* ²⁰*for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.*”

Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “*We must obey God rather than men.*”

1Cor 7:32-35 I want you to be free from anxieties. *The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.* ³³*But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife,* ³⁴*and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.* ³⁵*I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.*

The phrase “body and spirit” (v. 34a) is indicative of the whole person. This may be all that Paul has in mind in using the phrase. Alternatively, “body” may allude to sexual or physical commitments of a married person to their spouse, with “spirit” then signifying non-physical aspects of one’s commitments in the relationship. Either way, the use of the phrase emphasizes complete devotion to the Lord.

Num 22:15-18 Once again Balak sent princes, more in number and more honorable than these. ¹⁶And they came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: ‘Let nothing hinder you from coming to me, ¹⁷for I will surely do you great honor, and whatever you say to me I will do. Come, curse this people for me.’” ¹⁸But Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, “*Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD my God to do less or more.*”



Note that Balaam was actually a pagan diviner, for a time used by God. His great example here in pleasing and serving God rather than the king of Moab, is in stark contrast to what we know of his later activities (cf. Rev 2:14).

‡ “No one can serve two masters”:

Matt 6:24 *No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*^e

☞

^e Greek *mammon*, a Semitic word for money or possessions

Put God and Jesus Christ before everyone else

See also:

▪ [1Cor 7:29](#) ↴

Matt 10:37 *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* ☞

Luke 9:59-62 *To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”⁶⁰ And Jesus^f said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”⁶¹ Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” ☞*

^f Greek *he*

The man in v. 59 may well have been meaning that he wanted to wait until after his father had died. In saying, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead”, (v. 60) Jesus was probably indicating that such tasks as burying the physically dead could be left to the spiritually dead; God’s kingdom should take priority over all things. Verses 61-62 appear to point to the need to be fully focused in doing the work of the kingdom; nothing should be allowed to obstruct the work.

Ex 32:24-29 So I said to them, ‘Let any who have gold take it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.”²⁵ And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies),²⁶ then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the LORD’s side? Come to me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered around him.²⁷ And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.’”²⁸ And the sons of Levi did

*according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell.*²⁹ And Moses said, “Today you have been ordained for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.” ☞

Many of the people had been utterly unfaithful to God. They had made an idol and worshiped it (v. 24) and then engaged in unbridled debauchery (v. 25) – both of which were punishable by death under the terms of the old covenant (which the people had agreed to). In stark contrast, the Levites were prepared to put God and his command ahead of even the lives of their own kinsmen (vv. 26-29).

Deut 33:8-9 And of Levi he said, “Give to Levi^g your Thummim, and your Urim to your godly one, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you quarreled at the waters of Meribah; ⁹*who said of his father and mother, ‘I regard them not’; he disowned his brothers and ignored his children. For they observed your word and kept your covenant.* ☞

^g Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text lacks *Give to Levi*

This refers to Exodus 32:26-29 above. The Levites “showed greater loyalty” (GNT; cf. NLT) to God than to their own kinsmen, showing that he was “more important” (CEV) to them.

Put God’s and Jesus Christ’s interests before your own interests and other matters

See also:

- [Do not worry about the cares of this life for God will provide; focus instead on things of God](#), p. 1131
- [... Forsaking marriage for God and Jesus Christ](#), p. 1691

Ps 132:3-5 *“I will not enter my house or get into my bed, ⁴I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, ⁵until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”* ☞

These verses probably speak of David’s intent to build a temple for God.

Matt 6:31-33 Therefore *do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’*³² *For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.*³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* ☞



We should seek first God's kingdom and righteousness (v. 33a), rather than be preoccupied with pursuing any needs we have (vv. 31-32).

Phil 2:20-21 For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

In contrast to others, Timothy (cf. v. 22) put Jesus Christ's interests ahead of his own, in focusing on the welfare of fellow believers.

Heb 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,* ²⁵*choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.* ²⁶He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

2Tim 2:4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

Rather than getting involved in things of this world, Christians should be focused on trying to please Jesus Christ, their leader.

1Cor 7:29-31 This is what I mean, brothers: *the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none,* ³⁰*and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods,* ³¹*and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.*

Paul is admonishing the Corinthians not to be immersed in the relationships and material things of this world – as opposed to living for the Lord ahead of everyone and everything else (cf. vv. 32-35).

Hag 1:5-6, 9 Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: *Consider your ways.* ⁶*You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.* ... ⁹*You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.*

Hag 2:15-19 Now then, consider from this day onward.^h Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD, ¹⁶*how did you fare? Whenⁱ one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat*

to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. ¹⁷*I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD.* ¹⁸*Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider:* ¹⁹*Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.*

^h Or *backward*; also verse 18

ⁱ Probable reading (compare Septuagint); Hebrew *LORD, since they were. When*

As shown in 1:5-6, 9 above, when the people had been preoccupied with their own houses and concerns, rather than rebuilding God's temple, God frustrated their efforts (vv. 16-17). In contrast, in focusing on building God's temple, God would bless them (vv. 18-19). They were to give careful thought, therefore, to their priorities and the associated ramifications.

‡ **Jesus' warning against worldly matters becoming a higher priority than God's word:**

Matt 13:22 *As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*

This speaks of those who initially respond to God's word, but have more pressing concerns and priorities. Such things choke or crowd out God's word. Thus these people fail to bear fruit, and presumably fall away from God's kingdom.

Give up your life to live for God and Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

▪ . . . *Live for Jesus Christ, pleasing him*, p. 1191

Luke 9:23-25 And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, *let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but *whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.* ²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

If we want to follow Jesus Christ, we must deny ourselves – give up living for ourselves and what we want. In conjunction with this, we must daily take up our "cross" (v. 23; cf. **Luke 14:26** ↓) – daily shouldering the accompanying difficulties – and live for him. The result of doing this is paradoxical (v. 24). Those who give up their lives for Christ will find true life (cf. NCV, NLT). This "life" quite possibly refers solely or at least primarily to eternal life in the afterlife, but is also at least



applicable to spiritual life in the present. The absurdity of living for the present physical life and the things of this world – in contrast to devoting one’s life to Christ – is spoken of in v. 24 and highlighted in v. 25.

Luke 14:26-27 *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

In v. 26 Jesus is speaking of the need to love him more than anyone or anything else (cf. **Matt 10:37**) – in particular more than our own lives (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

John 12:24-25 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but *if it dies, it bears much fruit.* ²⁵Whoever loves his life loses it, and *whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*

When stating the principle given in v. 24, Jesus may well have been primarily speaking of his own death – having alluded to it in the preceding verse (cf. v. 23). Even so it is certainly applicable to believers; it is only in dying to ourselves that we can produce fruit for God (v. 24b). In conjunction with this, Jesus explains in v. 25, it is only by forsaking our lives that we can keep them for eternal life.

Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^j by the mercies of God, to *present your bodies as a living sacrifice*, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.^k

^j Or *brothers and sisters*

^k Or *your rational service*

Here Paul is teaching that we are to yield our whole self, our entire lives, in service to God.

2Cor 5:13-15 *For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.* ¹⁴For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, *that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

Verse 13a is apparently in reference to claims by some of the Corinthians that Paul was crazy. Most likely such claims were made regarding matters inclusive of the level of Paul’s devotion to God and Jesus Christ, with all the trials he was prepared to undergo, forsaking his life for their sake.

2Cor 8:5 ... and this, not as we expected, but *they gave themselves first to the Lord* and then by the will of God to us.

Phil 1:21 *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

To Paul, Christ was what living was all about. He lived his life for Christ, pleasing him and furthering his cause.

... Be willing even to endanger your life

The following passages all provide examples of believers who were willing to endanger their lives for God and Jesus Christ.

Acts 15:25-26 ... it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved *Barnabas and Paul*, ²⁶*men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Acts 20:22-24 And now, behold, *I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by¹ the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,* ²³*except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.* ²⁴*But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

¹ Or *bound in*

Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For *I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*”

Rom 8:36 As it is written, “*For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.*”

1Cor 15:30-32 Why are *we in danger every hour?* ³¹I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, *I die every day!* ³²What do I gain if, humanly speaking, *I fought with beasts at Ephesus?* If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

Paul uses the expression “I die every day” (v. 31a) to emphasize the fact that he faced death daily. In saying he “fought with wild beasts” (v. 32a), Paul is referring to the dangerous struggles he had experienced with menacing opponents.

2Cor 4:10-12 ... [We are] *always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.* ¹¹For we who live are *always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake*, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²*So death is at work in us*, but life in you.



The clause “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus” (v. 10) alludes to the bodily/physical sufferings Paul undergoes for Jesus’ sake, even being exposed to death – as reflected in v. 11a and 12a (cf. NLT). (It may well also be a reference to sharing in the death and sufferings of Jesus; see . . . *and share Jesus Christ’s sufferings*, p. 2009.) In v. 10b and v. 11b Paul indicates that he does this so that the power of Jesus Christ’s resurrection life may be revealed in him as he labors for Christ’s kingdom.

Phil 1:20 ... as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. 

Phil 2:30 ... for he [Epaphroditus] nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. 

Rev 2:13 ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith^m even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 

^mOr your faith in me

Rev 12:11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 

Be willing to give up everything – even life’s most basic and dearest things

See also:

- *The great cost of participating in the kingdom of God*, p. 680
- *Be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus Christ*, p. 1192

Matt 13:44-46 *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.* ⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. 

Although some commentators have a somewhat different understanding, arguably both these parables are essentially illustrating the absolute cost of the kingdom of God; one must be prepared to forgo everything for it. Note the joy in doing so that is apparent in v. 44.

Mark 10:28 Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” 

Luke 14:33 So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. 

Phil 3:7-9 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 

In v. 7 Paul refers to things (cf. vv. 5-6) that he had valued and done for his own benefit – in the context, particularly in regard to achieving righteousness (v. 9). He now considers them “worthless” (CEV, NLT; cf. NCV, NirV), even detrimental, for the sake of Christ – and all that one has in him (v. 9; cf. vv. 10-11). In v. 8 Paul says that in fact he now views all things of this world as such.

Gen 12:1, 4 Now the LORD saidⁿ to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.  ... ⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 

ⁿ Or had said

Gen 22:12 He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” 

Both Abraham’s wife and Hannah (cf. **1Sam 1:27-28** ↓) were unable to have children, until God intervened. Despite having had wanted a child for years, Abraham and Hannah both showed that they were willing to give up even their dearest, longed-for sons. Abraham showed that he would have been willing even to sacrifice Isaac in response to God testing him. Hannah actually gave up Samuel while he was still quite young, for him to serve God – which she had vowed to do when praying for a son (cf. **1Sam 1:11**).

1Sam 1:27-28 *For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him.* ²⁸*Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.* And he worshiped the LORD there. 

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) Reasons to Serve God

See also:

- a) *The Need to Obey God*, p. 1062
- b) *The Need for Good Deeds*, p. 1067

Subsections

- He is our God, who has done great things for us
- We are God's and Jesus Christ's servants
- God cares for his servants . . .
- . . . God rescues his servants
- Your work for God will be productive
- You will be rewarded for your work . . .
- . . . You will be rewarded particularly in the afterlife
- Whoever does not produce good "fruit" will be cut off from God and Jesus Christ
- Further warnings and consequences regarding not doing God's work
- Note: Do not work for things that do not satisfy or do not last – and so are in effect meaningless

He is our God, who has done great things for us

See also:

- *We should obey God because he is our God . . .*, p. 1167
- *We should obey God and Jesus Christ because of the great things they have done for us*, p. 1168
- *We should be holy and pleasing to God because of the things he has done for us*, p. 1873

Deut 10:20-22 You shall fear the LORD your God. *You shall serve him* and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. ²¹He is your praise. *He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.* ²²*Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.* 

1Sam 12:24 Only fear the LORD and *serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.* 

Josh 24:16-18 Then the people answered, "*Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, ¹⁷for it is*

the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. ¹⁸*And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."* 

✚ **Jesus Christ's love in dying for us compels us to live for him:**

2Cor 5:14-15 *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.* 

Jesus Christ's love shown in him dying for us compels us to live for him rather than for ourselves.

We are God's and Jesus Christ's servants

See also:

- . . . *Israel was God's chosen servant*, p. 329
- . . . *They have been freed from sin and are now slaves to God – and Jesus Christ*, p. 598

Lev 25:55 *For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants.^o They are my servants* whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. 

^o Or slaves

Ezra 5:11 And this was their reply to us: '*We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished.* 

Neh 1:10-11 *They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.* ¹¹O Lord, let your ear be attentive *to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants* who delight to fear your name, and give success to *your servant* today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king. 

Ps 116:16 *O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.* You have loosed my bonds. 

Ps 119:125 *I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies!* 



Eph 6:5-6, 9 Slaves,^p obey your earthly masters^q with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but *as servants^r of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,* ...
⁹Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that *he who is both their Master^s and yours is in heaven,* and that there is no partiality with him.

^p Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

^q Or *your masters according to the flesh*

^r Or *slaves*; Greek *bondservants*

^s Greek *Lord*

James 1:1 *James, a servant^t of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,* To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

^t Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to *his servants^u* the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to *his servant^v John,* ...

^u Greek *bondservants*

^v Greek *bondservant*

God cares for his servants . . .

God's care of his servants gives good reason to serve God.

Ps 135:14 For the LORD will vindicate his people and *have compassion on his servants.*

Isa 41:8-10 But you, Israel, *my servant, Jacob,* whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; ⁹you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "*You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off*"; ¹⁰*fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

1Ki 8:23 ... and said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and *showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart,* ...

Ps 35:27 Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "*Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant!*"

In a prayer for deliverance, David states his belief or hope that God delights in the well-being of his servants. This being the case, the verse points to God's care of his servants.

Ps 102:28 *The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you.*

The descendants of God's servants will be secure, living before God and safe in his care (cf. AMP, GNT, Nlrv, NLT).

Isa 65:13-15 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "*Behold, my servants shall eat,* but you shall be hungry; *behold, my servants shall drink,* but you shall be thirsty; *behold, my servants shall rejoice,* but you shall be put to shame; ¹⁴*behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart,* but you shall cry out for pain of heart and shall wail for breaking of spirit. ¹⁵You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse, and the Lord GOD will put you to death, but *his servants he will call by another name.*

This compares God's care and blessing of his servants with the lot of those who forsake him. The giving of a new name (v. 15) "suggests the beginning of a new life" (CEV text note). The end of the age is in view.

Rev 7:2-3 Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, ³saying, "*Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants^w of our God on their foreheads.*"

^w Greek *bondservants*

The seal signifies protection amidst coming judgments on the world (cf. 9:4).

. . . God rescues his servants

See also:

▪ [Ps 35:27](#)

Ps 34:22 *The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.*

1Sam 7:3 And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and *serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.*"

Dan 3:28 *Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside^x the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.*



* Aramaic and changed

Dan 6:20-22 As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! ²²My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.”

Daniel speaks of his innocence as the reason for his deliverance by God (v. 22). But the wording of the king’s question (v. 20) correctly implies that Daniel’s persistence in serving God was a related factor.

Isa 48:20 Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, “The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!”

Isa 54:17 ... no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication^y from me, declares the LORD.

^y Or righteousness

These promises are made to Jerusalem in its time of future renewal. In a spiritual sense at least, they are ultimately applicable to God’s servants of all ages.

Ps 89:20-23 I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, ²¹so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. ²²The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him. ²³I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

David was especially empowered by God, notably against his enemies. As commented on Isaiah 54:17 above, such passages are applicable to believers at least in a spiritual sense (cf. Rom 8:37-39).

Your work for God will be productive

Gal 6:9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

The term “reap” is possibly referring to one’s good work being productive for God’s kingdom – hence the verse’s inclusion here. Alternatively it could be speaking of the blessings one will receive for doing good (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT), which would make it more applicable to the following subsection.

Matt 13:23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. *He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.*

The “fruit” produced (cf. Luke 8:15 ↓) may well be referring to the productivity of one’s work for the kingdom (the theme of this subsection); it at least may be applied to it. Alternatively the spiritual growth of the individual believer may be in view.

Luke 8:15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

2Cor 9:10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

Here “righteousness” is akin to “good works” (NIRV®), righteousness “which manifests itself in active goodness, kindness, and charity” (AMP). Paul has the “service” (cf. vv. 12-13) of providing for the needy amongst God’s people primarily in view, assuring the Corinthians that God would “produce a rich harvest” (GNT) from such generosity.

Ps 126:5-6 Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! ⁶He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

Psalm 126 was written for the exiles who had returned from Babylon. These verses are apparently encouraging them with a promise of their land’s restoration, despite the initial pains in tending it. The verses are sometimes applied to the often-exacting work of sowing the gospel message, a service which leads to the joyful result of people coming to faith.

‡ One’s work for the Lord is not futile:

1Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that *in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

The fruitfulness of the work is one reason Paul may well have had in view as to why it is “not in vain”. Reward for such work – as per the following two subsections – is another possibility. The teaching is applicable to both possibilities.



You will be rewarded for your work . . .

See also:

- Gal 6:9 ↑; 1Cor 15:58 ↑
- Rom 6:22 ↓
- *Leaders will be richly rewarded for good work*, p. 1473

2Chr 15:7 But you, take courage! *Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.* ☞

Mark 10:29-30 Jesus said, *“Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.* ☞

In v. 29 Jesus mentions some things that his followers may be required to forego in following and serving him. In v. 30 Jesus speaks of corresponding blessings of this present age. These blessings are primarily fulfilled through the new relationships in the family of God’s people, to which Jesus’ followers belong.

Isa 49:4 But I said, *“I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God.”* ☞

Even in the face of apparent failure (v. 4a), one can be confident that God will reward faithful work (v. 4b).

Hag 2:18-19 Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider: ¹⁹Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you. ☞

The interpretation of aspects of these verses are debatable, but clearly the last sentence speaks of God’s blessing on the people for their resumption of the work on the temple.

1Tim 3:13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. ☞

2Tim 2:6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ☞

Paul is implying that just as a hardworking farmer receives a share of the crops, those who work hard serving God should or will receive their reward. What reward is in view is open to interpretation. If it means that hardworking believers “ought to” be rewarded, then it may simply be referring to church

leaders receiving material support from their congregation, the field in which they labor. Alternatively spiritual rewards may be in view – possibly primarily seeing people coming to or growing in faith – or spiritual blessings for the workers themselves, either in the present or in the afterlife.

Heb 6:7 For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ☞

The “land” signifies believers. The “rain” appears to primarily symbolize God’s spiritual enrichment – possibly in particular that enunciated in the preceding verses (cf. vv. 4-5). Paul compares a productive believer to land that produces a useful spiritual crop, for which such a believer receives God’s blessing.

Jer 31:16 Thus says the LORD: “Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for *there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.* ☞

Note that this appears to refer to the work of the women in rearing their children, rather than work done specifically for God. Here God promises them that although their children now faced exile (cf. v. 15), their work would be rewarded for their children would return.

. . . You will be rewarded particularly in the afterlife

See also:

- Mark 10:30 ↑
- . . . *God’s people will be judged and rewarded according to what they have done*, p. 713

Mal 3:17-18 They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. ☞

Matt 7:21 Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ☞

Matt 25:19-21 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ ²²You have



been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 

^z Greek *bondservant*; also verses 23, 26, 30

This depicts Jesus Christ’s rewarding of his faithful servants on his return. Note that a talent was a monetary unit (cf. v. 15 + text note).

John 12:26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. *If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.* 

This probably refers primarily to honor given in the afterlife.

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 

This indicates that the end result of living in service to God, rather than to sin, is eternal life (cf. CEV, NIV, NLT) – along with holiness.

1Cor 3:8, 14-15 He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.  ...
¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. 

The work of each of believer will be judged. If a believer’s work survives the testing of God’s judgment, he or she will receive their reward. If not, as a believer they will still be saved but will suffer loss of reward.

Eph 6:5-8 Slaves,^a obey your earthly masters^b with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but *as servants^c of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.* 

^a Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

^b Or *your masters according to the flesh*

^c Or *slaves*; Greek *bondservants*

All the good we do should be done as a service to the Lord, as part of his work – and as such he will reward us for it. The final judgment is most likely primarily in view here.

Heb 6:9-12 Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until

the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 

This indicates that doing work for God is associated with salvation (v. 9), making one’s hope sure (v. 11). Correspondingly, along with “faith and patience”, it will bring the blessings of the afterlife that he has promised (v. 12; cf. Heb 10:36 ↓).

Heb 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 

If we persevere to the end, both in faith (cf. vv. 35, 37-39; Heb 6:12 ↑) and in doing God’s will, we will receive what God has promised.

1Jn 2:17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but *whoever does the will of God abides forever.* 

Rev 2:26 *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ...* 

✦ **God accepts those who serve Jesus Christ:**

Rom 14:18 *Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.* 

Whoever does not produce good “fruit” will be cut off from God and Jesus Christ

As referred to in earlier comments, when used metaphorically in the NT, “fruit” can refer to spiritual characteristics (cf. Gal 5:22-23) or spiritual outcomes of quality work for the kingdom (with some instances possibly including both concepts). In the following verses “fruit” has been interpreted to be referring to the latter, or at least to be inclusive of it.

Matt 3:10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. *Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* 

This is spoken by John the Baptist. The latter part is repeated virtually verbatim by Jesus in 7:19 – “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

John 15:2 *Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.* 

Here Jesus speaks of God cutting off from him those who do not bear “fruit”.

Luke 13:6-9 And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and



found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, *'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?'* ⁸And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹Then *if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'* 

The fig tree represents the Jewish nation. It as a whole had failed to produce fruit, including a positive response to Jesus. So it faced being cut out of its relationship with God, no longer using up the "soil" (possibly a reference to God's love or grace). The scenario is applicable to anyone who professes to be one of God's people.

Matt 25:24-30 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵so I was afraid, and *I went and hid your talent in the ground.* Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But *his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'* 

Servants of Jesus Christ – particularly in view of his return – must not be lazy and irresponsible, but use their abilities and what they have been entrusted with (cf. vv. 14-15) to faithfully serve Jesus Christ, producing "fruit" for him. Any "servants" who are unfaithful in this will lose what they have and be banished from the kingdom. Note that in v. 26b the master is not necessarily agreeing with the servant; rather he may simply be using the servant's words to condemn him. Whichever is the case, the terminology used still appears to allude to Jesus Christ requiring his servants to produce "fruit" for him.

Rev 3:15-16 *I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.* 

Here the Laodicean church is condemned for its deeds that were apparently halfhearted and no doubt ineffective – revealing somewhat of an indifference towards Christ. The reference to neither being hot nor cold, is seen by some commentators as referring to neither being devoted to or opposed to Christ. But some commentators insist this is not

the case, as it would indicate that antagonism towards Christ is preferable to being a lukewarm Christian. They view the references to "hot" and "cold" as each being positive, in contrast to "lukewarm". As such they understand "hot" to allude to hot waters with medicinal uses, and "cold" to allude to refreshing drinking water. Sources of both kinds of water were near to Laodicea.

‡ **God promised to destroy his "vineyard" Israel for producing bad "grapes" instead of good "grapes":**

Isa 5:1-7 Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ²He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and *he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.* ³And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? *When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?* ⁵And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. *I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured;* ^d*I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.* ⁶*I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.* ⁷*For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;* ^e*for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!* ^f 

^d Or *grazed over*; compare Exodus 22:5

^e The Hebrew words for *justice* and *bloodshed* sound alike

^f The Hebrew words for *righteous* and *outcry* sound alike

Further warnings and consequences regarding not doing God's work

Deut 28:47-48 *Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, ⁴⁸therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you.* 

The phrase "the abundance of all things" refers to their time of abundance/prosperity. Passages such as this one regarding Israel, have an application to believers in respect to the afterlife, if not the present.

Judg 5:23 *Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD, curse its inhabitants thoroughly, because they did not come to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.* 



The city of Meroz apparently had failed to assist the other Israelites – the people of the LORD – in fighting off their enemies.

Jer 48:10 *Cursed is he who does the work of the LORD with slackness, and cursed is he who keeps back his sword from bloodshed.* 

This has in view God's work in executing judgment on Moab.

Hag 1:2-9 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: *These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.*" ³Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ⁴*Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?* ⁵Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: *Consider your ways.* ⁶*You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.* ⁷"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁸Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. ⁹*You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.* 

In working on their own interests rather than doing God's work, rebuilding his temple, the results of the people's efforts were very disappointing.

Mal 3:14, 18 *You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? ...* ¹⁸*Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.* 

Verse 18 has an ominous tone for those who had turned from serving God (v. 14).

Luke 12:47 *And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.* 

1Cor 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. *Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!* 

Rev 3:1-3 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: "The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ²*Wake up, and strengthen what*

remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³Remember, then, what you received and heard. *Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.* 

The accusation against the church in Sardis that the people's deeds were not "complete in the sight of my God" (v. 2b) indicates that their deeds fell considerably short of what God required of them. It is either referring to not doing God's work adequately (akin to the theme of this subsection) or to actually doing things that were sinful – or both. Note that the exhortation to strengthen what remained (v. 2a) is speaking of strengthening and consolidating aspects of the faith that remained in them and their church.

✦ **Those who do not work with Jesus Christ are detrimental to his cause:**

Matt 12:30 *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.* 

Note: Do not work for things that do not satisfy or do not last – and so are in effect meaningless

See also:

▪ Hag 1:2-9 

Isa 55:2 *Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.* 

Just as spending one's labor on what does not satisfy is pointless, so is spending one's resources on "that which is not bread", i.e. things that do not satisfy one's soul. In contrast, we ought to seek the "rich food" that God provides.

Matt 6:19 *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^g destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ...* 

^g Or worm; also verse 20

John 6:27 *Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.* 

Ecc 1:2-3, 14 *Vanity^h of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.* ³*What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?*  ... ¹⁴*I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.*¹ 



^h Hebrew *vapor* (so throughout Ecclesiastes)

ⁱ Or *a feeding on wind*; compare Hosea 12:1 (so throughout Ecclesiastes)

The main theme of Ecclesiastes, often underlying some of its more despairing conclusions, is that apart from God everything is pointless, useless or futile (as the following references from Ecclesiastes illustrate). As such, working to gain or achieve things of this world is in effect “a striving after wind” (v. 14; cf. [Eccl 2:11 ↓](#); [Eccl 2:17 ↓](#)) – a pointless, futile endeavor.

Eccl 2:3-11 I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, *till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.* ⁴I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines,^j the delight of the children of man. ⁹So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. ¹¹*Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.* 

^j The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Verse 10b may mean that he found pleasure in his work because he thought it would be rewarded with the pleasures he sought (cf. GNT, NCV). Instead, however, it proved to be pointless (v. 11). In making this conclusion Solomon may have had in mind the reasoning in vv. 17-23 below.

Eccl 2:17-23 So I hated life, because *what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.* ¹⁸*I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me,* ¹⁹*and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.* ²⁰*So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,* ²¹*because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a*

great evil. ²²*What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? ²³For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.* 

Eccl 4:7-8 *Again, I saw vanity under the sun: ⁸one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” This also is vanity and an unhappy business.* 

Eccl 6:7 *All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.*^k 

^k Hebrew *filled*

The meaning of this quite probably goes beyond simply one’s appetite for food. Here “mouth” most likely alludes to such things as “self-preservation and enjoyment” (AMP). All labor to achieve satisfaction in these things is ultimately futile as humans’ basic desires and needs are never satisfied once and for all. This inability to completely satisfy oneself is also spoken of elsewhere. Proverbs 27:20 says, “Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man.” Not dissimilarly Ecclesiastes 1:8b says, “... the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.” See also Isaiah 55:2 above.

✚ It is no good even gaining the whole world if it costs your soul:

Mark 8:36-37 *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷For what can a man give in return for his soul?* 

The “whole world” denotes everything that can be gained in this world or this physical life. The term “soul” can be translated “life” (GNT, NLT text note), eternal life appears to be primarily in view.

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) Being Guided by God

See also:

- d) *God Guides His People*, p. 976

The topic of being guided by God is very pertinent to serving God, such as in ascertaining his will in regard to how we should serve him. It is also of course important in other aspects of our lives. For it is vital in living righteously generally and in navigating through troubled times, as reflected in some of the following verses. God's guidance also becomes an issue when we need to make a significant choice or decision.

God's guidance may come through such sources as: the Holy Spirit's promptings; inner conviction or assurance (itself largely of the Holy Spirit); Scripture; circumstances; or advice from others. But God does not always guide his people by making them aware of his will. They may not even be aware of being guided by God, only recognizing his guidance in retrospect. The Bible actually says little about how one should find out God's guidance (apart from his directions evident in his laws). But the Bible does speak of how living a godly life and prayer are critical for being open to it – as is indicated in the following subsections.

Subsections

- To be guided by God, live a godly life
- Ask God to guide you (as in troubled times)
- God and Jesus Christ's will can even be understood through godliness and prayer
- Other sources of godly and wise guidance
- Note: In the OT, inquiring of God was at times done through an intercessor . . .
- . . . and it sometimes involved the use of lots

To be guided by God, live a godly life

Phil 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, *as you have always obeyed*, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, ¹³*for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* 📖

This implies that as we obey (v. 12a), acting in "fear and trembling" (v. 12b), we are open to God moving us to act in accordance with his purpose (v. 13).

Ps 23:1-3 *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*¹ ³*He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness^m for his name's sake.* 📖

¹ Hebrew *beside waters of rest*

^m Or *in right paths*

Like David we must acknowledge and submit to God as our shepherd (v. 1a); as such, God guides us (vv. 2-3). Note that the phrase "paths of righteousness" (v. 3b) may be speaking more generally of the right or best paths rather than specifically of paths that are morally right, although the former necessarily involves the latter.

Isa 58:9b-11 *If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. ¹¹And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.* 📖

Ps 25:9, 12 *He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.* 📖 ... ¹²*Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.* 📖

These verses may be speaking of God guiding the humble and those who fear him to live according to his ways or laws, rather than in guiding them in making choices regarding matters that his laws do not concern. However they are at least applicable to the latter, particularly v. 12.

Prov 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶*In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* 📖

The reference to paths that are "straight" (v. 6) suggests ways that are righteous and/or secure. The expression "make straight your paths" seems to be speaking either of: directing our ways so that we will take a straight path (cf. GNT, NLT, NKJV); or straightening the path before us (cf. CEV). Possibly aspects of both interpretations are involved.

Ps 139:24 *And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*ⁿ 📖

ⁿ Or *in the ancient way* (compare Jeremiah 6:16)

This points to the fact that living in ways that are offensive to God is incompatible with being led by him – as is illustrated in Ezekiel 20:31 immediately below.

‡ **The ungodly cannot inquire of God:**

Ezek 20:31 When you present your gifts and offer up your children in fire,^o *you defile yourselves with all your idols to*



this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you. 

^o Hebrew *and make your children pass through the fire*

Note that to “inquire” of God would appear to involve seeking his guidance (cf. GNT).

Ask God to guide you (as in troubled times)

See also:

- [Ps 139:24](#) 
- *Ask God to guide you*, p. 1961

Ps 25:5 *Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.* 

Ps 31:3 For you are my rock and my fortress; and *for your name's sake lead me and guide me; ...* 

Ps 61:1-2 Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer; ²from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. *Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, ...* 

The “rock that is higher than I” denotes a place of safety that is beyond the psalmist’s reach. Quite possibly it alludes to God himself (cf. vv. 3-4).

Ps 143:8, 10 Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. *Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.*  ... ¹⁰*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!* 

Note that v. 10 may speak of knowing God’s guidance (cf. CEV), hence the verse’s inclusion here. However David is arguably more likely simply speaking of God enabling him to obey God’s will.

God and Jesus Christ’s will can even be understood through godliness and prayer

See also:

- *I. General* [God’s plans for his people], p. 956

Rom 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world,^p but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.^q* 

^p Greek *age*

^q Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

Believers need to renew their minds through such things as: making their thoughts conform to God’s word and commands; communing with God through prayer; and being open to the Holy Spirit. In so doing they are better able to recognize what God wants of them in situations they encounter. The reference to God’s will is probably also inclusive of what tasks God wants believers to undertake for him, as is arguably the case also in the subsequent passages from Ephesians and Colossians.

Eph 5:8b-10, 15-17 *Walk as children of light* ⁹*(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),* ¹⁰*and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.*  ... ¹⁵*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,* ¹⁶*making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.* ¹⁷*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* 

In saying “try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (v. 10) Paul is probably not simply talking of learning his commands; more likely he is referring to discerning the Lord’s will (cf. v. 17) in the various circumstances and decisions one faces. With the two exhortations to discern the Lord’s will (vv. 10, 17), Paul does not say how to do so, but significantly each exhortation is preceded by a call to godly or wise living.

Col 1:9-10 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased *to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,* ¹⁰*so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.* 

This is of course a prayer that God’s will for others be made known to them. But it is still indicative of the need to pray ourselves, in understanding God’s will in our own lives (cf. [Ps 143:10](#) ). Note that v. 10 indicates that in asking God to enable the Colossians to know his will (v. 9), Paul had their service to God in view, along with related aspects of the Christian life.

1Ki 22:4-5 And he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?” And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.” ⁵And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, *“Inquire first for the word of the LORD.”* 

Jehoshaphat’s advice to first seek God’s counsel before embarking on a momentous course of action is reflective of the need to pray in such a situation – and reflects that God’s will may be understood through prayer.



Other sources of godly and wise guidance

See also:

- . . . *A good conscience is vital for governing ourselves in pleasing God*, p. 1930

Prov 1:1-6 *The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: ²To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, ³to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; ⁴to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— ⁵Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, ⁶to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.* 

These verses show that God's word – here Proverbs in particular – provides guidance.

Prov 6:20-22 *My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. ²¹Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. ²²When you walk, they^r will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.* 

^r Hebrew *it*; three times in this verse

Prov 11:3 *The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.* 

Prov 11:14 *Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.* 

This illustrates the importance of advice from others in obtaining guidance, with wise advisors presumably being in view.

2Cor 2:13 *... my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.* 

One's "peace of mind" (NIV®; cf. [Col 3:15](#) ↓) should be considered when determining a course of action. It is very helpful for guidance if one's mind is under the influence of the Holy Spirit and a clear conscience.

Col 3:15 *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.* 

In its context the reference is to relationships with other believers, in which Christ's "peace" in the church body – and so also in the "hearts" of its members – should be sought and maintained amidst working through differences. The first part of the verse is often applied to obtaining personal guidance, being used to point to the principle of being at peace with a particular choice (cf. [2Cor 2:13](#) ↑).

✦ On being given God's guidance, follow it:

Ps 32:8-9 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. ⁹Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.* 

Note: In the OT, inquiring of God was at times done through an intercessor . . .

In the following examples people inquire of God – or at least appear to – through Moses, the high priest and also a prophet.

Ex 33:7 *Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.* 

This temporary "tent of meeting" outside the Israelite camp was not the later tabernacle which was within the camp. It appears to have only been used before the tabernacle was constructed. Presumably anyone seeking God's counsel at this tent did so through Moses (cf. vv. 8-11) – as appears to be the case immediately below in [Leviticus 24:12-14](#).

Lev 24:12-14 *And they put him in custody, till the will of the LORD should be clear to them. ¹³Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁴"Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.* 

Judg 20:27-28 *And the people of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, ministered before it in those days), saying, "Shall we go out once more to battle against our brothers, the people of Benjamin, or shall we cease?" And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your hand."* 

Presumably it was through the priest Phinehas that the people both inquired of God and received God's reply (cf. comments on [1Sam 23:1-6](#) ↓; [Ex 28:29-30](#) ↓).

1Sam 23:1-6 *Now they told David, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors." ²Therefore David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah." ³But David's men said to him, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" ⁴Then David inquired of the LORD again. And the LORD answered him, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the*



Philistines into your hand."⁵And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. ⁶When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech had fled to David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand. 

As implied here and indicated in 1 Samuel 30:7 in the following subsection, David made his inquiries of God through Abiathar the priest who would use the ephod (v. 6), with the Urim and Thummim (cf. comment on [Ex 28:29-30](#) ↓). Note that 2 Samuel 2:1 and 5:19, 23 record further such instances of David inquiring of God.

2Ki 3:9-12 So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. And when they had made a circuitous march of seven days, there was no water for the army or for the animals that followed them. ¹⁰Then the king of Israel said, "Alas! The LORD has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab." ¹¹And Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may inquire of the LORD?" Then one of the king of Israel's servants answered, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." ¹²And Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. 

... and it sometimes involved the use of lots

See also:

- [1Sam 23:1-6](#) ↑

Ex 28:29-30 So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in *the breastpiece of judgment* on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD. ³⁰And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly. 

The Urim and the Thummim were sacred lots – contained in the breastpiece of judgment or "decision" (NIV®), attached to the ephod of the high priest (cf. [1Sam 23:6](#) ↑; [1Sam 30:7](#) ↓). The high priest used these to ascertain God's will (cf. [Num 27:21a](#) ↓).

Num 27:21 And he [Joshua] shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation. 

1Sam 14:41-43 Therefore Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel, why^s have you not answered your servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O LORD, God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. ⁴²Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was taken. ⁴³Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die." 

^s Vulgate (compare Septuagint); Hebrew *Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, "Why . . .*

1Sam 30:7-8 And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. ⁸And David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue." 

Jonah 1:7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 

In casting lots these sailors were probably looking to their own gods for guidance, but nevertheless obviously God used this.

Prov 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. 

Prov 18:18 The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders. 

Josh 18:10 ... and Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD. And there Joshua apportioned the land to the people of Israel, to each his portion. 

Lots may have been used here as a fair and equitable method of dividing up the land, rather than necessarily to procure God's will as to where which tribe was to live. However, the fact that Joshua did it "before the LORD" suggests that the latter may have been the case.

‡ The apostles also used lots to ascertain the Lord's will:

Acts 1:24-26 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. 



This is the last record in the Bible of lots being used to seek God's (or Christ's) guidance. One should bear in mind the following: this occurred before the Holy Spirit was given; it was done prayerfully; and the decision was between two people of apparently equivalent standing – with quite possibly the lots being used only after the disciples had done what they could to determine the most appropriate person.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Doing God's Work

In instructing us in how to do God's work, serving him, the Bible urges us to do our best but emphasizes God's role and the need to rely on him. The Bible also teaches us about: the manner in which we should serve God; serving God in a church context; and God's extraordinary spiritual gifts to his people for serving him.

a) Do God's Work – the Best You Can

See also:

- *Serve God with all your heart*, p. 1422
- *Serve God and Jesus Christ faithfully . . .*, p. 1783

Subsections

- Do God's work
- Do the work assigned to you . . .
- . . . Carry out God's will
- Work hard at God's work . . .
- . . . Endure associated persecution and hardships
- Do quality work which bears "fruit" – "fruit" that will last
- Persist at the work
- Complete the work you have been given

Do God's work

Ex 36:1 "Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the LORD has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall *work in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded.*" 

Neh 12:45 *And they performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon.* 

Neh 13:14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out *my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.* 

John 9:4 *We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.* 

Jesus appears to be speaking of his ministry, in which he implies the disciples were partners by the use of "We". As such, "night" would be a reference to his death. The exhortation is applicable to all believers to do God's work while they can.

1Cor 16:10 When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for *he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am.* 

Phil 2:22 But you know Timothy's^a proven worth, how as a son^b with a father *he has served with me in the gospel.* 

^a Greek *his*

^b Greek *child*

1Chr 22:16b *Arise and work! The LORD be with you!* 

Ezra 5:2 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and *began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.* 

Luke 19:12-13 He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. ¹³Calling ten of his servants,^c he gave them ten minas,^d and said to them, '*Engage in business until I come.*'" 

^c Greek *bondservants*; also verse 15

^d A *mina* was about three months' wages for a laborer

"The Parable of the Ten Minas" (cf. vv. 11-27) is often applied to the need to put to work the abilities and resources we have been given (cf. **Ex 36:1** ↑), making good use of them for God's kingdom.

† **God's people are workers for the kingdom of God:**

Col 4:11 ... and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow *workers for the kingdom of God*, and they have been a comfort to me. 

Do the work assigned to you . . .

1Cor 3:5-6 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? *Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.* ^{6I} *planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.* 

This indicates that Paul and Apollos did or worked at the tasks that the Lord had assigned to them (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). All believers should do likewise.



Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. 

It would appear that Paul is speaking of God preparing in advance particular work for each believer to do (cf. AMP). As such, believers need to look to God to guide them and enable them to do the work – and willingly do it.

Judg 6:14 And the LORD^e turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” 

^e Septuagint *the angel of the LORD*; also verse 16

The rhetorical question underlines the fact that in going and saving Israel, Gideon would be carrying out God’s will and work, God being the one who had sent him (cf. [Jer 1:7](#) ↓).

Jer 1:7 But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. 

2Tim 4:5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 

1Chr 6:32 They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting until Solomon built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they performed their service according to their order. 

These men performed their service according to the regulations stipulated for them (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT).

1Chr 16:37 So David left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister regularly before the ark as each day required, ... 

The phrase “as each day required” refers either to the standard daily regulations (cf. [1Chr 6:32](#) ↑) or whatever needs arose each day.

... Carry out God’s will

See also:

- [Col 4:12](#) ↓
- *Do God’s will . . .*, p. 1165
- *... Do what pleases God*, p. 1166

Ezra 7:18 Whatever seems good to you and your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God. 

2Cor 8:3-5 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor^f of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 

^f The Greek word *charis* can mean *favor* or *grace* or *thanks*, depending on the context

The Macedonian’s giving of their finances (vv. 3-5) was in a sense a giving of themselves to the Lord – first and foremost – and secondarily to Paul, in accordance with God’s will.

Eph 6:5-6 Slaves,^g obey your earthly masters^h with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servantsⁱ of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ... 

^g Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

^h Or *your masters according to the flesh*

ⁱ Or *slaves*; Greek *bondservants*

1Pet 4:2 ... so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. 

Matt 12:50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother. 

1Sam 2:35 And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. 

Acts 13:36 For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ... 

David “did God’s will” (NCV™; cf. NIV).

Work hard at God’s work . . .

See also:

- [2Cor 11:23-28](#) ↓
- *Devote yourself to God’s work*, p. 1390
- *Work hard at helping church members* [church leaders], p. 1489
- *Work hard at spreading the gospel message*, p. 1750

Rom 16:6, 12 Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.  ... ¹²Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved *Persis*, who has worked hard in the Lord. 



1Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. 📖

The expression “always abounding in the work of the Lord” refers either to: busily doing the Lord’s work (cf. CEV, GNT); or doing it well (cf. AMP, NRSV). Both possibilities involve working hard at it.

Col 1:28-29 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹*For this I toil, struggling with all his energy* that he powerfully works within me. 📖

Col 2:1 For I want you to know *how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face*, ... 📖

Col 4:12-13 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, *always struggling on your behalf in his prayers*, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³*For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis*. 📖

1Tim 4:15 *Practice these things, immerse yourself in them*,^j so that all may see your progress. 📖

^j Greek *be in them*

The “things” in the preceding verses (cf. vv. 6-14), concerned mainly Timothy’s ministry.

2Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved*,^k *a worker who has no need to be ashamed*, rightly handling the word of truth. 📖

^k That is, one approved after being tested

“Do your best” here is akin to “Work hard” (NLT) or “Be diligent” (NASB, NKJV). Paul urged Timothy to be industrious, doing his best to gain God’s approval of himself and his work, having no need to be ashamed of what he had done.

Rev 2:2 I know *your works, your toil* and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 📖

Rev 2:19 I know *your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first*. 📖

The clause “your latter works exceed the first” speaks of doing more than they did at first (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV).

2Chr 24:13 *So those who were engaged in the work labored*, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it. 📖

... Endure associated persecution and hardships

1Cor 4:11-13 *To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless*,¹² *and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure*;¹³ *when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things*. 📖

In v. 12a Paul appears to be speaking of working hard to support himself, which he did in conjunction with working hard in his work for the kingdom. In the last statement (v. 13b) Paul is saying that they had been thought of and treated as if they were the garbage of the world.

2Cor 4:8-10 *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair*; ⁹*persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed*; ¹⁰*always carrying in the body the death of Jesus*, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 📖

For comment on v. 10, see the comment on **2Cor 4:10-12** – under ... *Be willing even to endanger your life*, p. 1394.

2Cor 6:4-5, 8-10 ... *but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities*,⁵ *beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger*; 📖 ... ⁸*through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors*, and yet are true; ⁹*as unknown*, and yet well known; *as dying*, and behold, we live; *as punished*, and yet not killed; ¹⁰*as sorrowful*, yet always rejoicing; *as poor*, yet making many rich; *as having nothing*, yet possessing everything. 📖

In saying that he was treated “as unknown, and yet well known” (v. 9a) Paul probably means that he was treated as a nobody by the world and false brothers – ignored and/or unappreciated – but was well known by God and believers. In vv. 9b-10 Paul speaks of facing death, punishment, sorrow and poverty – and being treated or viewed as such.

2Cor 7:4-5 I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. *In all our affliction*, I am overflowing with joy. ⁵*For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within*. 📖



2Cor 11:23-28 *Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food,¹ in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.* 📖

¹ Or often in fasting

Note that in v. 23 Paul acknowledges the foolishness of what he earlier referred to as boasting (cf. vv. 16-17, 21). He felt compelled to boast as such to try to prove his credentials as an apostle in the face of false claims by opposing false apostles, who were a threat to the spirituality of the Corinthian church.

Do quality work which bears “fruit” – “fruit” that will last

See also:

- *Whoever does not produce good “fruit” will be cut off from God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1400

As noted earlier in this chapter, the metaphorical use of “fruit” in the NT may refer to: personal spiritual characteristics (cf. Gal 5:22-23); or wider spiritual outcomes of quality work for God’s kingdom. And in some instances, it may include both concepts – the spiritual characteristics and their effect. In including verses using “fruit” in this subsection, its usage in these verses has been interpreted as referring to – or at least inclusive of – spiritual outcomes of quality work for God’s kingdom. See also the comments below on John 15:16, Romans 7:4 and James 3:17.

Matt 13:23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. *He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.* 📖

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 📖

Jesus may be alluding to both his own death (cf. v. 23) and the death to themselves of Christians (cf. v. 25) in serving him (cf. v. 26).

John 15:8, 16 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 📖 ... ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 📖

With Jesus saying that he “appointed” the disciples to “go” and bear fruit (v. 16), it is quite likely that here “fruit” does refer to or encompass spiritual outcomes of quality work for the kingdom.

Rom 7:4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 📖

In regard to the use of “fruit”, note that a number of other translations (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) do clearly interpret it as referring to the produce of godly service.

Phil 1:22a If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. 📖

Col 1:10 ... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. 📖

James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 📖

The coupling of “good fruits” with being “full of mercy” suggests that “good deeds” (GNT, NLT; cf. CEV, NCV) are being spoken of here.

1Cor 3:10-15 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. *Let each one take care how he builds upon it.* ¹¹For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— ¹³each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. 📖



Here Paul speaks of the work of building the church, and is probably primarily addressing church teachers. Builders need to be careful to build with quality materials – symbolized by the gold, silver and precious stones (v. 12). Such “materials” would include correct doctrine, complemented by a godly lifestyle. Quality work – as with poor work – will be shown for what it is by testing on “the Day” of judgment (vv. 13-14).

Phil 2:15-16 ... that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so *that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*

Paul was anxious that his work amongst the Philippians would prove to be quality work, work that was enduring and worthwhile in the final analysis.

✦ Do the work just as God wants:

Ex 39:42-43 *According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the people of Israel had done all the work.* ⁴³*And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, so had they done it.* Then Moses blessed them.

Persist at the work

We are to persist at doing God's work, continually serving him for all our life.

Neh 5:16 *I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work.*

This refers to the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Dan 6:20 As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has *your God, whom you serve continually*, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

Luke 1:74-75 ... that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might *serve him without fear,* ⁷⁵*in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

2Thes 3:13 As for you, brothers, *do not grow weary in doing good.*

2Cor 4:1 Therefore, *having this ministry by the mercy of God,*^m *we do not lose heart.*

^mGreek as we have received mercy

The phrase “do not lose heart” in effect means “never give up” (CEV, NLT; cf. NCV). Note that Paul soon afterwards reiterates this thought: “So we do not lose heart.” (v. 16)

John 5:16-17 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷But Jesus answered them, “*My Father is working until now, and I am working.*”

This suggests that God is always at his work and Jesus likewise is (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). As such, Jesus provides the consummate example of persistence at God's work – an example which one can aspire to, if not actually be able to actually emulate.

Complete the work you have been given

Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, “*See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.*”

Ex 40:16, 33 *This Moses did; according to all that the LORD commanded him, so he did.* ... ³³*And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work.*

Josh 11:15 Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and *so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.*

Josh 22:1-3 At that time Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, ²and said to them, “*You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you.* ³*You have not forsaken your brothers these many days, down to this day, but have been careful to keep the charge of the LORD your God.*

2Ki 10:30 And the LORD said to Jehu, “*Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.*”

2Chr 8:16 *Thus was accomplished all the work of Solomon fromⁿ the day the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was completed.*

ⁿ Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate; Hebrew to



Acts 13:22-25 And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will *do all my will*.' ²³Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵And as *John was finishing his course*, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.' 

The expression "finishing his course" (v. 25; cf. **Acts 20:24** ↓) speaks of John finishing his ministry (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Acts 14:26 ... and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for *the work that they had fulfilled*. 

Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, *if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus*, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 

Rom 15:19 ... by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum *I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ*; ... 

Rom 15:28 *When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected,*^o I will leave for Spain by way of you. 

^o Greek *sealed to them this fruit*

2Cor 8:11 *So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it* out of what you have. 

2Tim 4:5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, *fulfill your ministry*. 

✦ Jesus' example of completing his work from God:

John 17:4 I glorified you on earth, *having accomplished the work that you gave me to do*. 

A couple of other references to Jesus completing the work God had given him are made later, in John 19:28, 30 – 'After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." ... ³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.'

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Do the Work through God

See also:

- ... *By grace God's people are enabled to do his work*, p. 828
- *b) God Works through His People (I): General*, p. 961
- *c) God Works through His People (II): Empowerment*, p. 968
- *The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power*, p. 1770

Subsections

- *Apart from God and Jesus Christ we can accomplish nothing*
- *Pray to God for help in the work – and ask others to pray*
- *Do God's work through God and his power*
- *Do the work by faith and in God's "name" ...*
- ... *Do God's work in the "name" of Jesus Christ*
- *Serve God through the Holy Spirit*
- *Note: Commit to God whatever you do*

Apart from God and Jesus Christ we can accomplish nothing

John 15:4-5 Abide in me, and I in you. *As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.* ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. *Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* 

1Cor 3:6-7 I planted, Apollos watered, but *God gave the growth.* ⁷*So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.* 

God's servants cannot themselves produce any real, lasting spiritual results or growth from the work that they do – only God can.

Phil 1:9-11 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with *the fruit of*



righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. 📖

The phrase "the fruit of righteousness" is quite possibly referring to good deeds (cf. CEV, NCV) – as is probably the case above in John 15:4-5 – hence the verse's inclusion here. Alternatively, righteous qualities may be in view (cf. GNT). In either case, such "fruit" is produced only through Jesus Christ.

Ps 127:1-2 *Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. ²It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.* 📖

Attempting a task independently of God is useless. This principle is of course very much applicable to attempting to accomplish things for God's kingdom. Note the Hebrew text of the latter part of v. 2 is difficult. But it appears to suggest that God meets the needs of his people, irrespective of the amount of one's toil.

Isa 26:12 O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for *you have indeed done for us all our works.* 📖

✦ **No one in themselves is adequate to do God's work of spreading the knowledge of him:**

2Cor 2:14-16 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and *through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.* ¹⁵For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. *Who is sufficient^p for these things?* 📖

^p Or *competent*

No one is "sufficient" (v. 16) or "competent" (cf. text note) in themselves to do such work, in part because the consequences of the work mean either death or life for those amongst whom the work is done (vv. 15-16).

Pray to God for help in the work – and ask others to pray

See also:

- *Pray for those spreading the gospel*, p. 1323

Neh 1:3-4, 11 And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." ⁴As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and *I continued*

fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 📖 ... ¹¹O Lord, *let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.*" Now I was cupbearer to the king. 📖

These verses along with the passage immediately below from the subsequent chapter of Nehemiah show that he both prayed and acted (approaching the king for help) regarding the ruined state of Jerusalem.

Neh 2:4-8 Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" *So I prayed to the God of heaven.* ⁵*And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it."* ⁶And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" *So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.* ⁷And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, ⁸and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." *And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.* 📖

Note that this passage and the one above show that Nehemiah prayed about both the problem and the action he planned to take to address it.

Neh 4:8-9 And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. ⁹*And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.* 📖

Again Nehemiah both prayed and acted in regard to a problem confronting his work for God. In this case it was the threats of enemies against him and the people as they did God's work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Ps 90:17 Let the favor^q of the Lord our God be upon us, and *establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!* 📖

^q Or *beauty*

The reference is to work in general, but the prayer is very much applicable to doing the work of God's kingdom.

Acts 4:29-31 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and *grant to your servants^r to continue to speak your word with all boldness,* ³⁰*while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your*



holy servant Jesus."³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. 📖

^r Greek *bondservants*

Eph 6:18b-20 To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,¹⁹and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. 📖

This and the following passages suggest that we should ask others to pray to God to help us in our work for him.

Col 4:3-4 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—⁴that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. 📖

2Thes 3:1-2 Finally, brothers,^s pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored,^t as happened among you,²and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. 📖

^s Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 6, 13

^t Or *glorified*

✦ Paul tells of his desire or prayer that his listeners would become a Christian like him:

Acts 26:28-29 And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"^u²⁹And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains." 📖

^u Or *In a short time you would persuade me to act like a Christian!*

"I would to God" suggests prayerfulness (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Do God's work through God and his power

See also:

- [Serve God through the Holy Spirit](#), p. 1419
- [Make good use of spiritual gifts, using them appropriately](#), p. 1433
- [The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power](#), p. 1770

John 3:21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that *his works have been carried out in God*. 📖

In "the light" given by Jesus Christ, all that one does in living by the truth is shown to be done in/through God – "divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him" (AMP).

1Cor 2:1-5 And I, when I came to you, brothers,^v did not come proclaiming to you the testimony^w of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴and *my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, ⁵that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 📖

^v Or *brothers and sisters*

^w Some manuscripts *mystery* (or *secret*)

Particularly in view of vv. 1-3, verses 4-5 suggest that Paul intentionally carried out his ministry in reliance on God's power (and the Holy Spirit).

2Cor 6:4, 7 ... but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 📖 ... ⁷by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ... 📖

In v. 7a, "by ... the power of God" indicates that Paul carried out his work as a servant of God (v. 4) in dependence on God's power (cf. GNT, NCV).

2Cor 13:4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but *in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God*. 📖

The phrase "by the power of God" is not only indicative of how we live with Christ, but also to how we – as we live with Christ – minister to others (cf. GNT, NLT).

Col 1:29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. 📖

Note that the reference is to Jesus Christ's "energy".

2Tim 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ... 📖

The reference to God's empowerment may primarily be to enduring the suffering (v. 8b) rather than to the actual doing of God's work (i.e. testifying about Jesus Christ, v. 8a). But obviously they went hand in hand; hence the verse's inclusion here.



1Pet 4:11 ... *whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies*—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 

The first portion of the verse is probably indicating that we should rely on God's help in what we say in ministering to others – as is paralleled in the second portion regarding serving with God's strength.

1Sam 14:45 Then the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, *for he has worked with God this day.*" So the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die. 

Neh 2:20 Then I replied to them, "*The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim^x in Jerusalem.*" 

^x Or *memorial*

In their efforts to rebuild of walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah looked to God as the ultimate source of the success of which he was confident.

1Chr 22:16b *Arise and work! The LORD be with you!* 

Here David alludes to the need for God to be helping Solomon in the work of building the temple.

1Thes 4:2 For you know *what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.* 

‡ **By his power God fulfills what his people seek to do for him:**

2Thes 1:11 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and *may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, ...* 

Paul prays that "by his power" God will bring to completion, putting to good effect, what the Thessalonians in faith sought to do for God. (Presumably Paul has in mind such things being in line with God's will/work.)

Do the work by faith and in God's "name" . . .

See also:

- *God's "name" is correlated with his authority and power,* p. 48

The latter verses in this subsection speak of acting in God's "name". To the ancient Hebrews and Jews, a person's name represented or embodied their whole person – including

their nature, authority and aims or cause. As such, doing something in God's name would appear to involve acting: as his representative; by his authority; and in accordance with his will. Doing so is allied with acting: in dependence on his power (spoken of in the previous subsection) and by faith in him (spoken of throughout this subsection). The same things can be said of acting in Jesus Christ's name (spoken of in the following subsection).

1Tim 1:4 ... nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than *the stewardship^y from God that is by faith.* 

^y Or *good order*

The "stewardship from God that is by faith" may well be speaking of God's work being "done by faith" (CEV, cf. NCV); as such the verse is pertinent to this subsection. Alternatively, some commentators think that it is speaking of God's plan or truth being known through faith (cf. GNT).

Acts 11:23-24 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and *he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,* ²⁴*for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.* And a great many people were added to the Lord. 

Undoubtedly the godly traits of Barnabas listed in v. 24 – including being "full of... faith" – were evident in the manner in which he ministered (v. 23).

Heb 11:32-34 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³*who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,* ³⁴*quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.* 

In fighting their enemies (vv. 33a, 34b) – along with administering justice (v. 33a) – these men of God were in a real sense doing God's work, doing so by faith. As such passages like this and the following ones are very much applicable to believers in doing their work for God.

1Sam 17:37, 45-47 And David said, "*The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.*" And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"  ... ⁴⁵Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but *I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.* ⁴⁶*This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to*



the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. *For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.*" 

David's faith is shown clearly in vv. 37, 46, 47. His statement that he came against Goliath "in the name of the LORD of hosts" (v. 45; cf. **2Chr 14:11** ↓; **Ps 4:5** ↓; **Ps 118:10-12** ↓) also points to his faith in God and God's power, as well as suggesting that he did so on God's behalf.

2Chr 14:11 And Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. *Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude.* O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." 

This clearly speaks of acting both by faith and in God's "name".

Ps 44:5 *Through you we push down our foes; through your name we tread down those who rise up against us.* 

Ps 118:10-12 *All nations surrounded me; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!* ¹¹*They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!* ¹²*They surrounded me like bees; they went out like a fire among thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!* 

The psalmist overcame his evil enemies in the name of the LORD – inclusive of "the power of the Lord" (CEV, GNT).

... Do God's work in the "name" of Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Jesus Christ's "name" is correlated with his authority and power*, p. 107
- *Ask for things in Jesus Christ's "name"*, p. 1225
- *Demons are driven out of people in Jesus Christ's "name"*, p. 1819

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. 

The exhortation in this verse was not made specifically in reference to doing God's work, but obviously is applicable to it.

Luke 10:17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" 

Luke 24:46-47 ... and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that *repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations*, beginning from Jerusalem. 

The message of "repentance and forgiveness of sins" was to be preached "in his name", with Christ's authority (cf. NLT), as the one who by his work has realized this forgiveness.

Acts 3:6-8 But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!*" ⁷And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 

Acts 9:27-28 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had *preached boldly in the name of Jesus*. ²⁸So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, *preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.* 

Acts 16:18 And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "*I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.*" And it came out that very hour. 

1Cor 1:10 *I appeal to you, brothers,^z by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. 

^z Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verses 11, 26

2Thes 3:6 *Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. 

1Cor 5:4-5 When you are *assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus* and my spirit is present, *with the power of our Lord Jesus*,⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.^a 

^a Some manuscripts add *Jesus*



That being "assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus" is connected with the presence of "the power of our Lord Jesus", suggests that acting in the name of Jesus Christ is correlative to acting in dependence on or through his power. (For comment on v. 5, see [1Cor 5:4-5](#) – under . . . *This is partly for the benefit of the offenders themselves*, p. 1493.)

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, *anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord*.

Note that here "Lord" could be referring to God.

Serve God through the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *d) The Holy Spirit Helps God's People*, p. 847
- *Spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit*, p. 1748
- *The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power*, p. 1770

Rom 7:6 But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that *we serve in the new way of the Spirit* and not in the old way of the written code.^b

^b Greek *of the letter*

God's people serve and obey him now by following the directing of the Holy Spirit, with the Spirit's empowerment, rather than by focusing on "obeying the letter of the law" (NLT).

1Cor 2:4-5, 13 ... and *my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, ⁵*that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God*. ... ¹³*And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit*, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.^c

^c Or *interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual*

In v. 4 Paul acknowledges the Spirit's power being behind the effectiveness of his preaching. While Paul does not expressly say that he looked to the Holy Spirit's help in his preaching, his acknowledgement in v. 4 and what he says in v. 13 – along with the preceding verses, as per an earlier comment – suggest that this was the case (cf. [1Pet 1:12](#) ↓).

2Cor 6:4, 6 ... but *as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way*: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ... ⁶*by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love*; ...

Paul indicates here that he served God "in the power of the Holy Spirit" (NirV®).

2Tim 1:14 *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you*.

1Pet 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through *those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit* sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

2Cor 3:3 And you show that *you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God*, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.^d

^d Greek *fleshly hearts*

The Corinthians' new spiritual lives were composed by Christ with the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of Paul. This would suggest that Paul performed this ministry with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 18:25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And *being fervent in spirit*,^e he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.

^e Or *in the Spirit*

The text note points to Apollos speaking with the help of the Holy Spirit. But note that the rendering in the text note has little or no support amongst other modern translations.

✚ **Paul appealed to believers "by the love of the Spirit":**

Rom 15:30 *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit*, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ...

The expression "by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit" appears to refer to the mode of Paul's exhortation. As such one could say that Paul is acting or speaking here (in part) "by the love of the Spirit". Alternatively, some interpret Paul to be urging his readers to act according to the love of the Spirit given to them (cf. NLT). With either interpretation this verse is indicative of the need to serve God "by the love of the Spirit".

Note: Commit to God whatever you do

Commit or entrust to God whatever you do, whether it be work for God or other more mundane things one does in "everyday life".



Prov 16:3 *Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.* 

Ps 37:5-6 *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. ⁶He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.* 

Note that v. 6 appears to be speaking of God making his people's righteousness shine forth, obvious to all, effecting vindication and justice for them.

Ps 90:17 Let the favor^f of the Lord our God be upon us, and *establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!* 

^f Or *beauty*

The psalmist looks to God to grant him and his people success "in all we do!" (GNT; cf. NCV, NLT).

Acts 14:23, 26 *And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*  ...²⁶*and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.* 

As well as committing what we do to God, we should also commit/commend others and what they do to God – notably Christian workers and their work. Note that in Acts 20:32 Paul speaks of committing others to God and his word – "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and *I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*^g 

^g Or *what I have entrusted to him; Greek my deposit*

If the alternative rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), then Paul would appear to be speaking of entrusting or committing to God his ministry and its fruits – along with himself, even through death.

† Acknowledge God in all that you do:

Prov 3:6 *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* 

To "acknowledge him" appears to involve being mindful of him – including his sovereignty and ways. As such, in all we do we should remember him (cf. GNT, NCV) and seek his will or leading (cf. CEV, NLT).

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Manner in Which to Serve God

Subsections

- Serve God in holiness and righteousness
- Serve God with humility
- Serve God with all your heart
- Serve God with zeal . . .
- . . . but zeal must not be misguided
- Be strong and courageous, as God is with those doing his work
- Do not be afraid as you do God's work . . .
- . . . Instead, fear God and serve him faithfully
- Further points on the manner in which to serve God

Serve God in holiness and righteousness

See also:

- *Live a godly life in readiness for doing God's work*, p. 1386
- *Consecrate yourself to serve God . . .*, p. 1387
- . . . *Be holy and set apart*, p. 1388
- *Live and act in a way that is consistent with the gospel*, p. 1755

Luke 1:74-75 ... that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might *serve him without fear*, ⁷⁵*in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.* 

1Thes 2:9-10 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰You are witnesses, and God also, *how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.* 

Lev 21:6 *They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. For they offer the LORD's food offerings, the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy.* 



Isa 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; *purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD.* 

The final clause is probably referring to the duty of the priests and Levites to look after the vessels that belonged in the temple.

Mal 2:6 *True instruction^h was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity.* 

^h Or *law*; also verses 7, 8, 9

A priest is in view, along with his work. Possibly it is the high priest Phinehas, or perhaps even an ideal priest.

Matt 10:16 Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and *innocent as doves.* 

2Cor 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that *we behaved in the world with simplicityⁱ and godly sincerity*, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. 

ⁱ Some manuscripts *holiness*

This refers in part to Paul's previous work amongst the Corinthians (cf. **1Thes 2:10** ↑). The text note says some manuscripts have "holiness" (NASB, NIV) instead of simplicity.

1Tim 5:1-2 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, *younger women as sisters, in all purity.* 

This direction was given to Timothy as a pastoral worker, but is very much applicable to all believers.

1Tim 6:13-14 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony beforeⁱ Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴to *keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach* until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 

ⁱ Or *in the time of*

It is not clear exactly what is referred to by "this command" (v. 14), but the most likely possibilities each pertain to Timothy's work for the kingdom.

2Tim 1:3 I thank God *whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience*, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 

2Cor 6:7 ... *by truthful speech*, and the power of God; *with the weapons of righteousness* for the right hand and for the left; ... 

The term "weapons of righteousness" is usually understood as a reference to the spiritual power and protection given by a life of righteousness and integrity – "right living" (NCV™, cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Serve God with humility

Acts 20:18b-19 You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹*servng the Lord with all humility* and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ... 

Luke 17:7-10 "Will any one of you who has a servant^k plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? ⁸Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly,^l and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? ⁹Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰*So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants;^m we have only done what was our duty.'*" 

^k Greek *bondservant*; also verse 9

^l Greek *gird yourself*

^m Greek *bondservants*

Phil 2:5-8 *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,ⁿ ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant,^o being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* 

ⁿ Or *which was also in Christ Jesus*

^o Greek *bondservant*

Paul actually has in view church harmony (cf. vv. 1-4) rather than serving God. But his exhortation to follow Jesus Christ's example of humility as shown in Christ's work for God is obviously applicable to believers in their own work for God.

Dan 2:30 *But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.* 



Although they do not refer specifically to humility, this and the remaining references reflect the speakers' humility and sober perspective of their part in their work for God.

Acts 3:12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or *why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?*"

Rom 15:18 For *I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me* to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ...

Paul seems to mean that he would only speak about things for which Jesus Christ should be given credit, things that Christ accomplished through him as opposed to things that Paul did by himself. Note that Paul is also the speaker in each of the remaining references.

1Cor 15:9 For *I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle*, because I persecuted the church of God. ...

2Cor 12:11 I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, *even though I am nothing.*

Eph 3:8 To me, though *I am the very least of all the saints*, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ...

Serve God with all your heart

Deut 10:12 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to *serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul*, ...

Josh 22:5 Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to *serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

1Sam 12:20, 24 And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but *serve the LORD with all your heart.* ... ²⁴Only fear the LORD and *serve him faithfully with all your heart.* For consider what great things he has done for you.

1Chr 28:9 And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and *serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind*, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

2Chr 19:9 And *he charged them: "Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart:* ...

2Chr 31:21 And *every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.*

Rom 1:9 For *God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son*, that without ceasing I mention you ...

Paul speaks of serving God "with all my heart" (CEV, GNT, NLT; cf. NCV, NIV).

✦ Serve God with gladness:

Ps 100:2 *Serve the LORD with gladness!* Come into his presence with singing!

Although speaking of disobedience, Deuteronomy 28:47 also indicates that we should serve God with gladness – "Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, ..."

Serve God with zeal . . .

Rom 12:11 *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit,*^p *serve the Lord.*

^p Or *fervent in the Spirit*

2Ki 10:16 And he said, "Come with me, and *see my zeal for the LORD.*" So he^q had him ride in his chariot.

^q Septuagint, Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *they*

Ps 69:9 For *zeal for your house has consumed me*, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

David's zeal for God's house was clearly shown in his plans and efforts towards building the temple.

Ps 119:139 *My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget your words.*

The use of "zeal" suggests that the psalmist did or had in mind taking action on behalf of God's word – zealously serving God.



John 2:14-17 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵And *making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.* ¹⁶And he told those who sold the pigeons, *"Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."* ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, *"Zeal for your house will consume me."*

Rom 12:8 ... the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; *the one who leads,^r with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

^r Or *gives aid*

2Cor 9:2 ... for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And *your zeal has stirred up most of them.*

Titus 2:14 ... who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are *zealous for good works.*

1Pet 3:13 Now who is there to harm you if you are *zealous for what is good?*

2Cor 8:22 And with them we are sending our brother whom *we have often tested and found earnest in many matters, but who is now more earnest than ever* because of his great confidence in you.

Such earnestness shows an intensity or zeal for God's work.

1Ki 19:10 He said, *"I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."*

Here Elijah indicates that he has been "very zealous" (NASB, NIV, NKJV, NRSV; cf. NLT) in serving God, the outcome of a mindset of being "very jealous for the LORD".

... but zeal must not be misguided

Acts 22:3-4 I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel^s according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being *zealous for God as all of you are this day.* ⁴*I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ...*

^s Or *city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated*

Paul's reference to his zeal for God is primarily in regard to his adherence to the law (cf. [Gal 1:14 ↓](#)), but likely also in view in his subsequent mention of persecuting the church (cf. [Phil 3:6 ↓](#)).

Rom 10:1-3 Brothers,^t my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ²For I bear them witness that *they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.* ³*For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*

^t Or *Brothers and sisters*

The Jews were zealous to please God, but their zeal was not based on knowledge of what God wanted. As a result their strenuous efforts to gain righteousness were in vein, as such efforts were not in accordance with the way to righteousness as stipulated by God.

Gal 1:14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, *so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.*

Paul was saying this in the realization that his zeal for these traditions had been misdirected and counterproductive.

Phil 3:4b-6 If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶*as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law,*^u blameless.

^u Greek *in the law*

Prov 19:2 *Desire^v without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.*

^v Or *A soul*

"Desire" here is indicative of enthusiasm (cf. CEV, GNT) or zeal (cf. NIV, NLT). To have it "without knowledge" is to have energy without direction, which like being hasty leads one to "make mistakes" (NCV™).

‡ **Wise people's actions are based on knowledge:**

Prov 13:16 *In everything the prudent acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.*



Be strong and courageous, as God is with those doing his work

See also:

- 1Chr 28:20 ↴; Zec 8:9, 13 ↴; Jer 1:7-8 ↴
- *Do not be afraid – be strong and courageous . . .*, p. 1122
- *. . . Look to God and Jesus Christ for your strength*, p. 1123

Deut 31:23 And the LORD commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, *“Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you.”* 

Josh 1:5-7, 9, 18 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. *Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.* ⁶*Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.* ⁷*Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success^w wherever you go.*  *...⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*  *...¹⁸Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.* 

^w Or *may act wisely*

Judg 6:12, 14 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, *“The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.”*  *...¹⁴And the LORD^x turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?”* 

^x Septuagint *the angel of the LORD*; also verse 16

The expression “in this might of yours” (v. 14) may well be a reference to the angel of the LORD’s statement in v. 12, which quite possibly implies that because the LORD was with him he was a mighty warrior. Thus Gideon was to act as such, in the might/strength he had with God’s presence and support (cf. Hag 2:4 ↴).

2Chr 19:11 And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king’s matters, and the Levites will serve you as officers. *Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the upright!*^y 

^y Hebrew *the good*

Note that the last clause is a blessing, that the LORD would be with the “upright”, here in particular those who serve him accordingly.

Hag 2:4 Yet now *be strong*, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. *Be strong*, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. *Be strong*, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. *Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, ...* 

Ezra 7:28b *I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.* 

Ezra is speaking here of going to Jerusalem, to minister to the Israelites there.

2Sam 10:12 *Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD do what seems good to him.* 

1Chr 28:10 Be careful now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; *be strong and do it.* 

2Chr 15:7-8 But you, *take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.*⁸ As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, *he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD.*^z 

^z Hebrew *the vestibule of the LORD*

2Chr 17:6 *His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD.* And furthermore, he took the high places and the Asherim out of Judah. 

Ezra 10:4 Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; *be strong and do it.* 

Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, *“Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”* 

Do not be afraid as you do God’s work . . .

See also:

- Josh 1:9 ↑
- *Spread the gospel boldly . . .*, p. 1749
- *. . . Spread the gospel boldly with God’s help*, p. 1749



1Chr 28:20 Then David said to Solomon his son, “*Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.*”

Zec 8:9, 13 Thus says the LORD of hosts: “*Let your hands be strong, you who in these days have been hearing these words from the mouth of the prophets who were present on the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.* ... ¹³And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. *Fear not, but let your hands be strong.*”

Jer 1:7-8 But the LORD said to me, “*Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.* ⁸*Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.*”

Ezek 2:6-7 And you, son of man, *be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions.*^a *Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.* ⁷*And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.*

^a Or on scorpion plants

Luke 1:74 ... that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might *serve him without fear,* ...

With the first part of the verse speaking of being rescued from enemies, presumably “without fear” is referring to fear of opponents.

1Pet 3:13-14 *Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?* ¹⁴*But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ...*

Doing good is unlikely to bring harm, but if even if it does, one is blessed. Therefore one should not be afraid or worried (cf. CEV, NLT).

2Tim 1:7-8 ... for *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* ⁸*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ...*

... Instead, fear God and serve him faithfully

See also:

- *Serve God and Jesus Christ faithfully . . .*, p. 1783
- *. . . Examples of faithful service*, p. 1783

Rather being afraid of other people or things, we should fear God as we do his work.

Josh 24:14 Now therefore *fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness.* Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

1Sam 12:24 *Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully* with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.

2Chr 19:9 And he charged them: “*Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: ...*”

Deut 6:13 *It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.*

Ps 2:11 *Serve the LORD with fear,* and rejoice with trembling.

1Sam 2:35 And I will raise up for myself *a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind.* And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.

Matt 24:45 *Who then is the faithful and wise servant,*^b whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?

^b Greek *bondservant*; also verses 46, 48, 50

Further points on the manner in which to serve God

See also:

- *Faith produces work in service to God*, p. 1097

Matt 10:16 Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so *be wise as serpents* and innocent as doves.



2Cor 6:4-6 ... but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ...

Personal qualities which should characterize servants of God include: "great endurance" (v. 4); "purity, knowledge, patience, kindness"; and "genuine love" (v. 6). Note that patience is also mentioned in the two verses immediately below.

2Cor 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

2Tim 2:24 And the Lord's servant^c must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ...

^c Greek *bondservant*

James 3:18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Peacemakers do their work in a peaceful way, producing righteousness. This could be speaking of righteousness in the lives of themselves or of others – or even both. It is certainly applicable to both, and so to one's work for God.

2Chr 31:21 And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.

This may indicate that in all Hezekiah did in service and obedience to God, he in effect sought God or aspired to seek him. Alternatively it may indicate that Hezekiah sought God and God's will in regard to what he did. Both interpretations are relevant to the manner or way in which we serve God, for in serving him we ought to seek him in both these ways.

Ps 149:6-9 Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, ⁷to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, ⁸to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, ⁹to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the LORD!

One can infer from this that in doing God's work (vv. 7-9) God's praises (v. 6) should never be far from our lips. Although not necessarily evidenced here, a persistent spirit of praise aids one in being mindful of and reliant on God, which are obviously vital in serving him.

✦ To serve Christ, one must follow him:

John 12:26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Serving Jesus Christ involves following him, which includes following his example and teachings. The context (cf. vv. 24-25) suggests that Jesus' challenge to follow him and be with him had in view his example of sacrificial living – to the point of death.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Working with Other Believers

See also:

- *d) Help Each Other*, p. 1336
- *e) Spiritual Gifts*, p. 1430

This section speaks of working with other believers both in: working among them, ministering to them; and working alongside them, ministering to others (such as in outreach). Note that most of the other teachings in this chapter are also very relevant to this topic.

Subsections

- [Serve each other](#)
- [Do God's work together](#)
- [Encourage each other in doing God's work](#)
- [Keep each other informed about the work and associated challenges](#)
- [Note: Churches send out workers, to aid the spread of the gospel and for other work . . .](#)
- [. . . The practice of workers going out in pairs](#)

Serve each other

Gal 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.



Mark 9:35 And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must *be last of all and servant of all.*"

John 13:13-17 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.* ¹⁵*For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.* ¹⁶*Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant^d is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.* ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

^d Greek *bondservant*

Here Jesus performs the task of a lowly servant, setting the disciples an example to follow. As he was their master and the one who sent them (v. 16), they were not to think of themselves as being above doing anything that he had done. Thus they were to serve each other, even in doing the most lowly and menial of tasks.

Rom 16:1 I commend to you *our sister Phoebe, a servant^e of the church* at Cenchræe, ...

^e Or *deaconess*

Heb 6:10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in *serving the saints, as you still do.*

1Pet 4:10 *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ...*

1Tim 6:2 Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather *they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.* Teach and urge these things.

We are to serve believing employers all the better.

Philem 1:13 I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order *that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ...*

‡ **Paul's suffering in his service for the church:**

Col 1:24-25 *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,* ²⁵*of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ...*

In v. 24 Paul says he considered that what he had suffered for the Colossians was a necessary part in the completion (cf. GNT, NLT) or continuation (cf. CEV) of Christ's sufferings for the sake of his people.

Do God's work together

See also:

- *Help others who are doing God's work*, p. 1339
- *Pray for the proclamation of the gospel, including others who proclaim it*, p. 1753

Rom 15:30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to *strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ...*

1Cor 16:16 ... be subject to such as these, and to *every fellow worker and laborer.*

Such references to fellow workers exemplify God's people doing his work together.

2Cor 8:23a As for Titus, *he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit.*

Phil 1:3-7 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴*always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,* ⁵*because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.* ⁶*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* ⁷*It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace,^f both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*

^f Or *you all have fellowship with me in grace*

The expression "partakers with me of grace" (v. 7) probably refers to the Philippians sharing with Paul in his work for the gospel. As such Paul would have in view God's grace in both appointing people to this work and enabling them to do it.

Phil 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy^g of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that *you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ...*

^g Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

Phil 2:22 But you know Timothy's^h proven worth, how as a sonⁱ with a father *he has served with me in the gospel.*

^h Greek *his*

ⁱ Greek *child*



Phil 4:3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion,^j help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. 

^j Or loyal Syzygus; Greek true yokefellow

3Jn 1:7-8 For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸Therefore we ought to support people like these, *that we may be fellow workers for the truth.* 

Num 18:2 And with you bring your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may join you and minister to you while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony. 

Ezra 3:2, 8-10 Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.  ... ⁸Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the LORD. ⁹And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers. ¹⁰And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. 

Neh 4:6, 16-17a So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.  ... ¹⁶From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, ¹⁷who were building on the wall. 

Those who were armed were to provide protection from enemies who had plotted against the Jews and their efforts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (cf. vv. 11-12 ).

Encourage each other in doing God's work

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. 

The encouragement spoken of (v. 25) is applicable to – if not at least in part referring to – spurring or encouraging one another on “to love and good works” (v. 24).

Deut 3:28 But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see. 

2Chr 30:22a And Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the LORD. 

2Chr 35:2 He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD. 

Neh 4:10-14 In Judah it was said,^k “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.” ¹¹And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.” ¹²At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.” ¹³So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. ¹⁴And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.” 

^k Hebrew Judah said

^l The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

In the face of discouragement against rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem from no less than three separate sources (vv. 10-12), Nehemiah takes action (v. 13) and then encourages the people by what he says (v. 14).

2Cor 9:2 ... for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 

This and the following verse illustrate that we can – and should – encourage others in doing God's work by our example.



Phil 1:14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word^m without fear. 

^mSome manuscripts add *of God*

Paul's faithful and courageous example encouraged others.

Keep each other informed about the work and associated challenges

It is a good practice for Christians to report to their church about their work, with its challenges and accomplishments. As is shown in some of the following verses, it is also helpful to tell other churches about the work.

Acts 14:27 And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 

Acts 15:3-4 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.ⁿ ⁴When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them. 

ⁿ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 22

Acts 21:17-20a When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰And when they heard it, they glorified God. 

Acts 4:23 When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 

Here the apostles report the opposition that they had faced in their work for the gospel (cf. [Acts 12:17 ↓](#); [Col 4:7-9 ↓](#)).

Acts 12:17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things to James and to the brothers."^o Then he departed and went to another place. 

^o Or *brothers and sisters*

Col 4:7-9 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant^p in the Lord. ⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved

brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. 

^p Greek *fellow bondservant*; also verse 12

Note: Churches send out workers, to aid the spread of the gospel and for other work . . .

Acts 13:1-3 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger,^q Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. 

^q Niger is a Latin word meaning *black*, or *dark*

Acts 8:14-15 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ... 

Acts 11:20-23 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^r also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²²The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ... 

^r Or *Greeks* (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)

As well as the sending of Barnabas by the Jerusalem church (v. 22), note that the men from Cyprus and Cyrene (v. 20) may also have been sent out by a church to spread the gospel.

Acts 18:27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ... 

The Ephesian church did not actually send out Apollos as such; he had come to Ephesus on his travels in spreading the gospel. But this is an example at least of a church supporting a worker on their journey in spreading the gospel.

2Cor 8:19, 23 And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.  ... ²³As for Titus, he is



my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, *they are messengers^s of the churches*, the glory of Christ. 

^s Greek *apostles*

This speaks of workers sent out by churches primarily to collect and administer the offering collected for the needy believers in Jerusalem. The term “messengers of the churches” (v. 23) probably denotes workers sent out by churches (cf. CEV, NCV).

... The practice of workers going out in pairs

See also:

▪ [Acts 13:1-3](#) ; [Acts 8:14](#) 

Mark 6:7 *And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two*, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 

Luke 10:1 *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two^t others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two*, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. 

^t Some manuscripts *seventy*; also verse 17

Acts 15:27 *We have therefore sent Judas and Silas*, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. 

Acts 15:39b-40 *Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus*, ⁴⁰*but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord*. 

2Cor 8:17-18 For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest *he is going^u to you of his own accord*. ¹⁸*With him we are sending^v the brother* who is famous among all the churches for his preaching of the gospel. 

^u Or *he went*

^v Or *we sent*; also verse 22

The unnamed brother (v. 18) was possibly Luke (cf. AMP).

Acts 19:22 *And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus*, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. 

2Cor 12:18a *I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him*. 

1Sam 26:6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Joab’s brother Abishai the son of Zeruiah, *“Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?” And Abishai said, “I will go down with you.”* 

This illustrates the usefulness of two people going out on a mission rather than just one.

‡ The advantages of two working and traveling together:

Ecc 4:9-12 *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil*. ¹⁰*For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!* ¹¹*Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?* ¹²*And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken*. 

Some commentators consider that some of these illustrations have traveling with another primarily in view. The final clause (v. 12) suggests that three “are even better” (NLT) than two, forming a grouping of quite some strength.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Spiritual Gifts

God equips his people to serve him, notably by giving them spiritual gifts.

Subsections

- God gives each of his people a spiritual gift, through the Holy Spirit
- God’s people are given different spiritual gifts
- The various spiritual gifts . . .
- . . . Examples of the Holy Spirit enabling believers to speak in other languages and to prophesy
- Make good use of spiritual gifts, using them appropriately
- Use your spiritual gift to build up the church
- Further instructions about spiritual gifts
- Other insights concerning spiritual gifts

God gives each of his people a spiritual gift, through the Holy Spirit

1Cor 7:7 I wish that all were as I myself am. But *each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another*. 



1Cor 12:4-11 Now *there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit*; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same *God who empowers them all in everyone*. ⁷To each is given the *manifestation of the Spirit* for the common good. ⁸For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. 📖

In the light of the context, it appears that the “varieties of activities” (v. 6a) allude to or are associated with the different spiritual gifts (v. 4; cf. v. 5). Thus v. 6b seems to indicate that a spiritual gift is given to each believer – as does vv. 7, 11. Verses 4, 7 indicate that the spiritual gifts are given by or through the Holy Spirit, as is stated in v. 11 and illustrated in vv. 8-10.

Eph 4:7-8 But *grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift*. ⁸Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” 📖

The context (cf. v. 11) indicates that the “grace” (v. 7) given to each believer refers to a spiritual gift or gifts (cf. **Rom 12:6** ↓) – which is also indicated by the final clause in v. 8. (Note that here “captives” most likely refers or applies to Christ’s evil spiritual enemies – whom he triumphed over in his death and resurrection, culminating in his ascending “on high” with them subject to him.)

1Pet 4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ... 📖

Heb 2:4 ... while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by *gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will*. 📖

God bore witness to the salvation announced by Jesus Christ (cf. v. 3) in part by bestowing spiritual gifts on believers, distributing the gifts according to his will. The term “gifts of the Holy Spirit” underlines that these spiritual gifts are given through the Holy Spirit.

‡ Timothy received his spiritual gift through a prophetic message when the elders laid hands on him:

1Tim 4:14 Do not neglect *the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you*. 📖

In saying that Timothy’s spiritual gift was given “by prophecy”, Paul may have meant it was given in association with such a prophetic message regarding it, at the time the message was spoken (cf. CEV, GNT).

God’s people are given different spiritual gifts

See also:

- **1Cor 7:7** ↑; **1Pet 4:10** ↑
- *God’s people are many different parts making up one body “in” Jesus Christ*, p. 789

Rom 12:4-6 For as in one body we have many members,^w and *the members do not all have the same function*, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶*Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us*, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ... 📖

^w Greek *parts*; also verse 5

Just as the members of a human body have different functions, so the members of Christ’s body have different spiritual gifts, performing different functions (cf. **1Cor 12:14-24a** ↓).

1Cor 12:4-6 Now *there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit*; ⁵and *there are varieties of service, but the same Lord*; ⁶and *there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone*. 📖

The thrust of these verses appears to be that there are different spiritual gifts which are applied in different ways – but they all have a unity in their source, function and purpose.

1Cor 12:29-30 *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?* ³⁰*Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?* 📖

The rhetorical questions reinforce Paul’s argument earlier in the chapter (cf. **vv. 14-24a** ↓), implying that no one particular gift is common to all – believers have different gifts.

‡ The different spiritual gifts are all indispensable:

1Cor 12:14-24a For *the body does not consist of one member but of many*. ¹⁵If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷*If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?*



¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts,^x yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴which our more presentable parts do not require. 

^x Or *members*; also verse 22

No one should think that their gift is not part of or vital to the body of Christ (vv. 15-16). Like the human body, Christ's body is made up of many different parts, all of which are indispensable – even parts that seem to be of less value or weaker (v. 22). Verse 23 implies that just as the parts of the human body that are less honorable and less attractive (or perhaps less obvious) are given special treatment, similarly those members of Christ's body whose gifts and functions appear unimportant should in fact be given special honor and care. Appearing to be unimportant does not make them any less vital to the ability of the body to function properly.

The various spiritual gifts . . .

See also:

- [1Cor 12:29-30](#) 

1Cor 12:8-10 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 

Broadly speaking, "the utterance of wisdom" and "the utterance of knowledge" (v. 8) quite possibly are respectively "the ability to give wise advice" (NLT) or insight and "the gift of special knowledge" (NLT) – with probably the application and conveying of spiritual truths being particularly in view. The term "faith" (v. 9) does not refer to saving faith, but to exceptional faith or trust in God. The gift of "prophecy" (v. 10) is the communication of a revelation from God, such as a "foretelling" of a future event or a revelation of God's will regarding a certain matter. The gift to distinguish between spirits (v. 10) appears to be the ability to distinguish whether something, such as a prophecy or teaching, is prompted by the Holy Spirit or a demonic spirit. The gift of "various kinds of tongues" (v. 10) or languages is the ability to speak in an

unlearned language. Some maintain that these languages are limited to human languages, while others claim that there are also "heavenly" or spiritual languages.

1Cor 12:28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 

Regarding the term "apostles" (cf. [Eph 4:11](#) ↓), it initially applied just to the twelve disciples. Occasionally others were also referred to as apostles, particularly Paul, who shared with the disciples a call from Jesus Christ to a ministry of evangelizing and teaching as Christ's representative. (Paul was also a witness of his resurrection – seen by many as a requirement for one to be designated an "apostle".) Used in a less strict sense, "apostle" is applied to itinerant workers, who founded and taught new churches. This usage is often applied to modern missionaries. The term "miracles" presumably refers to the gift of being able to perform miracles.

Eph 4:11 And he [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^y and teachers,^z ... 

^y Or *pastors*

^z Or *the shepherd-teachers*

Rom 12:6-8 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if *prophecy*, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if *service*, in our serving; the *one who teaches*, in his teaching; ⁸the *one who exhorts*, in his exhortation; the *one who contributes*, in generosity; the *one who leads*,^a with zeal; the *one who does acts of mercy*, with cheerfulness. 

^a Or *gives aid*

1Cor 7:7-8 I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. ⁸To the unmarried and the widows I say that *it is good for them to remain single as I am*. 

Many people understand Paul to be indicating here that he had a gift of celibacy.

. . . Examples of the Holy Spirit enabling believers to speak in other languages and to prophesy

See also:

- [1Cor 12:10](#) 

Acts 2:2-11, 16-18 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues as of



fire appeared to them and rested^b on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ... ¹⁶But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸even on my male servants^c and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. ...

^b Or *And tongues as of fire appeared to them, distributed among them, and rested*

^c Greek *bondservants*; twice in this verse

In v. 17, "see visions" and "dream dreams" most likely refer to receiving prophetic revelation from God, particularly with the references to prophecy in the adjacent verses. In talking of prophecy, Peter's words (vv. 16-18) suggest that the earlier speaking in other tongues (vv. 4-11) may have involved prophesying.

Acts 10:45-46a And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because *the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles*. ⁴⁶*For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.* ...

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, *the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.* ...

Acts 11:27-28 Now in these days *prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch*. ²⁸*And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius).* ...

The prophet Agabus is also recorded as prophesying in 21:10-11 below.

Acts 21:10-11 While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "*Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'*" ...

✦ An OT example of the Holy Spirit enabling people to prophesy:

Num 11:25-26 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And *as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied*. But they did not continue doing it. ²⁶Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and *the Spirit rested on them*. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so *they prophesied in the camp.* ...

Note that the elders appear to have only prophesied on this particular occasion (v. 25b) – rather than being given prophecy as a gift to remain with them. Other OT passages speaking specifically of the Holy Spirit enabling people to prophesy include: 1 Samuel 10:10; 19:19-20, 23; and 2 Chronicles 20:14-17. A NT example prior to Pentecost occurs in Luke 1:67-79, which speaks of the Holy Spirit enabling Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, to prophesy.

Make good use of spiritual gifts, using them appropriately

1Tim 4:14 *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.* ...

2Tim 1:6 For this reason I remind you to *fan into flame the gift of God*, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ...

The clause "fan into flame the gift of God" may well be speaking of developing the gift through use. Alternatively it could mean to "keep using" (NCV™) and "keep alive" (GNT) the gift.

Rom 12:6-8 *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads,^d with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.* ...

^d Or *gives aid*



With the phrase “in proportion to our faith” (v. 6), Paul may be instructing prophets to speak only messages that they in faith believe are from God. Alternatively it could mean: “use that gift in agreement with the faith” (NCV™), ensuring that the content and usage of apparent prophecy is in agreement with the faith.

1Pet 4:10-11 *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*



The first part of v. 11 probably means that those whose ministry largely involves speaking, should rely on God’s help in what they say – speaking in accordance with having words of God.

1Cor 13:1-2 *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

It is pointless exercising a spiritual gift without doing so in love. Note that Paul again links the importance of love with the use of spiritual gifts in 14:1 (in the following subsection).

Use your spiritual gift to build up the church

Eph 4:11-13, 16 *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^e and teachers,^f ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^g to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ... ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

^e Or *pastors*

^f Or *the shepherd-teachers*

^g Greek *to a full-grown man*

As parts of the body of Christ, believers are to use the gifts they have been given (v. 11) “for the work of ministry” (v. 12a) – each part doing its work (v. 16b) – so that Christ’s body may be built up, growing and maturing (vv. 12b-13, 16a).

1Cor 12:7 *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

Spiritual gifts are given to believers primarily to be used for the benefit of the whole church.

1Cor 14:1-6, 9, 12-19 *Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. ⁵Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up. ⁶Now, brothers,^h if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? ... ⁹So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. ... ¹²So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. ¹³Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. ¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. ¹⁶Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsiderⁱ say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. ¹⁸I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

^h Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 20, 26, 39

ⁱ Or *of him that is without gifts*

In v. 15 Paul appears to indicate that he – as one who has the gift of speaking in tongues – would use his mind as he both prayed and sang in tongues with his spirit. This would be either so he could interpret what he was saying or to speak intelligible words in addition to other languages. In doing so he would edify and build up the others in the church.

1Cor 14:26-32 *What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets*



speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³²and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. 

During church meetings everyone was free to contribute through their spiritual gifts, but this was to be done in an orderly fashion (vv. 27-30) – with the exercising of spiritual gifts being controllable (v. 32). The main aim of these instructions was building up the church (v. 26), which involved everyone learning and being encouraged (v. 31).

Further instructions about spiritual gifts

1Cor 12:1 Now concerning^j spiritual gifts,^k brothers,^l I do not want you to be uninformed. 

^j The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1

^k Or *spiritual persons*

^l Or *brothers and sisters*

Do not be uninformed about spiritual gifts – or misinformed (cf. AMP, NLT).

1Cor 12:28, 31a And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.  ... ³¹But earnestly desire the higher gifts. 

In view of v. 28, the "higher gifts" (v. 31a) probably primarily refers to prophecy in particular (cf. **1Cor 14:1, 39 ↓**) and also teaching.

1Cor 14:1, 39 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.  ... ³⁹So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 

1Thes 5:19-20 Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise prophecies, ... 

The use of spiritual gifts in corporate worship and meetings is most likely in view. The Thessalonians were not to stifle the Holy Spirit's work by restricting the expression of spiritual gifts.

Other insights concerning spiritual gifts

1Cor 1:4-7 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that

in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 

Here "you" is referring to the Corinthian church as a whole, among whom there was no spiritual gift lacking (v. 7). Particularly in the light of v. 7, Paul also quite probably has spiritual gifts primarily in view in v. 5. One can infer from these verses that, as they grow, God equips each of his churches with all spiritual gifts. Note that v. 6 is probably meaning that Paul's testimony to them about Christ was confirmed by them receiving the blessings in question.

1Cor 13:8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 

In contrast to love, there will come a time when spiritual gifts will cease. Presumably the afterlife is in view.

1Cor 14:21-25 In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." ²²Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign^m not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? ²⁴But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. 

^m Greek lacks a sign

The apparent conflict between v. 22 and vv. 23-25 may be due to a difference between the unbelievers referred to in v. 22 and the unbelievers who are coupled with "outsiders" (v. 23; cf. v. 24). The unbelievers of v. 22 may be ones who have rejected the truth and turned their backs on God (cf. v. 21b). Tongues are indicative of coming judgment for them just as the "strange tongues" were a sign of judgment for the Israelites (v. 21). In conjunction with this, the latter unbelievers – along with outsiders or inquirers – may be open to the gospel message and it is for them that prophesying rather than tongues is pertinent.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Significant Practices

I. Symbolic Rites

a) Baptism	1438
b) The Lord's Supper	1443
c) Circumcision: Its Needlessness	1446

II. Other Significant Practices

a) Confession of Jesus Christ	1450
b) Keeping the Sabbath Holy	1453
c) Fasting	1459
d) The Laying on of Hands	1465

I. Symbolic Rites

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are considered by many churches to be the Christian rites or sacraments. "Sacrament" comes from a Latin term meaning "military oath". The sacraments are often spoken of as being an outward sign with an inner significance. They are practiced by churches in worship ceremonies. Circumcision was also a rite practiced by God's people, under the first covenant, but has no such relevance under the second covenant.

a) Baptism

The Greek translated as "baptism" denotes washing in water. Opinions differ as to whether baptism need necessarily involve full immersion in water, as opposed to simply pouring or sprinkling water on the person being baptized.

Subsections

- God's people are baptized in the "name" of Jesus Christ
- Baptism into Jesus Christ signifies being united with him – with the corresponding implications
- Baptism signifies belief
- Baptism signifies the washing away of sins
- Baptism signifies or is linked with receiving the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . Receiving the Holy Spirit is sometimes spoken of as being "baptized" with the Holy Spirit
- Further notes on baptism
- Note: John the Baptist's baptism, for repentance

God's people are baptized in the "name" of Jesus Christ

See also:

- Gal 3:27 ↴; Rom 6:2-5 ↴
- d) *Jesus Christ's 'Name'*, p. 106

Being baptized in – or into (cf. Gal 3:27 ↴; Rom 6:3 ↴) – the "name" of Jesus Christ, is in part a declaration of our identification and relationship with Jesus Christ, and their commitment or allegiance to him. This explanation reflects both the meaning of the Latin from which "sacrament" comes

(i.e. military oath) and the concept of being united with him (discussed in the following subsection).

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and *be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ* for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 📖

Acts 8:14-16 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*. 📖

Note that an explanation as to why these Gentiles did not receive the Holy Spirit until some time after their apparent conversion is offered in *Examples of people receiving the Holy Spirit*, p. 835.

Acts 10:47-48 "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸And he commanded *them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*. Then they asked him to remain for some days. 📖

Acts 19:5 On hearing this, *they were baptized in^a the name of the Lord Jesus*. 📖

^a Or into

1Cor 1:13-15 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or *were you baptized in the name of Paul?* ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that *no one may say that you were baptized in my name*. 📖

In pointing out to the Corinthians that they were not baptized into his name, Paul alludes to baptism involving one being baptized into the name of Jesus Christ.

✚ **Jesus said to baptize people "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit":**

Matt 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing them in^b the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. 📖

^b Or into

In view of the oneness of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, baptizing people in the name of Jesus Christ is effectively the same as what Jesus speaks of here.



Baptism into Jesus Christ signifies being united with him – with the corresponding implications

See also:

- *b) The Significance of Being 'in' Jesus Christ*, p. 781

Rom 6:2-5 By no means! *How can we who died to sin still live in it?* ³Do you not know that *all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* ⁵*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.* 📖

Being “baptized into Christ” (v. 3) signifies the spiritual union of the believer with Christ. This being so, Paul draws parallels between baptism and other aspects of this spiritual union. Paul appears to parallel one’s immersion at baptism, with being immersed in death with Christ in his death (vv. 3-4a, 5a). As such, baptism portrays the death of our old self which was enslaved to sin (cf. vv. 6-7), and so a death to sin (v. 2). Subsequently baptism symbolizes one being raised up in union with Christ to live a new spiritual life (vv. 4b, 5b). Colossians 2:11-12 below similarly speaks of baptism as signifying the removal of our old sinful selves (v. 11) and being raised with Christ (v. 12).

Col 2:11-12 *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* 📖

Gal 3:27 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* 📖

The expression “baptized into Christ” (v. 27; cf. **Rom 6:3** ↑) appears to have a similar sense as being baptized into the “name” of Christ, as per the previous subsection. But not all commentators would agree that here (and in Romans 6:2-5 below) the expression is referring to water baptism. Assuming that it does, the verse is not teaching that water baptism itself brings us “into Christ”. Rather it is quite possibly speaking of baptism signifying this; i.e. that baptism signifies being united with Christ – “clothed” (GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NRSV) with or “placed” into him in a spiritual sense. Alternatively, “put on Christ” could instead refer to being “made like him” (NLT). The suggestion may then be that baptism signifies one being made like Christ.

✦ In the Holy Spirit believers are “baptized” into the body of Christ:

1Cor 12:12-13 For just as the body is one and has many members, and *all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.* ¹³*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body*—Jews or Greeks, slaves^c or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 📖

^c Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

In receiving the Holy Spirit (v. 13b), believers are in a spiritual sense “baptized” by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ – which involves being united spiritually with Jesus Christ (and other believers) as members of his body. While this does not refer to water baptism, it is understood to be signified by water baptism. (For further comment see . . . *Receiving the Holy Spirit is sometimes spoken of as being “baptized” with the Holy Spirit*, p. 1441.)

Baptism signifies belief

Baptism is a declaration and confirmation of belief.

Mark 16:16 *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.* 📖

This appears to closely link belief and baptism, suggesting that the latter signifies the former – as do the following verses.

Acts 2:41 *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.* 📖

Acts 8:12-13a *But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.* ¹³*Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip.* 📖

Acts 8:35-38 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture *he told him the good news about Jesus.* ³⁶*And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?”^d* ³⁸*And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.* 📖

^d Some manuscripts add all or most of verse 37: *And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

This passage correlates baptism with belief – and even more so if the text in the text note is accepted. Note that the text in the text note is included by some translations as v. 37.



Acts 16:14-15 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. *The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.* ¹⁵And after *she was baptized*, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

Acts 16:31-34 And they said, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus*, and you will be saved, you and your household.” ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and *he was baptized at once*, he and all his family. ³⁴Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that *he had believed in God*.

Acts 18:8b And *many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized*.

Acts 19:4-5 And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to *believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus*.” ⁵*On hearing this, they were baptized in^e the name of the Lord Jesus*.

^e Or *into*

Paul’s hearers had believed (cf. vv. 1-2).

Baptism signifies the washing away of sins

Baptism, the external washing in water, symbolizes one being internally (or spiritually) washed and cleansed of one’s sins.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In speaking of baptism along with repentance (from sin) and forgiveness of sins, this at least reflects the assertion that baptism signifies the washing away of sins.

Acts 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and *be baptized and wash away your sins*, calling on his name.

This should not be interpreted to mean that baptism in itself brings the forgiveness of sin. As noted above, the external washing in water is symbolic of one’s spiritual cleansing.

1Cor 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous^f will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^g ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the

kingdom of God. ¹¹*And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

^f Or *wrongdoers*

^g The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

Possibly “washed” alludes to baptism and so would here be pointing to baptism signifying cleansing, with the accompanying forgiveness of sin. Although forgiveness of sin is not specifically mentioned, it is certainly in view with Paul speaking of the formerly ungodly Corinthians (vv. 9-11a) as now being “sanctified” and “justified” (v. 11b).

Titus 3:5 ... he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by *the washing of regeneration* and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ...

Some consider “washing” here to allude to water baptism, but this is not necessarily the case (cf. CEV, GNT). If it is alluding to water baptism, it would be as that which symbolizes the divinely effected “washing” or cleansing from sin that occurs when one is spiritually reborn, having died to one’s former sinful ways. Such washing points to the removal of and forgiveness of sin.

Heb 10:22 ... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and *our bodies washed with pure water*.

The clause “our bodies washed with pure water” may be a reference to baptism as signifying being cleansed from sin – hence the verse’s inclusion here. However, more often it is seen simply as a reference to being cleansed by Jesus’ sacrifice (cf. v. 19). As with the earlier phrase “hearts sprinkled clean”, the expression appears to draw a parallel with the washing of the priests under the old covenant (cf. v. 21) – and so not necessarily a reference to baptism.

1Pet 3:20-21 ... because^h they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹*Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience*, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ...

^h Or *when*

Baptism is not simply about the removal of dirt from the body, but its washing in water has a deeper meaning, signifying the removal of sin from one’s inner self. In keeping with this, by being baptized one effectively makes “an appeal to God for a good conscience”. In subsequently living accordingly, we are saved by Christ’s resurrection – the



significance of which, baptism is in a sense an acknowledgement.

Baptism signifies or is linked with receiving the Holy Spirit . . .

See also:

- [Titus 3:5](#) ↑

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and *be baptized every one of you* in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, *and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*”

Acts 10:47 “Can anyone withhold *water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit* just as we have?”

Acts 9:17-18 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and *be filled with the Holy Spirit.*”¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. *Then he rose and was baptized;* ...

Acts 19:1-6 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland¹ country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples.²And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”³And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.”⁴And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.”⁵On hearing this, *they were baptized inⁱ the name of the Lord Jesus.*⁶*And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them,* and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

ⁱ Greek *upper* (that is, highland)

^j Or *into*

This correlates baptism with receiving the Holy Spirit. But it is not necessarily indicating that these disciples (v. 1) had not received the Holy Spirit because they had not been baptized into the name of Jesus. A number of commentators think that these disciples were disciples of John the Baptist (cf. v. 3) and had only a limited understanding of the gospel. Verses 4b-5 may well mean that it was only at this point that Jesus became the focus of their faith – which would explain why they received the Holy Spirit here rather than beforehand.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*”

There are a number of interpretations as to what “water” refers to, one of which is water baptism. Being “born of... the Spirit” probably refers to receiving the Holy Spirit. As such – if John the Baptist’s baptism for repentance is not primarily in view – the verse would associate baptism with receiving the Holy Spirit. Other possibilities as to what “water” denotes are: spiritual cleansing; physical birth; an allusion to the role of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 7:37-39); and God’s word (cf. Eph 5:26; 1Pet 1:23).

. . . Receiving the Holy Spirit is sometimes spoken of as being “baptized” with the Holy Spirit

The receiving of the Holy Spirit is on occasions referred to as being baptized with the Holy Spirit. This reflects the link between baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit, spoken of in the previous subsection.

Matt 3:11 I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

Note that “fire” may well be referring to Jesus Christ’s judgment on the wicked – particularly in light of the reference in v. 12 to him burning up “the chaff ... with unquenchable fire.” However some see it as referring to the purification associated with the aforementioned baptism with the Holy Spirit. Possibly the “tongues of fire” that came with the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:3-4) could also or instead be in view.

Acts 1:5, 8 ... for John baptized with water, but *you will be baptized with^k the Holy Spirit* not many days from now.”
...⁸But you will receive power *when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,* and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

^k Or *in*

The fulfillment of the prophecy that the apostles would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (v. 5) occurs in the subsequent chapter: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (2:4)

Acts 11:15-16 As I began to speak, *the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.*¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but *you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*’



1Cor 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves¹ or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 

¹ Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

The segment “in one Spirit we were all baptized” refers to the cleansing and renewal effected by the Holy Spirit in new believers. It is akin to phrases such as “baptized with the Holy Spirit”. The final clause clearly speaks of believers receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. NLT).

✦ **The Holy Spirit alighted on Jesus immediately following his baptism:**

Matt 3:13-17 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,^m and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son,ⁿ with whom I am well pleased.” 

^m Some manuscripts omit to *him*

ⁿ Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

This passage – and passages in this and the previous subsection – should not be interpreted to mean that people only receive the Holy Spirit on being baptized. For Jesus’ baptism was at least partially to signify him being set apart for God’s work – and his anointment with the Holy Spirit was probably more to do with the commencement of his ministry than his actual baptism. Furthermore John’s baptism had a different emphasis to the baptism practiced by the early church and today. Moreover, in some of the passages in this and the preceding subsection, the receiving of the Holy Spirit occurs before baptism, clearly not as a result of it.

Note that the clause “to fulfill all righteousness” (v. 15) probably means something like “to fulfill God’s will”, with God’s will in regard to Jesus’ mission being primarily in view. As to why Jesus being baptized was God’s will, a number of explanations have been given. In addition to it signifying Jesus being set apart for God’s work, possibly by it Jesus was identifying himself either with sinners or with the new or renewed people of God (cf. NBC), i.e. those who had been turning to God in repentance through John’s ministry.

Further notes on baptism

1Cor 1:16-17 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For *Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel*, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. 

The priority which Paul gives to the gospel reflects the fact that salvation comes through the gospel not baptism itself, the latter simply signifying a positive response to the former.

1Cor 15:29 Otherwise, what do people mean by *being baptized on behalf of the dead*? *If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf*? 

Here Paul refers to people being baptized on behalf of dead people to validate his argument for the resurrection, without approving or disapproving of this obscure practice. Note that he only refers to other people doing this, not himself or his co-workers.

Eph 4:4-5 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*, ... 

There is only one rite of baptism for God’s people – a once and for all baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.

Note: John the Baptist’s baptism, for repentance

John’s baptism had a different emphasis and significance to the water baptism practiced later by the early Church and in the Church today, which has aspects of the gospel in view that had not been revealed at the commencement of John’s ministry. John baptized people primarily for repentance. John’s baptism was also an integral part of his ministry in revealing Jesus Christ (cf. [Matt 3:11 ↓](#); [Acts 19:4 ↓](#); [John 1:31 ↓](#)).

Matt 3:11 *I baptize you with water for repentance*, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 

John’s words suggest that his water baptism would be superseded by the baptism done by the Christ.

Mark 1:4-5 *John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.* ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and *were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.* 

Note that v. 4 speaks of repentance for the forgiveness of sins – which was also a common theme of the OT prophets.



Acts 13:24 *Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.* 

Acts 19:4 And Paul said, “*John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.*” 

John’s baptism was to demonstrate a person’s commitment to repent (cf. NLT) – to turn away from their sins and turn to God. John’s ministry, with his baptism of repentance, was preparatory to Jesus Christ’s ministry (cf. **John 1:31** ↓) – with John emphasizing the need to deal with sin and to believe in Jesus Christ (v. 4b), whom would fully realize forgiveness of sins.

Luke 7:29-30 (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, *they declared God just,^o having been baptized with the baptism of John,³⁰ but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.*) 

^o Greek *they justified God*

The people acknowledged the rightness of God’s way for them – which encompassed “calling them to repentance” (AMP); accordingly they were baptized by John. In contrast their religious leaders “rejected the purpose of God for themselves” (v. 30) as they did not submit themselves to being baptized by John and embrace the repentance that it signified.

‡ **John’s baptizing and ministry was preparatory to the emergence of Jesus and his ministry:**

John 1:31-33 I myself did not know him, but *for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.*³² *And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.* ³³*I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’* 

In vv. 32-33 John effectively bears witness to Jesus being the awaited Christ, in conjunction with his purpose of revealing Jesus (v. 31). Note that v. 33 refers to God sending John to baptize.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s Supper is regularly practiced in churches. It primarily symbolizes and commemorates Jesus Christ’s death for us. The breaking of the bread symbolizes the breaking of his body, and the pouring out of the wine symbolizes the pouring out of his blood. Eating of the bread and drinking of the wine is in part a declaration of our own belief in Christ’s death and its implications – and correspondingly signifies our participation in the forgiveness and other outcomes that it made possible.

Subsections

- **Observe the Lord’s Supper – in remembrance of Jesus Christ and his death**
- **Participating in the Lord’s Supper also symbolizes participating in the blood and body of Jesus Christ**
- **Further insights on the Lord’s Supper**
- **Do not participate in the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner**

Observe the Lord’s Supper – in remembrance of Jesus Christ and his death

Matt 26:26-28 Now as they were eating, *Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”* ²⁷*And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the^p covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.* 

^p Some manuscripts insert *new*

Luke 22:19-20 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “*This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.*” ²⁰*And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”* 

^q Some manuscripts omit, in whole or in part, verses 19b-20 (*which is given . . . in my blood*)

“This cup . . . is the new covenant in my blood” (v. 20; cf. **Matt 26:28** †; **1Cor 11:25** ↓) speaks of Jesus Christ’s blood, shed in his death, introducing the new relationship – or covenant – between God and his people. In part at least this was achieved by his death bringing forgiveness for the sins of God’s people. The shedding of his blood inaugurated the new covenant and ratified or sealed it (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NLT) – just as the sprinkling of “the blood of the covenant”



by Moses ceremonially confirmed the old covenant (cf. Ex 24:5-8).

1Cor 11:23-25 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that *the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,* ²⁴*and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for^r you. Do this in remembrance of me."* ²⁵*In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

☞

^r Some manuscripts *broken for*

^s Or *as my memorial*; also verse 25

Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week, when *we were gathered together to break bread*, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ☞

The phrase "break bread" appears to refer to the observance of the Lord's Supper (but not all commentators would agree). As such this would illustrate that the Lord's Supper was practiced in the early church, from which one can infer that it should likewise be practiced in today's church.

✦ **In observing the Lord's Supper we proclaim Jesus' death:**

1Cor 11:26 *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* ☞

This indicates that the purpose of the Lord's Supper is not only to serve as a reminder to ourselves, but also to proclaim Jesus' death (with its implications) to others. By practicing it we are "telling others about the Lord's death" (NCV™; cf. CEV, NLT).

Participating in the Lord's Supper also symbolizes participating in the blood and body of Jesus Christ

Participating in the blood and body of Christ is understood to symbolize one's participation in the redemption brought by Jesus' death. Additionally it appears to point to participating in the church as the body of Christ. Note that one could argue that the references in the preceding subsection to eating the bread as the body of Christ and drinking the wine as the blood of Christ, also allude to participating in the body and blood of Christ.

1Cor 10:16-17 *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.* ☞

The two rhetorical questions in v. 16 appear to imply that drinking from the cup and eating of the bread – in addition to remembering Jesus Christ and his death – symbolize one's participation in what Christ's death accomplished, i.e. forgiveness and thus salvation. However, in view of v. 17, the second rhetorical question may well additionally or alternatively mean that eating from the one loaf of bread symbolizes one being part of and participating in Christ's body, the church.

1Cor 11:27, 29 *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.* ☞ ... ²⁹*For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.* ☞

The phrases "the body and blood of the Lord" (v. 27) and "the body" (v. 29) probably refer to Jesus' sacrifice of himself – along with what this accomplished – but some would contend that his body the church is also or alternatively in view (as per 10:16-17 above and the comment there). To participate in the Lord's Supper is to symbolically and spiritually participate in these things, and one must take part appropriately in recognition of this – as is emphasized below in *Do not participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner*.

✦ **The need to "feed" on Christ for everlasting life:**

John 6:33, 35, 47-58 *For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.* ☞ ... ³⁵*Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.* ☞ ... ⁴⁷*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.* ⁴⁸*I am the bread of life.* ⁴⁹*Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* ⁵⁰*This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.* ⁵¹*I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*" ⁵²*The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"* ⁵³*So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* ⁵⁴*Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* ⁵⁵*For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.* ⁵⁶*Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.* ⁵⁷*As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.* ⁵⁸*This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread^t the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."* ☞

^t Greek lacks *the bread*



Here Jesus speaks of himself as the source of everlasting, spiritual life – whom all need to partake of in order to obtain this life. (For further comment, see *Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life as opposed to death*, p. 614.) Some see in this passage a link with the Lord's Supper. As such they see participation in the Lord's Supper as indicative of the truth that we need to "feed" on Christ for life.

Further insights on the Lord's Supper

Matt 26:29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until *that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*. 

It can be inferred from this that celebrating the Lord's Supper (cf. vv. 26-28) also looks forward to communing anew with Christ in the consummated kingdom.

Acts 2:42 And *they devoted themselves* to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, *to the breaking of bread* and the prayers. 

This verse and 1 Corinthians 11:26 (immediately below) suggest that the Lord's Supper should be practiced regularly. Note that Acts 20:7a – above in *Observe the Lord's Supper – in remembrance of Jesus Christ and his death* – raises the possibility that the early church regularly did this on Sundays.

1Cor 11:26 For *as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup*, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 

1Cor 5:7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For *Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*. 

Paul is drawing a parallel here between the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (with the resultant salvation) and the sacrificial lamb of the Passover meal (which signified the deliverance/salvation from Egypt). Particularly in light of this parallel, by instituting the observance of "the Lord's Supper" at a Passover meal (cf. Matt 26:17-19, 26-28), Jesus himself may have been intimating a parallel between it and the Jewish Passover meal. As such, observing the Lord's Supper similarly celebrates and signifies God's salvation – but a greater, ultimate salvation effected through Jesus Christ.

Do not participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner

1Cor 11:20-22 *When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat*. ²¹*For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk*. ²²*What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise*

the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. 

Early churches often ate a celebratory meal – later known as the Agape (or Love) Feast – prior to and in conjunction with observing the Lord's Supper. The practice was open to abuse as was the case with the Corinthians, with rich people bringing and selfishly consuming much while others went hungry.

1Cor 11:27-34a *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord*. ²⁸*Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup*. ²⁹*For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself*. ³⁰*That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died*.^u ³¹*But if we judged^v ourselves truly, we would not be judged*. ³²*But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined^w so that we may not be condemned along with the world*. ³³*So then, my brothers,^x when you come together to eat, wait for^y one another—³⁴if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment*. 

^u Greek *have fallen asleep* (as in 15:6, 20)

^v Or *discerned*

^w Or *when we are judged we are being disciplined by the Lord*

^x Or *brothers and sisters*

^y Or *share with*

The instruction to "examine" oneself before participating in the Lord's Supper (v. 28) is effectively reiterated in the reference in v. 31 to judging ourselves. It refers primarily to examining the manner in which one is approaching the Lord's Supper (v. 28), so as to not do so in a flippant, unworthy manner (vv. 21, 27), not bearing in mind its significance (v. 29). Paul may also have in view the need – in preparing to participate – to examine the right state of ourselves before God, examining our hearts for unconfessed sin.

‡ **One cannot participate in pagan feasts as well as the Lord's Supper:**

1Cor 10:18-22 Consider the people of Israel:^z *are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?* ¹⁹*What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?* ²⁰*No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons*. ²¹*You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons*. ²²*Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?* 



^z Greek *Consider Israel according to the flesh*

Sacrifices are an act of worship of the one to whom they are made. In v. 18 Paul refers to some kinds of OT sacrifices where those who brought the sacrifices also ate of the sacrifices. This signified participation in the worship of God, as the one to whom the sacrifices were made. In the same way, by eating and so participating in pagan feasts involving sacrifices to idols, which are in fact made to demons, one takes part in the worship of demons. This is clearly incompatible with participation in the Lord's Supper.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Circumcision: Its Needlessness

Circumcision of males is the cutting off of the foreskin. Jewish males undergo circumcision in keeping with both God's covenant with Abraham (their ancestor), and God's covenant and law for Israel, i.e. the Mosaic Law.

In regard to God's covenant and law for Israel, being circumcised signifies one's adherence to the law – on which the covenant was based – as the way to righteousness. This is in contrast to and at odds with the way of faith in Jesus Christ, which God introduced in conjunction with the new covenant.

Subsections

- Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham – and included in the Mosaic Law
- Circumcision does not bring salvation
- For believers, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any consequence
- It is our hearts that must be circumcised – as is ultimately accomplished by God
- Denunciation of people advocating circumcision

Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham – and included in the Mosaic Law

Gen 17:7-14 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you

and to your offspring after you. ⁸And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." ⁹And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰*This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.* ¹¹*You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.* ¹²*He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring,* ¹³*both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant.* ¹⁴*Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."* 

Acts 7:8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs. 

Lev 12:1-3 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. ³And *on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.*" 

John 7:22-23 *Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.* ²³*If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?* 

† **Jesus was circumcised:**

Luke 2:21 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 

Note that earlier (cf. 1:59) Luke also tells of John the Baptist being circumcised.

Circumcision does not bring salvation

The following passages show that circumcision does not bring salvation nor various aspects of salvation, in particular:



justification (Rom 3:29-30); righteousness (Rom 4:9-12); and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45).

Acts 15:1-2, 5-11 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. ¶ ...⁵ But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."⁶ The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.⁷ And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.⁸ And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us,⁹ and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." ¶

Peter's argument in vv. 7-11 is basically as follows. God had shown that he saved Gentiles, despite the fact that they were not circumcised (vv. 7-9). So therefore the Jewish believers should not insist that the Gentiles be circumcised and so impose on them the "yoke" of the law as the means to salvation, which had proved futile for the Jews (v. 10). For it is by grace that all are saved – not by the law (v. 11), which circumcision signifies adherence to. Note Galatians 2:1-3 also tells of the apostles in Jerusalem not insisting on circumcision for non-Jewish believers, with Paul recalling in v. 3: "But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek."

Rom 3:29-30 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ¶

God justifies people by faith – quite apart from whether or not they are circumcised.

Rom 4:5-12 And to the one who does not work but believes in^a him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:⁷ "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;⁸ blessed is the man against whom the

Lord will not count his sin."⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness.¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised.¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well,¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. ¶

^a Or *but trusts*; compare verse 24

Having been credited by faith as righteous before he was circumcised (vv. 9-11a), Abraham is the "spiritual father" (NLT) or predecessor of all who by faith are credited as righteous – forgiven of their sins (vv. 7-8) – irrespective of whether or not they have been circumcised (vv. 11b-12).

Acts 10:45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ¶

This verse illustrates that receiving the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with being circumcised. Otherwise, as is implied, such Gentile believers – who would not have been circumcised – would not have received the Holy Spirit.

✦ **The way of circumcision is in fact contrary to that of Christ and grace:**

Gal 5:1-4, 11 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^b by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ¶ ...¹¹ But if I, brothers,^c still preach^d circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¶

^b Or *counted righteous*

^c Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 13

^d Greek *proclaim*

In v. 1, "do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" refers to obeying the law as a means of obtaining justification. Being circumcised would signify that one had contracted to do this. Paul strongly exhorts the Galatians not to be circumcised, as it would obligate them to obey the whole law to be justified – a position incompatible with salvation through grace, meaning Christ's work would be of no value to them (vv. 2,



4). In v. 11 Paul further highlights the incompatibility of the way of circumcision and that of Christ's death – the latter being offensive to those advocating circumcision, which had led them to persecute Paul.

For believers, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any consequence

1Cor 7:18-19 *Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision.* ¹⁹For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. 

Note that this and the following verses from Galatians underline circumcision's lack of importance by concluding with a reference to an aspect of the faith that in contrast really "counts".

Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. 

Gal 6:15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. 

Col 3:11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave,^e free; but Christ is all, and in all. 

^e Greek *bondservant*

In the new life in Christ, distinctions that were previously considered significant – such as that between circumcised and uncircumcised – are no longer important.

† Circumcision is only of any value if you observe the law:

Rom 2:25-27 *For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.* ²⁶So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded^f as circumcision? ²⁷Then *he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code^g and circumcision but break the law.* 

^f Or *counted*

^g Or *the letter*

Circumcision symbolizes adherence to the law. Apart from observing the law, the symbol alone is useless. One can infer from this that circumcision in itself is of no value. This is because all people break the law and so therefore those who are circumcised become as though they have not been circumcised (v. 25). Furthermore, if any uncircumcised people

were able to keep the law's requirements, they would be regarded as though they were circumcised (v. 26) – in a sense giving them the right to condemn any circumcised person who failed to keep the law and so failed to live up to their implied standing (v. 27).

It is our hearts that must be circumcised – as is ultimately accomplished by God

Circumcision of the heart involves changing to become responsive to God. It involves "cutting off" the rigidity of sin from a person's heart.

Deut 10:16 *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.* 

Jer 4:4 *Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.* 

"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD" may mean much the same as "remove the foreskin of your hearts" – i.e. "Cleanse your minds and hearts before the Lord" (NLT). Alternatively it could be referring to the people dedicating themselves to the LORD (cf. GNT, NCV), in conjunction with such cleansing.

Jer 9:25-26 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will punish all those who are circumcised merely in the flesh— ²⁶Egypt, Judah, Edom, the sons of Ammon, Moab, and all who dwell in the desert who cut the corners of their hair, for all these nations are uncircumcised, and *all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.*" 

Deut 30:6 *And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.* 

Note that this and the following verses point to the fact that our hearts are circumcised ultimately by God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Col 2:11-12 *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* 

This speaks of the circumcision of cutting off one's sinful nature (v. 11; cf. NLT) – which is essentially the same as circumcision of the heart.



Rom 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, *nor is circumcision outward and physical.* ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and *circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.* His praise is not from man but from God. 📖

‡ **Aspects of true, inner circumcision:**

Phil 3:3 For *we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God^h and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh*— 📖

^h Some manuscripts *God in spirit*

True, inner, spiritual circumcision involves such things as worshiping by the Holy Spirit and exulting in Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished for us. It also involves not putting any confidence in external circumcision, to gain any righteousness of our own making through the law (cf. v. 9).

Denunciation of people advocating circumcision

Acts 15:5, 10 But some *believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."* 📖 ... [Peter:] ¹⁰Now, therefore, *why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?* 📖

Gal 5:11-12 But if I, brothers,ⁱ still preach^j circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹²*I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!* 📖

ⁱ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 13

^j Greek *proclaim*

Gal 6:12-13 *It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.* ¹³For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but *they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.* 📖

Advocating circumcision helped those whom Paul is denouncing here to avoid persecution from the Jews (cf. **Gal 5:11** †) for maintaining that Jesus' death alone provided the means for salvation (v. 12). Having the Galatians circumcised would also boost their standing before the Jews (v. 13b). Additionally, Paul may have in view in the final clause that it would also provide them with their own followers amongst the Galatians (cf. NLT).

Phil 3:2 *Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.* 📖

Titus 1:10-11 *For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.* ¹¹*They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Other Significant Practices

It is important for each Christian to understand all significant church practices. The practice of confessing Jesus Christ is one such practice that we need to understand – and be prepared to do. The weekly Sabbath is to some extent ignored by a lot of Christians, many seeing it as not relevant in the new covenant – but many evangelical theologians would “beg to differ”. Reasons both for and against observing it are included in this section. Fasting, when undertaken with a godly focus, is a significant practice that is a very valuable supplement to such things as prayer and worship. The laying on of hands is a further common practice, and so we should also be familiar with its significance and use in the Bible.

a) Confession of Jesus Christ

The NT speaks of confessing or acknowledging Jesus Christ. Usually it is implicit or suggested – as the word “confess” implies – that this is done in the presence of others. Confessing Jesus Christ is an expression of allegiance to him, as Lord, and involves stating what one believes about him. It is often done formally at one’s baptism and corporately in church with the recital of creeds or “confessions”. In addition, many Christians will experience times in which they should acknowledge Jesus Christ and their faith in him before unbelievers – often at the cost or risk of being persecuted. Such a situation is in view in a number of the verses in this section.

Subsections

- Confess Jesus Christ, before others
- Things to confess (or acknowledge) about Jesus Christ
- Examples of people making confessions about Jesus Christ
- Outcomes of confessing Jesus Christ
- Note: If we deny Jesus Christ, he will deny us

Confess Jesus Christ, before others

Luke 12:8 And I tell you, everyone who *acknowledges me before men*, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, ...

Note that where it occurs in verses throughout this section, the Greek translated in the ESV as “acknowledge” or “acknowledges” is at times translated as “confess” or “confesses” in other Bible translations – as is the case with this verse (cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV).

1Tim 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which *you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

This most likely is referring to the occasion of Timothy’s baptism, when he would have confessed his belief in Jesus Christ before numerous witnesses.

2Tim 2:19 But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who *names the name of the Lord* depart from iniquity.”

The expression “names the name of the Lord” may well be referring to confessing the name of the Lord (cf. NIV), hence the verse’s inclusion here. The “firm foundation” most likely refers to either God’s truth or the church. Despite the efforts of the false teachers (cf. vv. 16-18), God’s solid foundation stands firm. The foundation is sealed with two complementary facets of the faith, referred to by the two quotations. The first points to God’s firm hold on those who are his. The second speaks of naming or confessing Jesus Christ as a key aspect of what identifies and affirms a person as truly being one of God’s people.

Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers,^a you who share in a heavenly calling, consider *Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession*, ...

^a Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

Heb 13:15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *lips that acknowledge his name.*

Note that here the phrase “acknowledge his name” could be referring to confessing God’s name instead of Jesus Christ’s name.

‡ **Confessing Jesus Christ can be costly:**

John 12:42 Nevertheless, *many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue*; ...

Here “confess it” has in view the fact that those referred to “believed in him”, Jesus Christ. As such this illustrates that confessing Jesus Christ involves confessing that one believes in him. Note that the penalty of being expelled from the



synagogue is also mentioned in John 9:22 in the following sub-section.

Things to confess (or acknowledge) about Jesus Christ

See also:

- [John 12:42](#) ↑

John 9:22 (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should *confess Jesus^b to be Christ*, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) 📖

^b Greek *him*

1Cor 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “*Jesus is Lord*” except in the Holy Spirit. 📖

Believers confess (cf. GNT) or acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord (cf. [Phil 2:9-11](#) ↓), enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit (cf. [1Jn 4:2-3a](#) ↓).

Phil 2:9-11 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue *confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father. 📖

1Jn 4:2-3a By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that *confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh* is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. 📖

Believers confess that Jesus Christ came “in the flesh”, i.e. as a human being. (Note that 2 John 7 similarly refers to people “who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh”.) Regarding the use of “spirit”, here it refers to the spirit influencing a person to either acknowledge Jesus Christ and his humanity or not – indicative of whether the “spirit” is the Holy Spirit or an evil one.

1Jn 4:15 Whoever *confesses that Jesus is the Son of God*, God abides in him, and he in God. 📖

Note that John appears to be saying that confessing that Jesus is the Son of God is evidence of one’s existing intimate relationship with God.

2Cor 9:13 By their approval of this service, they^c will glorify God because of your submission flowing from *your confession of the gospel of Christ*, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ... 📖

^c Or *you*

This suggests that believers confess or acknowledge as true what the gospel message teaches about Jesus Christ – in effect all that the NT states about him.

✚ **An early Christian creed, confessing key truths about Jesus Christ:**

1Tim 3:16 *Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He^d was manifested in the flesh, vindicated^e by the Spirit,^f seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.* 📖

^d Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^e Or *justified*

^f Or *vindicated in spirit*

The phrase “vindicated by the Spirit” seems to be referring to the Holy Spirit empowering Jesus to perform miracles and in particular to the Spirit’s role in his resurrection – thus vindicating Jesus and his claims. The reference to Jesus Christ being “seen by angels” most likely refers to their witness to his earthly mission, primarily to his resurrection and ascension.

Examples of people making confessions about Jesus Christ

Matt 14:33 *And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”* 📖

Matt 16:16 *Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* 📖

John 1:49 *Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”* 📖

The term “the King of Israel” – as with “the Holy One of God” ([John 6:69](#) ↓) – is a title of the Christ or Messiah.

John 6:69 ... and *we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.* 📖

John 11:27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord; *I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.*” 📖

John 20:28 *Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”* 📖

Thomas appears to confess Jesus not just as being Lord generally, but as being his Lord on a personal level. Strikingly Thomas also confesses Jesus as being his God.



† Jesus made a confession about himself before Pilate:

1Tim 6:13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of *Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession*, ... 

‡ Or in the time of

John records Jesus' conversation with Pilate (cf. John 18:33-37) in which Jesus affirmed that he was a king – a reference to being the Messiah. Paul may have John's account in view here. Note that a number of times elsewhere in the gospels Jesus makes statements about himself that are in effect confessions.

Outcomes of confessing Jesus Christ

Matt 10:32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ... 

Jesus Christ's acknowledgment before God and God's angels (cf. **Luke 12:8** ↓) of those who acknowledge him, presumably involves him acknowledging or declaring at the final judgment that they belong to him and so are to be accepted into God's kingdom.

Luke 12:8 And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, ... 

Rom 10:8b-10 "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 

One will be saved if one confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord and believes that God raised him to life (v. 9). Presumably the latter has in view also believing the implications of Jesus Christ's resurrection for our salvation. Note that a literal interpretation of these verses, which a number of commentators do take, would mean that one has to make such a verbal confession to be saved. Another view is that Paul is drawing on the "mouth"/"heart" terminology in the quotation from Deuteronomy 30:14 (v. 8b) to emphasize the need for genuine belief in Christ.

1Jn 2:23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 

Whoever confesses the Son – here in particular that he is the Christ (cf. v. 22) – is in a right relationship with the Father also. As with a number of other verses throughout this section, this verse is not necessarily talking about public denial or

acknowledgment, but what it says is applicable to both public and personal domains.

Note: If we deny Jesus Christ, he will deny us

Although the gravity of the following warnings should not be diluted, the verses should not be interpreted to mean that a single act of denial will necessarily result in Jesus Christ disowning a person. This is illustrated in Peter's experience. Despite his disowning Jesus three times (cf. **Matt 26:33-35**; **Matt 26:69-75** ↓), Jesus did reinstate him – although in a way which appears to have underlined the seriousness of what Peter had done (cf. **John 21:15-17**). Also note that Peter showed great remorse and is understood to have in fact later lost his life as a result of his stand for Christ, in contrast to his earlier disowning of him.

Matt 10:33 ... but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. 

2Tim 2:12 ... if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; ... 

This appears to be echoing Jesus' warning above in **Matthew 10:33**, but some commentators see it as referring to apostasy – abandoning Jesus Christ and faith in him altogether.

Mark 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. 

Being "ashamed" of Jesus – usually prompted by a real or perceived threat – encompasses failure to confess him and the more acute act of actually disowning him (cf. **2Tim 2:12** ↑). Likewise when Jesus Christ returns he will not acknowledge and will disown those who have been "ashamed" of him.

† Peter's disowning of Jesus (and subsequent remorse):

Matt 26:69-75 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." ⁷⁰But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." ⁷¹And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." ⁷²And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man." ⁷³After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." ⁷⁴Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. ⁷⁵And Peter remembered the



saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly. 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Keeping the Sabbath Holy

“Sabbath” means “to cease”. Thus to observe or keep the Sabbath day we cease from work and rest. In conjunction with this, rather than engaging in our usual activities we dedicate the day to God. As such we keep the Sabbath day holy, set apart from the other days as sacred to God.

In following God’s example by resting on the Sabbath day, people imitate and associate themselves with God, even fellowship with him. In line with this, for Israel observing the Sabbath was a sign of being God’s people. The necessity for Christians to likewise observe it has been the subject of debate.

Subsections

- On finishing creation, God rested on the seventh day – and made it holy
- Observe the Sabbath as holy by resting on it
- Observance of the Sabbath was given as a sign between God and his people Israel
- Further reasons for keeping the Sabbath holy
- It is permissible to do good and necessary things on the Sabbath
- On the Sabbath God’s people assemble for worship . . .
- . . . During Sabbath worship there is teaching, with reading of Scripture
- Blessings for keeping the Sabbath holy – and judgments for not
- Verses alleged to indicate that Christians do not need to keep the Sabbath
- Note: Early Christians met together on the first day of the week

On finishing creation, God rested on the seventh day – and made it holy

God rested on the seventh day not because of any tiredness, but due to the finish of his creative work – reflecting his satisfaction that it was complete and excellent (cf. Gen 1:31). God made the seventh day holy by ordaining it to be a day of rest, in recognition of his rest from his creative work (and perhaps also of his completion of it).

Gen 2:2-3 *And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.* 📖

Ex 20:8-11 *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.* 📖

Ex 31:15a, 17 *Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. 📖 ... ¹⁷It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.* 📖

Imitating God by resting on the seventh day would be a sign that the Israelites were God’s people (v. 17), associating them with him.

Heb 4:3-4 *For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest,” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.”* 📖

Observe the Sabbath as holy by resting on it

See also:

- *On finishing creation, God rested on the seventh day – and made it holy*, p. 1453

Deut 5:12-14 *Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labor and*



do all your work,¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 

Ex 31:14-15 You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.¹⁵ Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. 

Under the new covenant Christians do not advocate putting to death one who works on the Sabbath. Nevertheless the command (cf. [Ex 35:2 ↓](#)) serves to illustrate the gravity of working on the Sabbath.

Ex 34:21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. 

Even during the busiest times one is to rest on the Sabbath.

Ex 35:2 Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. 

Neh 9:14 ... and you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant. 

In this reference to God's commands (cf. v. 13) arguably the importance of the Sabbath is underlined by it being the only command specifically mentioned (cf. [Isa 56:1-2](#); [Ezek 20:13](#)). Note also Exodus 31:13 in the following subsection, which says: "Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths ..."

Neh 10:31a And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. 

Purchasing is a form of work; it certainly is a participation in the work of others, encouraging them to do their work. Note that later Nehemiah similarly condemns selling goods on the Sabbath: "In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food." (13:15; cf. 13:16-17)

Jer 17:21-22, 24 Thus says the LORD: Take care for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem.²² And do not carry a

burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers.  ...²⁴ "But if you listen to me, declares the LORD, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it, ... 

Luke 23:55-56 The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid.⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. 

✦ Treat the Sabbath as a delight and honorable:

Isa 58:13 If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure^h on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure,ⁱ or talking idly;^j ... 

^h Or business

ⁱ Or pursuing your own business

^j Hebrew or speaking a word

We are to view the Sabbath as a delight and honorable. We honor it accordingly by not using it for our own purposes and pleasure ("not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure") or engaging in matters that are trivial ("talking idly"). Note that "turn back your foot from the Sabbath" refers to not doing activities that would break the command to rest on the Sabbath.

Observance of the Sabbath was given as a sign between God and his people Israel

It is debatable as to what extent Sabbath observance is a sign between God and the new people of God (cf. [Verses alleged to indicate that Christians do not need to keep the Sabbath](#), p. 1458). However some of the points made below in regard to Israel are at least applicable to believers and their relationship with God.

Ex 31:13 You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. 

Setting apart the Sabbath as holy was in part to symbolize that God made his people holy (cf. [Ezek 20:12 ↓](#)). As such the command may have in view the setting apart of the Sabbath day as paralleling God setting apart Israel, from the other nations.



Ezek 20:12 Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. 

Ex 31:16-17 Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed. 

Doing as God had done was to be a sign that the Israelites were of God (v. 17), with them being his people and he being their God (cf. **Ezek 20:20** ↓). Note that these verses are often interpreted to indicate that the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant with Israel at Sinai (cf. GNT, NLT).

Ezek 20:20 ... and keep my Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God. 

✦ **Observance of the Sabbath was a reminder of the Israelite's slavery and God rescuing them from it:**

Deut 5:15 You shall remember that you were a slave^k in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. 

^k Or servant

In contrast to Exodus 20 (cf. **Ex 20:8-11** ↓), in the repeating of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5, the reason given for observing the Sabbath was for it to serve as a reminder of the Israelite's slavery and God's deliverance. Resting on it may have been to mirror the people resting from their harsh work as slaves, as well as to be a time to acknowledge God's redemption – taking them for himself – and so be a sign of the close, unique relationship between God and them as his people.

Further reasons for keeping the Sabbath holy

See also:

- *Blessings for keeping the Sabbath holy – and judgments for not*, p. 1458

Ex 16:21-30 Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted. ²²On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, ²³he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what

you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'" ²⁴So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. ²⁵Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none." ²⁷On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. ²⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? ²⁹See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day." ³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day. 

This is speaking of the Israelites gathering manna, the food God sent them in the desert. The passage shows that keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest was commanded – and practiced – prior to the covenant with Israel being introduced (although one could argue that this was done with the soon to be introduced covenant in view). Along with the fact that God made the Sabbath holy also prior to the old covenant – in fact immediately after creating the world (cf. Gen 2:2-3; Gen 20:11) – this suggests that now opting not to rest on the Sabbath because it was "only" part of the old covenant is not in itself a valid reason. Note that the passage illustrates that God provides what is necessary so that his people do not need to work on the Sabbath (vv. 23-24, 29).

Ex 20:8-11 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. 

Verse 10a is in effect saying that the seventh day is a Sabbath dedicated to God (cf. GNT, NLT), in honor of him (cf. NCV, NIV). Thus one reason we should observe the Sabbath is because it honors God. Verse 1 appears to indicate that the Sabbath is to be observed to commemorate God's rest from his creative work and perhaps also his completion of it. Additionally there is the suggestion that humankind should – even needs to – follow God's example of resting on the Sabbath. Such an assertion seems only logical as they are made in his image (cf. Gen 1:26-27). An associated benefit and reason for keeping the Sabbath is given below in 23:12.



Ex 23:12 Six days you shall do your work, but *on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.* 

This points out that resting on the Sabbath enables people to “be refreshed”.

✦ **The Sabbath was made for the benefit of people:**

Mark 2:27 And he said to them, *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.* 

The assertion that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of people is supported above by: Exodus 16:29a, its wording suggesting that the Sabbath was introduced in part at least as a gift from God – i.e. the gift of a day of rest; and Exodus 23:12, in pointing out that it enables people to “be refreshed”. As such, rather than viewing the Sabbath as restrictive, we should in fact see it as a positive thing – we should “call the Sabbath a delight” (Isa 58:13).

It is permissible to do good and necessary things on the Sabbath

Matt 12:10-13 And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, *“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse him.* ¹¹*He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other.* 

Mark 3:4 And he said to them, *“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?”* But they were silent. 

This verse is from Mark’s parallel account to the above passage from Matthew. Jesus’ rhetorical question indicates that it is indeed lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Note that the phrases “to do harm” and “to kill” may well be referring to the evil plots of Jesus’ opponents that they were hypocritically actively engaging in on this Sabbath (cf. vv. 2, 6). Alternatively, some commentators think Jesus was referring to the option of not healing the man with a shriveled hand when he had the power to do so.

Luke 13:10-17 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹*And there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from*

*your disability.” ¹³And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, “There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.” ¹⁵Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! *Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” ¹⁷As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.* *

John 7:21-24 Jesus answered them, “I did one work, and you all marvel at it. ²²Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³*If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well? ²⁴Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”* 

In v. 21 “marvel” apparently refers to the Jews’ shock that Jesus would perform a “work” of healing in the Sabbath. In v. 23 Jesus appears to be implying that if circumcision which deals with only part of the body was permissible to carry out on the Sabbath, then there is all the more reason to heal the “whole body” on the Sabbath. A slightly different interpretation is that Jesus was drawing a parallel between the wholeness that circumcision signified and the wholeness that was brought by his act of healing, concluding that if one was permissible then both should be.

Mark 2:23-28 *One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” ²⁵And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: ²⁶how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” ²⁷And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”* 

In vv. 25-26 Jesus draws a parallel between what his disciples had done to satisfy their hunger and need for food (cf. Matt 12:1 – “His disciples were hungry”) with what David did when he and his companions were “in need and ... hungry”. Like David the disciples had acted contrary to the letter of the law, but as in David’s case their actions were not inconsistent with



the spirit of the law (cf. NSB). The implication is that it is permissible to do good and necessary things on the Sabbath. In summing up, Jesus affirms that the Sabbath should be used for the good of people (v. 27) – before claiming authority over matters relating to observing the Sabbath (v. 28).

On the Sabbath God's people assemble for worship . . .

See also:

- *Note: Early Christians met together on the first day of the week*, p. 1459

Lev 23:3 Six days shall work be done, but on *the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation*. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places. 

A “convocation” is a large formal assembly. Undoubtedly “a holy convocation” is a reference to corporate worship.

Ezek 46:3 *The people of the land shall bow down at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the new moons.* 

Acts 16:13-14 *And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.* ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. 

On the Sabbath Paul and his companions found a group of women gathered presumably for prayer (v. 13) and other aspects of worship, as is perhaps suggested by Lydia being described as “a worshiper of God” (v. 14a). Note that on joining the women, Paul taught them (vv. 13b-14) – illustrative of the subject of the following subsection.

Acts 20:7 *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread*, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. 

The reference to coming together to “break bread” is probably speaking of celebrating the Lord’s Supper, an aspect of worship. Regarding this being on the first day of the week, see *Note: Early Christians met together on the first day of the week*, p. 1459.

Num 28:9-10 On the Sabbath day, two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering: ¹⁰*this is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.* 

These verses do not mention God’s people assembling for worship, but the additional offerings spoken of do illustrate the increased focus on worship on the Sabbath.

. . . During Sabbath worship there is teaching, with reading of Scripture

See also:

- **Acts 16:13-14** ; **Acts 20:7** 

Luke 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, *he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.* 

Note that synagogues are places of Jewish worship.

Luke 13:10 Now *he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.* 

Acts 13:42, 44 As they went out, *the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath.*  ... ⁴⁴*The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.* 

Acts 18:4 *And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.* 

Acts 17:2 *And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ...* 

Acts 15:21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for *he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.* 

Luke 4:31 And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. *And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, ...* 

Acts 13:27 For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand *the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.* 



Blessings for keeping the Sabbath holy – and judgments for not

Isa 56:1-2, 4-7 Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. ²*Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.*”  ... ⁴For thus says the LORD: “*To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, ⁵I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.*” ⁶“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, *everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— ⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.*” 

Note that the blessings promised were due not just to keeping the Sabbath, but also for being faithful to God in other matters. Other such matters are possibly likewise in view in the promises in Isaiah 58:13-14 and Ezekiel 20:13 below.

Isa 58:13-14 “*If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure^l on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure,^m or talking idly,ⁿ ¹⁴then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;^o I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*” 

^l Or *business*

^m Or *pursuing your own business*

ⁿ Hebrew *or speaking a word*

^o Or *of the land*

In v. 14, “ride on the heights of the earth” may be speaking of the people’s dominion over their land (cf. Nlrv), in conjunction with the subsequently mentioned feeding on the produce of the land, their inheritance. Alternatively it may allude to being held in honor amongst the other nations (cf. GNT, NLT).

Jer 17:24-27 “*But if you listen to me, declares the LORD, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it, ²⁵then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings and princes who*

sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And this city shall be inhabited forever. ²⁶And people shall come from the cities of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the Shephelah, from the hill country, and from the Negeb, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the LORD. ²⁷But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.” 

Verse 25 speaks of Israel being independent – strong and not subject to other nations – led by kings who are appropriately from David’s line.

Ezek 20:13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and *my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. “Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them.*” 

Neh 13:16-18 Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself! ¹⁷Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, “*What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day?*” ¹⁸*Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster^p on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.*” 

^p The Hebrew word can mean *evil, harm, or disaster*, depending on the context

Verses alleged to indicate that Christians do not need to keep the Sabbath

Col 2:16-17 Therefore *let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.* 

With it being mentioned specifically in association with other aspects of the old covenant that believers no longer are required to abide by, this verse arguably provides the best evidence that believers do not need to keep the Sabbath. However one could argue that Paul is not necessarily meaning that they do not need to keep the Sabbath at all. Rather in mentioning it here he may have in mind certain aspects of its observance, such as offerings required on it



under the old covenant or even the day of the week on which it is to be observed.

Rom 14:5-6 *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.* 📖

What Paul is referring to here is possibly inclusive of the Sabbath, although the reference to eating suggests that a special day of feasting may be what is foremost in view. Regarding contentious issues like those in question here, Paul is primarily concerned that his readers be convinced in themselves (v. 5b), so they can act with a clear conscience; and the chosen course of action be taken for the Lord's honor and with thanksgiving (v. 6b).

Gal 4:8-11 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. ⁹But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, *how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?* ¹⁰*You observe days and months and seasons and years!* ¹¹I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain. 📖

In view of the discussion regarding the law in the preceding chapter (cf. 3:2-25) and latter passages – and also a possible reference to it in v. 12 – some consider that Paul is referring to the law in vv. 9-10, with “the weak and worthless elementary principles” (v. 9) paralleling the shortfalls of the law with paganism (v. 8). As such “days” would quite possibly encompass the Sabbath. However the reference to paganism in v. 8 points to paganism as being what Paul has in mind here (cf. CEV, GNT). If this is the case, then there is no reference here to the Sabbath.

Note: Early Christians met together on the first day of the week

The fact that the early Christians are recorded as meeting together on the first day of the week – and the reason why (cf. **Rev 1:10** ↓) – has influenced most Christians to meet for worship and celebrate the Sabbath on this day rather than on the seventh day of the week. But bear in mind that one reason why the early Christians did not meet together on the seventh day, may have been that they continued to observe it as the Sabbath.

John 20:19 *On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”* 📖

Note that v. 26 records a similar appearance by Jesus to the disciples, who were again meeting together. But as it was eight days later, it illustrates that they did not only meet together on the first day of the week.

Acts 20:7 *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.* 📖

1Cor 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.* 📖

This verse is quite probably speaking of money being brought to Christian gatherings held on the first day of every week.

✚ **The first day of the week was referred to as “the Lord’s Day”:**

Rev 1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ...* 📖

This is understood to be referring to the first day of the week, which was called “the Lord’s day” in view of the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on this day. It being “the Lord’s day” is most likely the major reason as to why believers regularly met together on the first day of the week.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Fasting

Fasting involves abstaining from food and drink, though not necessarily water which provides no calories or energy. Ordained fasts in the OT were usually from sunrise to sunset. People who fast regularly today often do so once or twice a week, for one or two successive meal times. In the Wesleyan revival, fasting was observed from after the Thursday evening meal to mid-afternoon Friday. Note that in the NT there are examples of fasting, but it is not actually commanded.



Subsections

- Fasting involves abstaining from food and drink
- Fasting can be done regularly – as an adjunct to prayer and worship
- Fasting can be done on particular occasions, in petitioning God – as in seeking God’s help . . .
- . . . or as in asking God to relent from punishing sin
- Fasting can be done to express distress in trouble or remorse over sin
- Note: Fasting in itself is not significant

Fasting involves abstaining from food and drink

Est 4:16a “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. 

Ex 34:28 So he was there with the LORD *forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water.* And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.^a 

^a Hebrew *the ten words*

Note that the forty-day fasts of Moses and Jesus (cf. **Matt 4:2** ↓) were exceptional cases of fasting.

Lev 23:32 It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath. 

The clause “you shall afflict yourselves” refers to fasting (cf. text note on 16:29), denying oneself of food. Note that the reference here is to the annual Day of Atonement (cf. vv. 27-28).

Judg 20:26b They sat there before the LORD and *fasted that day until evening*, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. 

1Sam 31:13 And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and *fasted seven days*. 

2Sam 12:16-17 David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And *David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground*. ¹⁷And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, *nor did he eat food with them*. 

Ezra 10:6 Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, where *he spent the night,^r neither eating bread nor drinking water*, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles. 

^r Probable reading; Hebrew *where he went*

Matt 4:2 And *after fasting forty days and forty nights*, he was hungry. 

Acts 9:9 And *for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank*. 

‡ Daniel abstained from choice food for three weeks:

Dan 10:2-3 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning *for three weeks*. ³*I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks*. 

Fasting can be done regularly – as an adjunct to prayer and worship

See also:

- *Worship God through prayer and even with fasting*, p. 1349

Matt 6:16-18 And *when you fast*, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But *when you fast*, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸that *your fasting* may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 

One implication of this teaching is that Jesus appears to expect that his followers would fast regularly.

Luke 18:12 *I fast twice a week*; I give tithes of all that I get. 

Luke 2:36-37 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.⁵ She did not depart from the temple, *worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day*. 

⁵ Or *as a widow for eighty-four years*

Fasting implies and promotes earnestness in worship and prayer. When fasting, the ache and craving of hunger brings an earnestness and intensity to our worship and prayers (cf. comment on **1Cor 7:3, 5** ↓). Fasting also promotes clarity of thought. Furthermore, our hunger serves as a reminder to worship and/or pray throughout the fasting period.



Luke 5:33, 35 And they said to him, “*The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.*” ☞ ... [Jesus:] ³⁵*The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.*” ☞

John the Baptist’s disciples often fasted as an adjunct to prayer – as did the disciples of the Pharisees (v. 33). But during the remarkable time that Jesus was with them, it was not appropriate or necessary for his disciples to fast. But on his death – when he, the “bridegroom”, would be taken away from them (v. 35) – then they would fast. The reference appears to be in particular to fasting in mourning over his death.

Acts 13:2 While *they were worshiping the Lord and fasting*, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ☞

Acts 10:30 And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, *I was praying in my house* at the ninth hour,[†] and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ... ☞

[†] That is, 3 P.M.

In this verse some manuscripts have “praying and fasting” (cf. GNT text note).

Lev 23:27 Now *on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD.* ☞

This refers to an annual fast rather than a regular one. It is included here as further example of fasting being involved in worship.

✦ **Abstaining from sexual relations for the sake of devotion to prayer:**

1Cor 7:3, 5 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ☞ ... ⁵*Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.* ☞

A parallel can be made with this practice and fasting, with both practices involving giving up something that is craved in order to intensify one’s focus on something else, namely prayer. Note that Paul may not be encouraging this practice, particularly as he puts restrictions on it – i.e. that it be done only with mutual consent and for a limited time.

Fasting can be done on particular occasions, in petitioning God – as in seeking God’s help . . .

See also:

▪ . . . *Even fast when making requests of God*, p. 1226

Ezra 8:21-23 *Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods.* ²²For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, “The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.” ²³*So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.* ☞

2Sam 12:16 *David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.* ☞

2Chr 20:1-4 After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites,^u came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ²Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,^v from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar” (that is, Engedi). ³*Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.* ⁴*And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.* ☞

^u Compare 26:7; Hebrew *Ammonites*

^v One Hebrew manuscript; most Hebrew manuscripts *Aram* (Syria)

Dan 9:2-3, 19 ... in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, *must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.* ³*Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.* ☞ ... ¹⁹*O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.* ☞

Acts 13:3 Then *after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.* ☞

Here members of the Antioch church appear to be fasting and praying in regard to Barnabas and Saul and the work to which God had called them (cf. v. 2 ↑), presumably largely to ask God to help them in the work (cf. Acts 14:23 ↓).



Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. 

... or as in asking God to relent from punishing sin

See also:

- [Dan 9:2-3, 19](#) ↑
- [In petitioning God, express your anguish over consequences of your sin – even with fasting](#), p. 1845
- [Fast as a means of humbling yourself before God](#), p. 1904

Fasting can be done in seeking God's forgiveness of sin along with deliverance from his punishment for the sin.

Deut 9:18-19 Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights. *I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke him to anger.* ¹⁹*For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me that time also.* 

1Ki 21:21-22, 27-29 Behold, *I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel.* ²²*And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin.*  ... ²⁷*And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly.* ²⁸*And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,* ²⁹*“Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house.”* 

Joel 1:13-14 Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! *Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.* ¹⁴*Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.* 

Apparently as a punishment for the people's sin (cf. [Joel 2:12-13](#) ↓), an awesome plague of locusts had devastated the land, leaving neither grain nor wine even for offerings (v. 13b; cf. [Joel 2:14](#) ↓). Thus the prophet calls on the priests – and similarly the people (cf. vv. 5-12) – to seek God's forgiveness and restoration, in part with fasting (v. 14a).

Joel 2:12-17 “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “*return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;* ¹³*and rend your hearts and not your garments.*” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. ¹⁴*Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God?* ¹⁵*Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly;* ¹⁶*gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.* ¹⁷*Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, “Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.”* Why should they say among the peoples, “Where is their God?” 

^w Or *reproach, that the nations should rule over them*

Jonah 3:1-10 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²*“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.”* ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city,^x three days' journey in breadth.^y ⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And *he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”* ⁵*And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.* ⁶The word reached^z the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: *Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water,* ⁸*but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.* ⁹*Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”* ¹⁰*When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.* 

^x Hebrew *a great city to God*

^y Or *a visit was a three days' journey*

^z Or *had reached*



‡ The Israelites fasted on the annual day when atonement was made for them to cleanse them from sin:

Lev 16:29-31 And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, *you shall afflict yourselves*^a and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. ³⁰*For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins.* ³¹It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and *you shall afflict yourselves*; it is a statute forever. ☞

^a Or *shall fast*; also verse 31

Fasting can be done to express distress in trouble or remorse over sin

See also:

- *In petitioning God, express your anguish over consequences of your sin – even with fasting*, p. 1845
- *Fast in mourning*, p. 1941

In conjunction with seeking God's help, fasting expresses one's distress in trouble. Likewise, in conjunction with seeking God's forgiveness, fasting expresses one's remorse over sin. Note that most of the passages in the previous subsection are also reflective of fasting expressing one's remorse over sin.

Judg 20:25-26 And Benjamin went against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed 18,000 men of the people of Israel. All these were men who drew the sword. ²⁶*Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening*, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ☞

Neh 1:3-4 And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." ⁴*As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.* ☞

Est 4:3 And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, *there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.* ☞

The edict in question ordered the killing of all Jews (cf. Est 3:8-15).

Ps 109:22, 24 For *I am poor and needy, and my heart is stricken within me.* ☞ ... ²⁴*My knees are weak through fasting; my body has become gaunt, with no fat.* ☞

Neh 9:1-2 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month *the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads.* ²And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood *and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.* ☞

1Sam 7:6 So *they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD."* And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah. ☞

The pouring out of water before God is quite possibly indicative of repentance, and so also remorse. It may have been done as an offering (cf. CEV, GNT) and/or as an allusion to self-denial and fasting.

Ezra 10:6 Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, where *he spent the night,*^b *neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles.* ☞

^b Probable reading; Hebrew *where he went*

Note: Fasting in itself is not significant

Jer 14:10-12 Thus says the LORD concerning this people: *"They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the LORD does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins."* ¹¹The LORD said to me: "Do not pray for the welfare of this people. ¹²*Though they fast, I will not hear their cry*, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence." ☞

It does no good to fast – or perform any religious practice – while continuing to live a sinful life. God takes no notice of such fasting (cf. [Isa 58:3](#) ↓).

Isa 58:1-7 Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; *declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.* ²Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, *as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God*; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. ³*Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?*



Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,^c and oppress all your workers. ⁴Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. ⁵Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD? ⁶“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed^d go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”

^c Or pursue your own business

^d Or bruised

Fasting should signify godliness. Thus it ought to be manifested in such things as: obedience to God (vv. 1-2); treating others appropriately (vv. 3-4); and caring for the needy (vv. 6-7). Without being accompanied by such things, fasting itself is of no significance.

Zec 7:2-6 Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to entreat the favor of the LORD, ³saying to the priests of the house of the LORD of hosts and the prophets, “Should I weep and abstain in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?” ⁴Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me: ⁵“Say to all the people of the land and the priests, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? ⁶And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?”

Fasting must be done for the right reasons, with God primarily in view – as with all religious practices (cf. v. 6). As far as God is concerned, there is no point just “going through the motions” or doing it with less than God-centered motives – which God’s reply (v. 5) suggests that the people were doing. Any religious practice performed without a focus on its proper object becomes a stale and pointless exercise.

Luke 18:9-14 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^e thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went

down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

^e Or standing, prayed to himself

Fasting in a spirit of self-righteousness counts for nothing in God’s sight.

Matt 6:16-18 And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Fasting for show – so as to display one’s supposed piety – is unacceptable to God, and receives no reward from him. It must be done discreetly.

1Sam 14:24, 28-30 And the men of Israel had been hard pressed that day, so Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, “Cursed be the man who eats food until it is evening and I am avenged on my enemies.” So none of the people had tasted food. ... ²⁸Then one of the people said [to Jonathan], “Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, ‘Cursed be the man who eats food this day.’” And the people were faint. ²⁹Then Jonathan said, “My father has troubled the land. See how my eyes have become bright because I tasted a little of this honey. ³⁰How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies that they found. For now the defeat among the Philistines has not been great.”

The binding of Saul’s troops to a fast with an oath was thoughtless, pointless and in fact counterproductive.

✦ We should not be legalistic about the practice of fasting:

Matt 9:14-17 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast,^f but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

^f Some manuscripts add much, or often

A number of commentators interpret the inclusion of the wineskins illustration (vv. 16-17) immediately after Jesus’ comments on fasting (vv. 14-15), to imply that under the new



covenant one should not be legalistic about the practice of fasting – which no doubt would have been in contrast to the Pharisees' attitude in their fasting (v. 14).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) The Laying on of Hands

See also:

- *The sinner laid hands on the offering, identifying the animal with themselves*, p. 389

Bear in mind that generally at least – and as reflected in some of the passages in this section – the laying on of hands is done in conjunction with prayer.

Subsections

- In conveying the gift of the Holy Spirit
- In conveying blessing
- In conveying God's healing
- In commissioning for ministry
- Note: The OT use of oil to anoint and consecrate people for God's service

In conveying the gift of the Holy Spirit

Note that the laying on of hands to convey the gift of the Holy Spirit is generally done in conjunction with the recipients coming to faith – rather than at a time chosen by those performing the act. Also, it is not essential for a person to have hands laid on them for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:17-18 *Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.* ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ...

Acts 9:17-18 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell

from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ...

Although it is not stated, presumably Paul received the Holy Spirit at this time, particularly as it is mentioned in conjunction with receiving back his sight (v. 17) which did occur here (v. 18).

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

In conveying blessing

Mark 10:16 And he [Jesus] took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Matt 19:13-15 Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, ¹⁴but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." ¹⁵And he laid his hands on them and went away.

Particularly as it is spoken of as being done in conjunction with prayer (v. 13), it would appear that Jesus' act of placing his hands on the children signified that he was blessing them (cf. **Mark 10:16** ↑).

Gen 48:14-16, 20a And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn). ¹⁵And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, ¹⁶the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude^g in the midst of the earth." ... ²⁰So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.'"

^g Or let them be like fish for multitude

Here Jacob (called Israel) blesses Joseph's two sons, in a sense blessing Joseph himself (v. 15a). Note that the right hand (v. 14) was indicative of a greater blessing.

Lev 9:22 Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings.

Here and in the following reference from Luke, a group of people is being blessed. So instead of hands being laid on



each of them individually – which here in Aaron’s case would have taken an enormous amount of time – hands are used to convey blessing by being lifted towards the group.

Luke 24:50 Then he [Jesus] led them out as far as Bethany, and *lifting up his hands he blessed them.* 

✦ **The laying on of hands is listed amongst elementary and foundational teachings:**

Heb 6:1-2 Therefore let us leave *the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,* ²and of *instruction about washings,*^h *the laying on of hands,* the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 

^h Or *baptisms* (that is, cleansing rites)

Being listed amongst such elementary and foundational teachings points to the importance of this practice, with presumably the importance of what it signifies being in view.

In conveying God’s healing

See also:

- *Note: The OT use of oil to anoint and consecrate people for God’s service,* p. 1467

Those who have the gift of healing, generally convey God’s healing through laying their hands on sick people – as Jesus often did.

Luke 4:40 Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and *he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.* 

Matt 8:3 And *Jesusⁱ stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* 

ⁱ Greek *he*

Matt 9:29-30a Then *he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.”* ³⁰*And their eyes were opened.* 

Mark 5:23 ...and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and *lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.*” 

Mark 6:5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that *he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.* 

Mark 7:32-35 *And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.* ³³*And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue.* ³⁴*And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”* ³⁵*And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.* 

Note that in conjunction with touching the man (v. 33), in healing him Jesus also appears to pray (v. 34).

Luke 13:12-13 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “*Woman, you are freed from your disability.*”¹³ *And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.* 

Mark 16:18 ... they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; *they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.* 

Acts 28:8 It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and *prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him.* 

In commissioning for ministry

The practice of established leaders laying their hands on newly appointed leaders or ones being commissioned for a new role, denotes the bestowing of authority by the established leaders – who have such authority themselves – onto the newly appointed leaders, before God.

Num 27:15-23 Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, ¹⁶“Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation ¹⁷who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” ¹⁸So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and *lay your hand on him.* ¹⁹Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall *commission him in their sight.* ²⁰*You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.* ²¹And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. *At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation.*” ²²And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. *He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, ²³and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him* as the LORD directed through Moses. 



Acts 6:1-3, 6 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists^j arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers,^k pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ... ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. 📖

^j That is, Greek-speaking Jews

^k Or *brothers and sisters*

Acts 13:1-3 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger,¹ Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. 📖

¹ *Niger* is a Latin word meaning *black*, or *dark*

Note that the prophets and teachers (v. 1), leaders in the church, may well be in view as those who laid hands on Barnabas and Saul.

1Tim 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. 📖

This is commonly understood to be referring to the laying on of hands in the ordination of elders – which should not be done without due consideration nor until the candidate has had sufficient time to prove their suitability.

Num 8:10-11 When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the people of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites, ¹¹and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the people of Israel, that they may do the service of the LORD. 📖

In contrast to the other passages in this subsection, here the people rather than the leaders, are said to have been the ones who laid hands (on the Levites). This signified that the Levites were representative of the whole people, having the authority to represent them before God, including making offerings on their behalf. Verse 1 indicates that as such they were in a sense an offering from the people to God, to do his work, notably interceding before him on the people's behalf.

✦ Timothy's spiritual gift for ministry given through the laying on of hands:

1Tim 4:14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 📖

Most likely the elders laid their hands on Timothy in commissioning him for service. As such he would have received this spiritual gift primarily to equip him in the work. Note that in 2 Timothy 1:6 Paul speaks of Timothy receiving a spiritual gift through Paul himself laying his hands on him: "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands." As such Paul could be speaking of himself as one of the elders on the occasion referred to here in 1 Timothy 4:14.

Note: The OT use of oil to anoint and consecrate people for God's service

In the OT, a person being ordained or inducted into a role in God's service – notably as a priest, a prophet or a king – was anointed with oil. It signified them being set apart by God for such a role. Particularly in the case of priests, it also signified them being consecrated or made holy in order to undertake their holy work. This practice is imitated in some churches today, in commissioning people for ministry.

Ex 29:7, 21 You shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him. ... ²¹Then you shall take part of the blood that is on the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and his sons' garments with him. He and his garments shall be holy, and his sons and his sons' garments with him. 📖

Note that the composition of the sacred anointing oil used to anoint and consecrate priests, is given in 30:23-25. Unauthorized making and use of it is strictly prohibited in 30:32-33.

Ex 40:9, 13-15 "Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it may become holy. ... ¹³and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may serve me as priest. ¹⁴You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, ¹⁵and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations." 📖

As with the tabernacle and the other things in v. 9, the anointing of the priests would have been done with the anointing oil.



Lev 8:12 And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him. 📖

Lev 21:10-12 The priest who is chief among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil is poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not let the hair of his head hang loose nor tear his clothes. ¹¹He shall not go in to any dead bodies nor make himself unclean, even for his father or for his mother. ¹²He shall not go out of the sanctuary, lest he profane the sanctuary of his God, for *the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him: I am the LORD.* 📖

1Sam 10:1a Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel?" 📖

1Sam 16:1, 12-13 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." 📖 ... ¹²And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." ¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah. 📖

Ps 89:20 I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, ... 📖

1Ki 1:39 There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" 📖

2Ki 9:6 So he arose and went into the house. And the young man poured the oil on his [Jehu's] head, saying to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, I anoint you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel." 📖

Zec 4:12-14 And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil^m is poured out?" ¹³He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." ¹⁴Then he said, "These are the two anointed onesⁿ who stand by the Lord of the whole earth." 📖

^m Hebrew lacks oil

ⁿ Hebrew two sons of new oil

This is from one of Zechariah's visions and uses figurative language. The "two branches of the olive trees" symbolize Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua the high priest. Possibly the "golden oil" (v. 12) – which originates from the olive trees (cf. v. 11) to which the branches belong – is associated with their anointing to serve God (v. 14). As such the imagery would be reflective of the use of oil to anoint people for service to God.

✦ The practice of anointing sick people with oil for healing:

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 📖

The anointing with oil may simply be medicinal treatment, as in its use by the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:34a – "He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine." This is also the case in Isaiah 1:6b – "... bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil." Some however view it as being of spiritual significance. Either way, it is done "in the name of the Lord", acknowledging that healing is ultimately from him. Note that Mark 6:13 also speaks of Jesus' followers (the twelve disciples) employing this practice – "And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them."

Pray for persecuted Christians



Church Leadership

I. General

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I. General

Good leadership is one of the most important prerequisites for a healthy church. For a church to function effectively it is critical that leaders know and do what is required of them. It is also important for church members to know what they should expect of leaders – and how they can support their leaders.

Note that a number of verses in this chapter speak of Paul and other NT leaders in their work overseeing a number of churches, or of leaders of the nation of Israel – such as Moses, Joshua, prophets, priests and kings. Such verses are generally readily applicable to leaders of local churches today, and to their relationship with church members.

a) Introductory Insights

Subsections

- Churches have leaders
- Typically churches are together overseen by a central leadership group
- Ultimately it is God who chooses leaders . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit play a role in the making of leaders
- Leaders will be accountable to God for their work
- Leaders will be richly rewarded for good work
- Note: Examples of the ordination of leaders

Churches have leaders

Acts 13:1 *Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger,^a Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.* 📖

^a *Niger* is a Latin word meaning *black*, or *dark*

Prophets and teachers have key leadership roles in the church.

Acts 14:23 *And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.* 📖

Acts 20:17 *Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.* 📖

Rom 16:1 *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant^b of the church at Cenchreae, ...* 📖

^b Or *deaconess*

The text note suggests that Phoebe was a deaconess, a ministerial position in the church (cf. **Phil 1:1** ↓).

Phil 1:1 *Paul and Timothy, servants^c of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers^d and deacons:^e ...* 📖

^c Or *slaves*; Greek *bondservants*

^d Or *bishops*; Greek *episkopoi*

^e Or *servants, or ministers*; Greek *diakonoi*

Although not explicitly stated, the leaders referred to in this and the following verses are leaders of churches.

Heb 13:7 *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.* 📖

1Pet 5:1 *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ...* 📖

Matt 16:18 *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^f I will build my church, and the gates of hell^g shall not prevail against it.* 📖

^f The Greek words for *Peter* and *rock* sound similar

^g Greek *the gates of Hades*

Note that “Peter” sounds like “rock” (cf. text note). This points to Peter’s leadership role in Jesus Christ’s building of his church.

Acts 1:20 *For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it; and “Let another take his office.”* 📖

The reference is to Judas Iscariot and “his place of leadership” (NIV®) in the early church as a whole, as one of the twelve disciples.

Typically churches are together overseen by a central leadership group

In the NT church, all the local churches were overseen by the apostles and the elders based in Jerusalem. Similarly today each church denomination has some form of central leadership group overseeing its churches.



Acts 11:20-22 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^h also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²²*The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.* 📖

^h Or *Greeks* (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)

Here the leaders of the church in Jerusalem took action to oversee the development of the church in the city of Antioch.

Acts 15:1-2, 6, 19-20, 22-29 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ²And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, *Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.* 📖 ... ⁶*The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.* 📖 ... [James:] ¹⁹*Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.* 📖 ... ²²*Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, ²³with the following letter: “The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothersⁱ who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. ²⁴Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you^j with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, ²⁵it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: ²⁹that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”* 📖

ⁱ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 32, 33, 36

^j Some manuscripts *some persons from us have troubled you*

Doctrinal issues are here overseen by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. In vv. 19-20 James – who appears to preside over proceedings – advocates ruling in line with the position of Paul and Barnabas, a stance agreed to by the other apostles and elders (cf. vv. 22-24, 28-29).

Acts 16:4 *As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.* 📖

This is speaking of instructions of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem being delivered to churches in different towns.

✚ **Paul oversaw a number of churches:**

2Thes 3:14 If anyone does not *obey what we say in this letter*, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. 📖

In his work as an apostle, Paul himself played a significant role in overseeing the affairs of quite a number of churches – many of which he had been instrumental in their establishment. Paul often did this through his letters – as exemplified in this verse – and sometimes through his co-workers, as shown in his instruction to Titus in Titus 1:5: “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you–”

Ultimately it is God who chooses leaders . . .

See also:

- *Further examples of God appointing people to a specific role*, p. 957

Note that one implication of the teaching here is that in choosing leaders, churches should prayerfully seek God’s leading so as to make a choice in accordance with his will.

1Cor 12:28 And *God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers*, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. 📖

One can infer from this verse both that God has ordained that these positions exist in churches and that he chooses people to fulfill these positions.

2Cor 4:1 Therefore, *having this ministry by the mercy of God*,^k we do not lose heart. 📖

^k Greek *as we have received mercy*

Here Paul refers to the leadership roles of himself and his co-workers, given to them by God in his mercy.

Heb 5:1, 4 For *every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.* 📖 ... ⁴*And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.* 📖

What is said here of the position of high priest is arguably applicable to church leaders today. Note that it is not obvious



whether the selecting and appointing spoken of in v. 1 is that done directly by God, or the actions taken by leaders in response to God's choice and calling (v. 4).

Num 27:15-18 Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, ¹⁶*“Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation* ¹⁷*who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.”* ¹⁸*So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.”* 

Deut 17:15 ... you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. 

1Ki 19:16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. 

Here God tells Elijah to anoint the ones he has chosen for these critical leadership roles amongst God's people.

1Chr 28:4-5 Yet the LORD God of Israel chose me from all my father's house to be king over Israel forever. For he chose Judah as leader, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel. ⁵*And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.* 

Note that in v. 4b David tells of God choosing Judah to be the leading tribe of Israel.

Ps 78:70-71 He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹*from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance.* 

Jer 3:15 And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. 

Amos 2:11 And I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?" declares the LORD. 

Nazirites took a vow of devout devotion to God and, as with the prophets, had a role in the spiritual leadership of Israel.

. . . Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit play a role in the making of leaders

Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, *“Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?”* 

This refers to leaders of God's people (“the faithful and wise manager”) being given such authority by Jesus Christ (“the master”).

Acts 1:24-26 And they prayed and said, *“You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen* ²⁵*to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”* ²⁶*And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.* 

The Lord's choice was ascertained here through the casting of lots.

1Cor 3:5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. 

Although Paul rightly refers to Apollos and himself as “Servants”, their roles or tasks were nevertheless crucial leadership ones – assigned by the Lord.

2Cor 10:8 For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. 

Similar in 2 Corinthians 13:10 Paul speaks of: “... the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.”

Eph 4:11 And he [Jesus Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds¹ and teachers,^m ... 

¹ Or pastors

^m Or the shepherd-teachers

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God,ⁿ which he obtained with his own blood.^o 

ⁿ Some manuscripts of the Lord

^o Or with the blood of his Own

Judg 3:10 The Spirit of the LORD was upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand. And his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. 



✦ Jesus' choosing of the twelve disciples:

Luke 6:13-16 And when day came, *he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:* ¹⁴*Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew,* ¹⁵*and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot,* ¹⁶*and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.* 📖

Leaders will be accountable to God for their work

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for *they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.* Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. 📖

The reference is to giving account to the Lord on the day of judgment.

1Cor 4:1-4 This is how one should regard us, as *servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.* ²*Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.* ³But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. *It is the Lord who judges me.* 📖

Paul implies that those who have been entrusted with God's work will be held accountable for it by indicating that: "it is required" that they prove trustworthy (v. 2); and the Lord judges them (v. 4).

Luke 12:42-48 And the Lord said, *"Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?"* ⁴³*Blessed is that servant^p whom his master will find so doing when he comes.* ⁴⁴*Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.* ⁴⁵*But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk,* ⁴⁶*the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.* ⁴⁷*And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.* ⁴⁸*But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.* 📖

^p Greek *bondservant*; also verses 45, 46, 47

The use of "servant" in the context (cf. vv. 35-44) speaks primarily of leaders – as reflected by the term "manager" in v. 42 – although aspects of this passage have a wider application.

Ezek 34:10a Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and *I will require my sheep at their hand* and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. 📖

"I will require my sheep at their hand" means that God would hold the leaders accountable for the state of his flock, his people.

Isa 9:13-16 *The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of the LORD of hosts.* ¹⁴*So the LORD cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day—* ¹⁵*the elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail;* ¹⁶*for those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up.* 📖

The bad leaders would be held accountable (vv. 14-15) as they were principally responsible for the people's failure to return to or to seek God (v. 13), leading them astray (v. 16).

✦ Teachers will be judged more strictly than other church members:

James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that *we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.* 📖

Note that this teaching parallels that above in Luke 12:47-48.

Leaders will be richly rewarded for good work

See also:

- *You will be rewarded for your work . . .*, p. 1399
- *. . . You will be rewarded particularly in the afterlife*, p. 1399

Matt 24:45-47 Who then is *the faithful and wise servant,*^q *whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?* ⁴⁶*Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.* ⁴⁷*Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.* 📖

^q Greek *bondservant*; also verses 46, 48, 50

This speaks of Jesus Christ rewarding the faithful servants whom he has put in charge of his other servants – i.e. leaders in his "household", the church.

1Pet 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you [elders] *will receive the unfading crown of glory.* 📖



1Thes 2:19-20 *For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?*

²⁰*For you are our glory and joy.*

Here “joy” (cf. [Phil 4:1 ↓](#)) may be alluding to Paul’s future joy when Christ comes and rewards him for his ministry amongst the Thessalonians. Alternatively, like his “hope” (v. 19), it may be joy which he has in anticipating his future reward for his work. The “crown” (cf. [Phil 4:1 ↓](#)) alludes to the wreath that was given to the victors at the Greek games; the Thessalonians will be as such for him to glory in.

Phil 4:1 Therefore, my brothers,^r whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

^r Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21

1Tim 3:13 *For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

The “good standing” may well be referring to the standing of these deacons in God’s sight – pointing to God’s approval and the associated rewards. Alternatively, gaining respect and honor before the congregation may be in view.

‡ **Paul’s anticipated pride in his work on Jesus Christ’s return:**

Phil 2:14-16 Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵*that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,* ¹⁶*holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*

On Jesus Christ’s return Paul hoped to be able to take pride in the godly lives of the Philippians, to which his work had led.

Note: Examples of the ordination of leaders

See also:

- *Note: The purification of the priests and Levites for consecration and preparedness for God’s service*, p. 1389
- *Note: The OT use of oil to anoint and consecrate people for God’s service*, p. 1467

Acts 6:5-6 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶*These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*

The practice of established leaders laying their hands on newly appointed leaders and ones being commissioned for a new role, occurs a number of times in both the OT and NT (cf. [Num 8:10 ↓](#); [Num 27:18, 23 ↓](#); [1Tim 5:22 ↓](#)). It appears to denote the bestowing of authority by established leaders, who have such authority, onto the newly appointed leaders.

Acts 14:23, 26 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. ... ²⁶and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.

When people are appointed to a particular role, notably a leadership one, other leaders should commend/commit them to God in prayer (cf. [Acts 6:6 ↑](#)).

Num 8:10-11 When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the people of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites, ¹¹and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the people of Israel, that they may do the service of the LORD.

The wave offering (v. 11) appears to have been to symbolize the Levites being offered to God as living sacrifices, dedicated to assisting the priests in doing God’s work. Leaders today likewise need to be willing to offer themselves unconditionally to God in his service – something which may be formally signified in their ordination as was the case here.

Num 27:18-20, 22-23 So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. ²⁰You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. ... ²²And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, ²³and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the LORD directed through Moses.

Moses commissioned Joshua before all the people so that they would clearly recognize the authority that was invested in him, and so obey him (v. 20).

‡ **Do not be hasty in appointing leaders:**

1Tim 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

The first clause is commonly understood to be referring to the ordination of elders – the public signifying and recognition of their appointment to a leadership role. Their appointment should not be done without due consideration, nor until the candidate has had sufficient time to prove their suitability (cf. [1Tim 3:6 ↓](#); [1Tim 3:10 ↓](#)).



Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Required Characteristics

The following characteristics are required of all believers, but it is especially vital for the life of Christian groups that they are exemplified by leaders. As such, churches need to bear in mind the following characteristics when choosing leaders.

Note that largely: the verses in the first two subsections speak of attributes that are required of a person to be chosen as a leader; the verses in the third and fourth subsections contain exhortations to those who are leaders to have the qualities concerned; and the verses in the fifth and sixth subsection contain examples of leaders displaying necessary attitudes.

Subsections

- Godliness
- Wisdom and competence
- Strength and courage
- Willingness to serve
- Deep love for church members . . .
- . . . and concern for church members

Godliness

See also:

- [Ezra 7:25](#) ↕; [Ps 78:72](#) ↕; [Jer 3:15](#) ↕; [Luke 12:42](#) ↕; [Acts 6:3](#) ↕; [Ex 18:21](#) ↕
- *Live a godly life in readiness for doing God's work*, p. 1386
- *Consecrate yourself to serve God . . .*, p. 1387
- *. . . Be holy and set apart*, p. 1388
- *Serve God in holiness and righteousness*, p. 1420

1Tim 3:2-3, 7-11 Therefore an overseer^s must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^t sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ☞ ... ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. ⁸Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued,^u not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest

gain. ⁹They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹Their wives likewise must^v be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ☞

^s Or *bishop*; Greek *episkopos*; a similar term occurs in verse 1

^t Or *a man of one woman*; also verse 12

^u Or *devious in speech*

^v Or *Wives, likewise, must, or Women, likewise, must*

The requirement that an overseer must “be well thought of by outsiders” (v. 7) probably has in view the need for the church and in particular its leaders to show that they are credible, for the sake of spreading the gospel amongst outsiders and for bringing glory to God. The verse appears to teach that having a bad reputation would cause an overseer to fall into “a snare of the devil”, presumably a reference to Satan deceiving them into sin rather than referring to any particular “snare”. It does not say how or why this is the case. Perhaps the thought is that those without a good reputation may well not be deserving of such and so be the type of person quite likely to fall into Satan’s traps.

Titus 1:5-8 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— *“if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife,^w and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷For an overseer,^x as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ☞*

^w Or *a man of one woman*

^x Or *bishop*; Greek *episkopos*

Acts 6:5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ☞

2Cor 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that *we behaved in the world with simplicity^y and godly sincerity*, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. ☞

^y Some manuscripts *holiness*

This refers in part to Paul’s previous work amongst the Corinthians. Bear in mind that the text note indicates that some manuscripts have “holiness” (NASB, NIV) instead of simplicity.



1Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, and God also, *how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.* 

1Tim 5:1-2 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, *younger women as sisters, in all purity.* 

Although very much applicable to all believers, this direction was given to Timothy as a pastoral worker.

Ps 132:9 *Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your saints shout for joy.* 

The reference may be to the character and actions of the priests – i.e. that they “do what is right” (NCV™; cf. GNT) – hence the verse’s inclusion here. However some commentators point to the close relationship between God’s righteousness and salvation as indicating that it is speaking of the priests propagating God’s righteousness so as to realize the salvation of the people.

Ecl 12:10 The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and *uprightly he wrote words of truth.* 

Zec 3:6-7 And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, ⁷“Thus says the LORD of hosts: *If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.* 

The high priest Joshua is representative of the priests and/or the nation of Israel, with the verses having in view governance either of God’s people (by the priests) or of all God’s realm (by Israel). As such this passage is indicative of the need for those who would lead God’s people to be obedient to God’s laws. The “right of access among those who are standing here” (v. 7b) probably refers to being in God’s presence as the angels are, being his priest with ready access to him.

✦ Leaders must not be recent converts:

1Tim 3:6 *He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* 

Verse 10 (included earlier in this subsection) also reflects that leaders must not be recent converts, stating that potential leaders need to “be tested first” and “prove themselves blameless”. The reference to falling into the condemnation of the devil, most likely means to face the same condemnation as the devil does. Note that other interpretations include: falling from a high position just as the devil did; and judgment dealt out by the devil (cf. NLT).

Wisdom and competence

See also:

- *Authorities should rule wisely . . .*, p. 1721
- *. . . Authorities need to be wise*, p. 1722

Deut 1:13, 15 *Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.’*  ...
¹⁵So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes. 

Ezra 7:25 And you, Ezra, according to *the wisdom of your God that is in your hand*, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach. 

Ezra was a high priest and a key leader amongst the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian exile. Here he is spoken of as having great wisdom, which he was to use in appointing other leaders.

Ps 78:72 With upright heart he shepherded them and *guided them with his skillful hand.* 

Jer 3:15 And *I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.* 

Luke 12:42 And the Lord said, “Who then is *the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?* 

Acts 6:3 Therefore, brothers,² *pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.* 

² Or *brothers and sisters*

Ex 18:21 Moreover, *look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.* 

1Chr 26:6 Also to his son Shemaiah were sons born *who were rulers in their fathers’ houses, for they were men of great ability.* 

1Tim 3:2, 4-5 Therefore an overseer^a must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^b sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, *able to teach,*  ... ⁴*He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping*



his children submissive,⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?



^a Or *bishop*; Greek *episkopos*; a similar term occurs in verse 1

^b Or *a man of one woman*; also verse 12

As with being "able to teach" (v. 2), managing one's own family well (cf. [Titus 1:6](#) ↑) demonstrates competence and wisdom, needed for taking care of God's church.

Strength and courage

See also:

- [c\) The Manner in Which to Serve God](#), p. 1420

Josh 1:6, 9 *Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.* ... ⁹Have I not commanded you? *Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

1Chr 28:10 Be careful now, for *the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it.*

Here David encourages his son Solomon, as the time drew near for Solomon to become king and to tackle the task of building God's temple.

Ezra 7:28b *I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.*

Ezra is speaking here of going to Jerusalem, to minister to the Israelites there.

Ezra 10:2-4 And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: "We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. ³Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord^c and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the Law. ⁴Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it."

^c Or *of the Lord*

Jer 1:7-8 But *the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD."*

Ezek 2:6-7 And you, son of man, *be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions.*^d *Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. ⁷And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.*

^d Or *on scorpion plants*

✚ **One should act according to the spirit of power that God has given them:**

2Tim 1:6-7 For this reason *I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

Paul exhorts Timothy to use his gift (v. 6) in his ministry, bearing in mind that God does not give a spirit that "makes us weak and fearful" (NirV®), but a spirit of power (and of love and self-discipline).

Willingness to serve

See also:

- [Serve God with humility](#), p. 1421
- [Serve church members](#), p. 1488
- [Authorities should rule as servants of God](#), p. 1721

Leaders must be willing to not only serve God and Jesus Christ, but also church members.

Matt 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶It shall not be so among you. But *whoever would be great among you must be your servant,*^e ²⁷*and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,*^f ²⁸*even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

^e Greek *diakonos*

^f Greek *bondservant (doulos)*

1Ki 12:7 And they said to him, "If you will *be a servant to this people today and serve them*, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever."

This good advice was given to Rehoboam, King of Israel. However he did not follow it, which led to the secession of the northern tribes from his kingdom.



1Cor 3:5-6 *What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.* ☞

Paul's reference to himself as a servant suggests his willingness to serve the churches.

1Cor 16:15-16 Now I urge you, brothers^g—you know that the household^h of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that *they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints*— ¹⁶be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. ☞

^g Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 20

^h Greek *house*

The fact that Paul tells the Corinthians to submit to the household of Stephanas, implies that they had a leadership role. The willingness of the household of Stephanas to serve in this role was underscored by their devotion to doing so.

1Pet 5:2 ... shepherd the flock of God that is among you, *exercising oversight*,ⁱ *not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you*; ^j*not for shameful gain, but eagerly*; ... ☞

ⁱ Some manuscripts omit *exercising oversight*

^j Some manuscripts omit *as God would have you*

This and 2 Chronicles 19:8-9 below speak of willingly exercising leadership responsibilities. Note that here the phrase "exercising oversight" has been translated as "serving as overseers" (NIV®, NKJV).

2Chr 19:8-9 Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. ⁹And he charged them: *"Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: ...* ☞

✦ **Do not seek authority and status; instead be a servant:**

Matt 23:8-12 *But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers.*^k ⁹*And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.* ¹⁰*Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.* ¹¹*The greatest among you shall be your servant.* ¹²*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.* ☞

^k Or *brothers and sisters*

The disciples were not to seek titles of authority and status (vv. 8-10). As Matthew 20:25-28 above teaches, greatness amongst Jesus' followers comes not from things such as these, but from serving others (v. 11).

Deep love for church members . . .

2Cor 2:4 *For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.* ☞

2Cor 6:11-13 We have spoken freely to you,¹ Corinthians; *our heart is wide open.* ¹²You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also. ☞

¹ Greek *Our mouth is open to you*

In appealing to the somewhat wayward and rebellious Corinthian church, Paul speaks of his love for them (v. 11; cf. **2Cor 7:3** ↓) – which was in a sense a paternal love (v. 13).

2Cor 7:3, 15 I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that *you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.* ☞ ... ¹⁵*And his [Titus's] affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.* ☞

In v. 3, Paul is saying that the Corinthian believers were in his heart/thoughts to the extent that he would journey together with them through life or death.

1Thes 2:8 *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.* ☞

Phil 1:7-8 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because *I hold you in my heart*, for you are all partakers with me of grace,^m both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸*For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.* ☞

^m Or *you all have fellowship with me in grace*

Phil 4:1 Therefore, *my brothers*,ⁿ *whom I love and long for*, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. ☞

ⁿ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21

. . . and concern for church members

See also:

▪ **2Cor 2:4** ↑

Gal 4:18-19 It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, ¹⁹*my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!* ☞



Paul's metaphor (v. 19) demonstrates his ardent concern for the Galatians, who were faltering under the influence of false teachers.

2Cor 8:16 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. 

2Cor 11:2-3 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 

Paul was jealous for his converts and their commitment to Christ (v. 2a) "just as God is" (GNT) – possibly meaning "with a jealousy that comes from God" (NCV™) – reflecting Paul's deep love and concern for them.

2Cor 11:28-29 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? 

Such was Paul's concern for the churches (v. 28) that he strongly identified with them in their weaknesses and trials (v. 29). The final phrase may be speaking of "intense concern" (NASB), "distress" (GNT, cf. NCV), or even "anger" (NLT, cf. CEV).

2Cor 12:20-21 For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced. 

Note that Paul's reference to being humbled or "ashamed" (CEV, NCV) before them (v. 21a) would have been at least partly due to the pride and joy he took in them and their progress in the faith.

1Thes 3:5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain. 

Phil 2:19-20 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 

✦ Leadership is a noble task:

1Tim 3:1 The saying is trustworthy: *If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Managing the Church

See also:

- e) *Dealing with Sin in the Church*, p. 1490
- b) *Authorities' Duties to Citizens (I): General*, p. 1720

Subsections

- As a leader, supervise church affairs
- Delegate work to capable people
- Be gentle and sparing in the use of authority . . .
- . . . but exercise authority where necessary
- Be an example for church members to imitate

As a leader, supervise church affairs

Acts 20:28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God,^o which he obtained with his own blood.^p 

^o Some manuscripts *of the Lord*

^p Or *with the blood of his Own*

As "overseers", leaders oversee and so supervise church affairs, including the welfare of church members (cf. *Be a shepherd taking care of God's flock*, p. 1484).

Num 27:16-17, 21 "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation ¹⁷who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd."  ... ²¹And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. *At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation.* 



Joshua is referred to in v. 21. Like Joshua and Moses before him, church leaders are to lead the people – as the term “leader” implies.

1Chr 25:2 Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah, sons of Asaph, *under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king.* 📖

2Chr 23:18 And Jehoiada posted watchmen for the house of the LORD under the direction of the Levitical priests and the Levites whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. 📖

As with 1 Chronicles 25:2b above, this illustrates a chain of command in the leadership and supervision of Israel and its affairs. The king assigned responsibility for the temple to the priests, who by implication would then supervise others in matters regarding the temple. Such a chain of command is applicable to and, as such, has its parallels in the church today.

Ezra 3:9 And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, *together supervised the workmen in the house of God,* along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers. 📖

Neh 11:11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, *ruler of the house of God,* ... 📖

1Tim 5:17 Let *the elders who rule well* be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 📖

✦ In leading, listen to and consider suggestions:

Deut 1:22-23 [Moses:] *Then all of you came near me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, that they may explore the land for us and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up and the cities into which we shall come.’*²³*The thing seemed good to me, and I took twelve men from you, one man from each tribe.* 📖

Delegate work to capable people

Note that the verses below illustrate that leaders delegating work to others has the following advantages: leaders will be better able to cope; leaders will be able to concentrate better on the main priorities of their roles; more work will be done; and new and emerging leaders will be developed.

Acts 6:1-4 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists^a arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, *“It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.* ³*Therefore, brothers,^r pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.* ⁴*But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* 📖

^a That is, Greek-speaking Jews

^r Or *brothers and sisters*

2Tim 2:2 ... and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses *entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* 📖

Ex 18:13-18, 21-23 The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. ¹⁴When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?” ¹⁵And Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God; ¹⁶when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.” ¹⁷Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸*You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone.* 📖 ... ²¹*Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.* ²²*And let them judge the people at all times.* Every great matter they shall bring to you, but *any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you.* ²³*If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.”* 📖

This occurrence also appears to be in view in Deuteronomy 1:9-18, with there being a number of parallels, as seen in 1:15. There Moses says, “So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes.”

Num 11:14, 16-17 [Moses:] *I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me.* 📖 ... ¹⁶*Then the LORD said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy men of the elders*



of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. ¹⁷And I will come down and talk with you there. And *I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.* 

Here it is God who initiates the delegating of work, indicating that he would anoint and empower the seventy elders Moses selected with the Holy Spirit for them to help Moses.

1Chr 6:31 These are *the men whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the LORD* after the ark rested there. 

1Chr 26:32 *King David appointed him and his brothers, 2,700 men of ability, heads of fathers' houses, to have the oversight of the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of the Manassites for everything pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king.* 

2Chr 19:5, 8 *He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city,*  ... ⁸*Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases.* They had their seat at Jerusalem. 

Mark 3:14-15 *And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵and have authority to cast out demons.* 

Jesus appointed the apostles, to be with him and do his work.

✦ Nurture new and prospective leaders:

Deut 3:28 *But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see.* 

Mark 3:14-15 above is also illustrative of the nurturing of new or prospective leaders. There Jesus both takes his disciples with him – enabling them to see and learn how he ministers – and delegates work to them.

Be gentle and sparing in the use of authority . . .

See also:

- [1Cor 4:21](#) 

1Thes 2:7, 11-12 *But we were gentle^s among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.*  ... ¹¹For

you know how, *like a father with his children,* ¹²*we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.* 

^s Some manuscripts *infants*

Complementing the comparison with a mother (v. 7), the likening of Paul's dealings with the Thessalonians to that of a father (v. 11) – along with the apparent tone of his exhortations (v. 12a) – reflects Paul's gentleness and measured use of authority.

Heb 5:2 *He [a high priest] can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.* 

Philem 1:8-9 *Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—* 

2Cor 1:24 *Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.* 

2Cor 13:9-10 *For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong.* Your restoration is what we pray for. ¹⁰For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, *that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.* 

The phrase “when we are weak” (v. 9) appears to allude back to v. 4 where Paul spoke of being weak in Christ – “we also are weak in him” – quite possibly a reference to Paul's non-assertiveness that he had displayed on his previous visit to Corinth. Here in v. 9 then, Paul may be meaning that he was more than happy to be “weak” – i.e. not needing to be harsh in the use of his authority (v. 10) – if they were strong in the faith.

1Tim 5:1-2 *Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.* 

In addition to the command explicitly regarding the exercising of authority in v. 1a, vv. 1b-2 contain further complementary instructions.

1Pet 5:3 *... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.* 

Mark 10:42-45 *And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered *rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.* ⁴³But it shall not be so among you. But*



whoever would be great among you must be your servant,^t
⁴⁴and whoever would be first among you must be slave^u of all.
⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,
 and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

^t Greek *diakonos*

^u Greek *bondservant (doulos)*

Neh 5:15 *The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration^v forty shekels^w of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.*

^v Compare Vulgate; Hebrew *took from them with food and wine afterward*

^w A *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

In addition to not lording it over those under them, leaders should not take advantage of their authority, as governors preceding Nehemiah had done in demanding quantities of silver in addition to supplies.

Prov 28:16 *A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.*

... but exercise authority where necessary

1Cor 4:18-21 Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. ²¹What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

In v. 20 Paul is implying that if need be he would come to the Corinthians ready to exercise power, the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2:4-5).

2Cor 10:2, 6, 10-11 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. ... ⁶being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. ... ¹⁰For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” ¹¹Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.

In v. 6, Paul is probably speaking essentially of “obedience” to Christ (cf. v. 5), but he may have in view obedience to himself as an apostle of Christ. He appears to be saying that he will be ready to punish every act of disobedience – presumably primarily that of his opponents – once the

Corinthian church as a whole was obedient. As such his view would probably have been that there was no point in him trying to take action against his opponents until he was sure of the obedience and support of the rest of the church.

2Cor 13:2-3 *I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—* ³since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.

Note that in v. 3 Paul implies that his authority and power comes ultimately from Jesus Christ, who worked through him.

1Thes 4:2 For you know what *instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.*

Paul gave the Thessalonians instructions by “the authority of the Lord Jesus” (GNT, NCV, NIV).

2Thes 3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will *do the things that we command.*

Exercising of authority is apparent in the issuing of commands (cf. 1Thes 4:2 ↑; 1Tim 1:3 ↓; 1Tim 4:11 ↓).

1Tim 1:3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may *charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ...*

1Tim 4:11-12 *Command and teach these things.* ¹²Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

In v. 12 Paul urges Timothy to establish his authority through leading by example.

Titus 2:15 Declare these things; *exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*

Leaders should both exhort and rebuke with full authority, exercising in their church the authority that their church has granted to them.

† The special authority bestowed on the disciples:

Matt 18:18 Truly, I say to you, *whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^x in heaven.*

^x Or *shall have been bound . . . shall have been loosed*

This may be interpreted in at least two ways. It may mean that the disciples would have the authority to decide what would be prohibited or permitted (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) in the kingdom. Alternatively, if the rendering in the text note is



taken, it would instead be speaking of taking action that reflects what has already been determined in heaven. (This is probably the more common interpretation.) Note that in 16:18-19 this authority is given to Peter alone (v. 19) in his role as the “rock” on which Jesus would build his church (v. 18), whereas here it appears to be extended to the other disciples. The context even suggests that it is applicable to other leaders or churches.

Be an example for church members to imitate

See also:

- [1Tim 4:12](#) ↑

Titus 2:7 *Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ...* 📖

1Pet 5:3 ... not domineering over those in your charge, but *being examples to the flock.* 📖

1Thes 1:5b-7 *You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.* 📖

Note that v. 7 points out how the Thessalonians – who had imitated Paul and his associate leaders as well as the Lord (v. 6a) – themselves in turn became examples to other believers.

2Thes 3:7-9 For you yourselves know how *you ought to imitate us*, because we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. ⁹It was not because we do not have that right, but *to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.* 📖

1Cor 4:16-17 *Urge you, then, be imitators of me.* ¹⁷That is why I sent^y you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, *to remind you of my ways in Christ,^z as I teach them everywhere in every church.* 📖

^y Or *am sending*

^z Some manuscripts add *Jesus*

1Cor 10:32-33 *Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.* 📖

1Cor 11:1 *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.* 📖

Gal 4:12a *Brothers,^a I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are.* 📖

^a Or *Brothers and sisters*; also verses 28, 31

Note that the last clause speaks of Paul taking steps to identify himself with the Galatians (cf. 1Cor 9:19-22), aiding them in identifying with him and his example.

Phil 4:9 *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.* 📖

2Tim 3:10 *You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ...* 📖

Paul could point to his own words, actions, motives and character as being exemplary.

Phil 3:17 *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.* 📖

Heb 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and *imitate their faith.* 📖

The readers are encouraged to remember the lives of their former leaders (who had presumably passed away) and the outcomes that their lives had for the kingdom, as a stimulus to imitating their faith.

✚ **Going into battle, Gideon urged his men to follow his lead:**

Judg 7:17-18 And he said to them, *“Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. ¹⁸When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) Caring for Church Members

See also:

- c) *Encourage Each Other*, p. 1330

Subsections

- Be a shepherd taking care of God's flock
- Pray for church members
- Strengthen members in the faith
- Exhort and urge members on in aspects of the Christian life
- Follow up and pastor members by visiting them . . .
- . . . or by writing letters to them
- Serve church members
- Work hard at helping church members
- Be prepared to suffer hardship for church members

Be a shepherd taking care of God's flock

Acts 20:28-31 *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God,^b which he obtained with his own blood.^c ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.* 

^b Some manuscripts *of the Lord*

^c Or *with the blood of his Own*

The title "overseer" (v. 28a; cf. **1Pet 5:2** ↓) indicates a role of overseeing or watching over a church – not dissimilar to a shepherd watching over his flock. In v. 31, the warning to "be alert" points to the need to guard the flock.

1Pet 5:1-2 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ²*shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight,^d not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;^e not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ...* 

^d Some manuscripts omit *exercising oversight*

^e Some manuscripts omit *as God would have you*

Num 27:16-17 "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint *a man over the congregation* ¹⁷*who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.*" 

2Sam 5:2 In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, *'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'* 

1Chr 17:6 In all places where I have moved with all Israel, did I speak a word with any of *the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people*, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" 

Ps 78:70-71 He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹*from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people*, Israel his inheritance. 

Jer 23:4 I will set *shepherds over them who will care for them*, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD. 

Ezek 34:2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! *Should not shepherds feed the sheep?* 

John 21:15-16 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "*Feed my lambs.*" ¹⁶He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "*Tend my sheep.*" 

Hos 12:13 By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and *by a prophet he was guarded.* 

This and Hebrews 13:17a below do not use a shepherd/flock analogy, but do further speak of the need for leaders to take care of their people.

Heb 13:17a Obey your leaders and submit to them, for *they are keeping watch over your souls*, as those who will have to give an account. 



Pray for church members

See also:

- 1Thes 3:10 ↓
- a) *Pray for Each Other (I): General*, p. 1322
- b) *Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask*, p. 1325

Note that the section cross-referenced above contains a number of examples of prayers for church members or God's people, by Paul and other leaders.

Phil 1:3-4 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ...

Col 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ...

Num 14:19-20 [Moses:] Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now." ²⁰Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word.

Num 21:7-8 And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."

2Chr 30:18-20 For a majority of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than as prescribed. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD pardon everyone ¹⁹who sets his heart to seek God, the LORD, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness."^f ²⁰And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.

^f Hebrew not according to the cleanness of holiness

2Chr 30:27 Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to his holy habitation in heaven.

1Sam 7:5, 8-9 Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." ... ⁸And the people of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines."⁹So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as

a whole burnt offering to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him.

Jer 42:1-4 Then all the commanders of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest, came near ²and said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the LORD your God for us, for all this remnant—because we are left with but a few, as your eyes see us— ³that the LORD your God may show us the way we should go, and the thing that we should do."⁴Jeremiah the prophet said to them, "I have heard you. Behold, I will pray to the LORD your God according to your request, and whatever the LORD answers you I will tell you. I will keep nothing back from you."

Joel 2:17 Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, "Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations." Why should they say among the peoples, "Where is their God?"

^g Or reproach, that the nations should rule over them

2Sam 6:18 And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.

Blessing people in this way is in effect praying for them (cf. 2Chr 30:27 ↑).

† Samuel considered that any failure of his to pray for the people would be sinning against God:

1Sam 12:23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.

Strengthen members in the faith

Acts 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Acts 16:4-5 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

The churches were strengthened through Paul and his co-workers delivering the sound decision of the apostles and elders on an issue that had caused division and angst in the churches (cf. 15:1-29).



Rom 1:11-12 For I long to see you, *that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you*— ¹²*that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.*

A number of commentators interpret “impart to you some spiritual gift” (v. 11) as not referring to Paul bestowing on them a spiritual gift. Rather they think Paul means either that he intended to use a spiritual gift of his own to strengthen them or that he would confer on them a spiritual blessing. In v. 12 Paul qualifies what he has just said, indicating that he hoped there would in fact be mutual encouragement.

2Cor 12:19b It is in the sight of God that *we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved.*

2Cor 13:10 For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of *the authority that the Lord has given me for building up* and not for tearing down.

1Thes 3:1-2, 9-10 Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, ²and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker^h in the gospel of Christ, *to establish and exhort you in your faith,* ... ⁹For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and *supply what is lacking in your faith?*

^h Some manuscripts *servant*

Strengthening church members in the faith involves strengthening their own faith, as Paul speaks of here.

Phil 1:25 Convinced of this, I know that *I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,* ...

Titus 1:1 *Paul, a servantⁱ of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,* ...

ⁱ Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

The purpose of Paul's work was to help or further the faith of God's chosen ones, which went hand in hand with deepening their knowledge of the truth (cf. [Col 1:28 ↓](#); [Col 2:2 ↓](#)).

Col 1:28 *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

Col 2:1-2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ²*that their hearts may be encouraged,*

being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ...

† **Leaders are to use their spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ:**

Eph 4:11-12 *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^j and teachers,^k ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,* ...

^j Or *pastors*

^k Or *the shepherd-teachers*

This is usually understood to mean that those who are given such leadership functions by Christ (v. 11) have been gifted as such to prepare the rest of God's people for service (v. 12a). This preparing of others is itself an example of strengthening God's people in their faith. Additionally, the end result is that in turn the whole church is built up (v. 12b) or strengthened.

Exhort and urge members on in aspects of the Christian life

See also:

- [1Thes 3:2 ↑](#)

1Tim 4:13 Until I come, *devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*

2Tim 4:2 ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and *exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

Titus 2:15 Declare these things; *exhort and rebuke with all authority.* Let no one disregard you.

Luke 3:18 *So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.*

Acts 11:23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and *he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,* ...

1Thes 2:11-12 For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹²*we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God,* who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.



1Thes 3:2 ... and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker^l in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ...

^l Some manuscripts *servant*

1Tim 6:2b *Teach and urge these things.*

Eph 4:1 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ...*

1Thes 4:1 Finally, then, brothers,^m we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

^mOr *brothers and sisters*; also verses 10, 13

1Thes 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,ⁿ encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

ⁿ Or *disorderly, or undisciplined*

Rom 12:1 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^o by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*^p

^o Or *brothers and sisters*

^p Or *your rational service*

Follow up and pastor members by visiting them . . .

See also:

- **1Tim 3:14-15** ; **2Cor 10:11**

Parallels can be drawn here between how Paul followed up whole churches by visiting them and how leaders ought to follow up and pastor church members in part by visiting them. (A similar point can be made regarding writing to believers, as per the following subsection.)

Acts 15:36, 41 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." ...
⁴¹And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Acts 9:32 Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

Acts 18:23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

On Paul's third missionary journey he visited churches that he had established or ministered to on his earlier trips.

2Cor 1:15-16 Because I was sure of this, *I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a second experience of grace.*
¹⁶*I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea.*

2Cor 12:14a Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for *I seek not what is yours but you.*

Paul planned to visit the Corinthians because he wanted to secure them, for Christ.

Phil 2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus *to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.*

Unable to follow up the Philippians by visiting them himself, Paul sent Timothy instead (cf. **1Thes 3:2**).

1Thes 3:2, 10 ... and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker^q in the gospel of Christ, *to establish and exhort you in your faith,* ...¹⁰*as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?*

^q Some manuscripts *servant*

2Jn 1:12 Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead *I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.*

The last clause may well speak of joy from achieving pastoral objectives on visiting his readers, along with having fellowship with them.

. . . or by writing letters to them

2Cor 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia: ...*

Here Paul begins his second letter to the Corinthian church – to teach, exhort and encourage them.

Col 4:16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

2Thes 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and *hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.*



1Tim 3:14-15 *I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.* 📖

Heb 13:22 *I appeal to you, brothers,^r bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.* 📖

^r Or *brothers and sisters*

1Pet 5:12 *By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.* 📖

2Pet 3:1-2 *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ²that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ...* 📖

1Jn 2:1, 7, 12-14, 26 *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 📖 ... ⁷Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. 📖 ... ¹²I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. ¹³I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. 📖 ... ²⁶I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.* 📖

In vv. 12-14 John reassures his readers that he writes to them because of their soundness in the faith. This illustrates that even church members who are strong Christians should be given attention and follow-up – particularly with the common threat from false teachers (v. 26).

2Cor 10:9-11 *I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters. ¹⁰For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account." ¹¹Let such a person understand that *what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.* 📖*

Verse 1 suggests that Paul tried to accomplish in his letters what he would have tried to do if he was present – indicative of the fact that letters are a way of ministering in one's absence.

✦ In his letters Paul spoke of being present with young churches "in spirit":

Col 2:5 *For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.* 📖

Likewise in 1 Corinthians 5:3a Paul says: "For though absent in body, I am present in spirit ..." And somewhat similarly, in 1 Thessalonians 2:17 Paul says: "... we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart ..." Such terminology points both to Paul's closeness to and care for such churches in his absence – both of which he builds on as he pastors them in his letters.

Serve church members

See also:

- *Willingness to serve*, p. 1477

Luke 22:26b-27 *Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.* 📖

Here Jesus points out an irony in God's kingdom: one who rules, the "greatest" (v. 26b), must serve the others.

Rom 15:30-31 *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ...* 📖

Rom 16:1 *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant^s of the church at Cenchreae, ...* 📖

^s Or *deaconess*

2Cor 4:5 *For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants^t for Jesus' sake.* 📖

^t Greek *bondservants*

2Cor 11:8 *I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.* 📖

Num 16:9 ... is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do service in the tabernacle of the LORD and to stand before the congregation to minister to them, ... 📖



To “minister” involves serving. In fact here the phrase “minister to them” can be rendered “serve them” (NCV™, NKJV, NRSV).

2Chr 35:3 And he said to the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the LORD, “Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. You need not carry it on your shoulders. *Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel.* 📖

Work hard at helping church members

2Cor 12:15a *I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.* 📖

Along with giving everything he had for them, Paul was willing to give himself fully in his service to the Corinthians.

Col 1:28-29 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹*For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* 📖

Col 2:1 For I want you to know *how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ...* 📖

Col 4:13 For I bear him [Epaphras] witness that *he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.* 📖

2Pet 1:15 *And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.* 📖

1Thes 2:9 *For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.* 📖

Note that here Paul is speaking of working hard so that he would be able to help them, without being a financial burden, rather than of actually in helping them.

✦ Leaders should lead with zeal:

Rom 12:8 ... the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; *the one who leads,^u with zeal;* the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. 📖

^u Or *gives aid*

Leaders should carry out their leadership duties with zeal, which induces hard work.

Be prepared to suffer hardship for church members

2Cor 1:6 *If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.* 📖

2Cor 4:12 *So death is at work in us, but life in you.* 📖

Here Paul alludes to the great physical sufferings – and their toll on him – that he underwent in his work (cf. vv. 7-11), work that was for the benefit of the Corinthians’ spiritual life.

Eph 3:1 *For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—* 📖

Paul is referring or alluding to his imprisonment in Rome, in the course of his service to Jesus Christ for the sake of the Ephesians and Gentiles in general.

Col 1:24 *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ...* 📖

Paul considered that what he had suffered for the Colossians was a necessary part in the completion (cf. GNT, NLT) or continuation (cf. CEV) of Christ’s sufferings for the sake of his people.

2Tim 2:10 *Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.* 📖

✦ Paul was prepared to cover any costs for Onesimus:

Philem 1:18 *If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



e) Dealing with Sin in the Church

See also:

- ... *but exercise authority where necessary*, p. 1482
- e) *Guarding against False Teachers*, p. 1529

Confrontation and rebuke are needed when a church member sins and does not deal with it themselves. If confrontation and rebuke prove to be ineffective, then disassociation is required.

Subsections

- Confront church members over sin
- Rebuke members for their sin . . .
- . . . and warn them to stop sinning
- Expel unrepentant sinners . . .
- . . . This is partly for the benefit of the offenders themselves
- Have multiple witnesses in disciplinary procedures
- Restoring a person who has sinned
- Note: Unchecked sin corrupts others

Confront church members over sin

Ezek 16:2 Son of man, *make known to Jerusalem her abominations, ...* 

Just as the OT prophets confronted the people as a whole with their sin (cf. [Mic 3:8 ↓](#); [Isa 58:1 ↓](#); [Lam 2:14 ↓](#)), so today church leaders should confront both individual church members and, when applicable, whole churches with their sin.

Mic 3:8 *But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.* 

Isa 58:1 Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; *declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.* 

2Chr 26:18 ... and they [priests] withstood King Uzziah and said to him, *“It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God.”* 

Lam 2:14 Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not *exposed your iniquity* to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading. 

The prophets were supposed to expose the people’s sin – which the prophets in question had failed to do.

Matt 18:15-17 *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.* 

These instructions are for believers or church members themselves in confronting fellow believers over sin. But the instructions are also applicable to leaders in their approach to confronting church members who have sinned and not repented.

Gal 2:11-14 But when Cephas came to Antioch, *I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.* ¹²For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴*But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”* 

Paul confronted and rebuked Cephas/Peter because his action was not consistent with the gospel (v. 14a) – nor with how he had acted before certain Jews had arrived (v. 12a). What Peter did was particularly serious as it implied that living as a Gentile was not good enough for a believer, and so pressured Gentiles to follow Jewish customs – as alluded to in Paul’s rebuke (v. 14b).

‡ Where necessary, call attention to sinful actions:

3Jn 1:10 So if I come, *I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.* 

John speaks of telling others of the malicious gossiping of a church member (Diotrephes) and possibly also to the other sinful actions listed. Here it would have been particularly appropriate to expose such behavior as it was ongoing and was affecting other people, even the church as a whole.



Rebuke members for their sin . . .

See also:

- [Gal 2:14](#) ↑
- *Note: Instructions and insights on giving rebuke*, p. 1646

1Tim 5:20 *As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.* 📖

The reference is to publicly rebuking church elders who persist in sin and is not implying that all members should be rebuked publicly.

Titus 1:9, 13-14 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound^v doctrine and also to *rebuke those who contradict it.* 📖 ...
¹³This testimony is true. Therefore *rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,* ¹⁴*not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.* 📖

^v Or *healthy*; also verse 13

The command to “rebuke them sharply” (v. 13) appears to refer to church members influenced by false teaching and even those actively supporting it – although not necessarily the main instigators (those “who turn away from the truth”, v. 14) who may well have been outsiders. Presumably the rebuke needed to be sharp because the actions of those in question gravely threatened the fabric of the whole church.

2Tim 4:2 ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; *reprove, rebuke,* and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 📖

Paul’s instruction to Timothy to “reprove” or reprimand church members is probably at least in part in reference to sin, as with the subsequent instruction to “rebuke”.

Titus 2:15 Declare these things; exhort and *rebuke with all authority.* Let no one disregard you. 📖

1Sam 13:13 And *Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you.* For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 📖

As the spiritual leader of God’s people, Samuel here rebukes King Saul for his sin.

Matt 16:21-23 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you,

Lord!^w This shall never happen to you.” ²³But *he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance^x to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”* 📖

^w Or “[May God be] merciful to you, Lord!”

^x Greek *stumbling block*

By his use of “Satan” (v. 23) in rebuking Peter – who was himself inappropriately rebuking Jesus (v. 22) – it is apparent that Jesus could see an agenda of Satan in Peter’s words. Jesus was not suggesting that Peter was possessed by Satan, but possibly some satanic influence is implied.

Luke 3:19-20 But *Herod the tetrarch, who had been reprovved by him for Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done,* ²⁰added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison. 📖

This suggests that in addition to exhorting church members, leaders have a role in speaking out against wrongs in the wider society.

1Cor 4:14 *I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.* 📖

2Cor 7:8-9 For *even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while.* ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because *you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.* 📖

Paul had earlier written a letter rebuking the Corinthians for sin. (Quite possibly this was a letter that has been lost, rather than 1 Corinthians.) Despite the pain it had caused (v. 8), it had the desired effect – producing godly grief and leading them to repent (v. 9).

. . . and warn them to stop sinning

See also:

- [Titus 3:10](#) ↓

2Ki 17:13 Yet *the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.”* 📖

Neh 9:26 Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed *your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you,* and they committed great blasphemies. 📖



Ezek 33:9 But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

1Cor 15:34 Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

Note that the sin referred to appears to be that of denying the resurrection.

2Cor 13:2 I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them—

Gal 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy,^y drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

^y Some manuscripts add murder

✦ Where applicable, warn the people generally not to sin:

1Sam 12:15 But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king.^z

^z Septuagint; Hebrew fathers

Expel unrepentant sinners . . .

See also:

- *Note: Unchecked sin corrupts others*, p. 1495
- *Get rid of sinful influences*, p. 1858

Expulsion of unrepentant sinners from the church is necessary primarily to prevent their behavior from adversely affecting the rest of the church. (This danger is discussed later in *Note: Unchecked sin corrupts others*, p. 1495.) It also has the ultimate good of the offender in view, as the following subsection indicates.

Matt 18:17-18 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^a in heaven.

^a Or shall have been bound . . . shall have been loosed

To treat one as “a Gentile and a tax collector” (v. 17) is to disassociate from such a person, with the tax collectors of the

day being viewed as traitors and exploiters. In v. 18, most likely the binding in this context alludes to the expulsion of a sinner and the loosing to the reinstatement of such a sinner, once they have repented. As referred to earlier, the assertion that such things will be done “in heaven” is usually understood in view of the rendering in the text note to mean that such actions would be indicative of what has already been determined by God.

1Cor 5:1-2, 6-7, 11-13 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. ²And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. . . . ⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. . . . ¹¹But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—even to eat with such a one. ¹²For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³God judges^b those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

^b Or will judge

2Thes 3:6 Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.

Titus 3:10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, . . .

Num 15:30-31 But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.

To act as such “with a high hand” (v. 30) is to do so “defiantly” (NASB, NIV). Sinning defiantly actually blasphemes God (v. 30) as it is very dishonoring to him. This is largely because it: discredits his laws and he himself as the one who instituted the laws; and shows disdain towards him as the one to whom we are accountable for breaking the laws. Anyone who so readily dishonored God was to be cut off from his people – a stipulation that is not without application in today’s church.



Deut 13:5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. *So you shall purge the evil^c from your midst.* 

^c Or *evil person*

The importance of the final command is underlined by it being repeated a further eight times in Deuteronomy. It is also referred to in Judges 20:13 and quoted in 1 Corinthians 5:13 above.

1Cor 14:37-38 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that *the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.* ³⁸*If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.* 

The final clause may be speaking of church members needing to ignore people who ignore the Lord's commands – hence its inclusion here. Alternatively, it may be speaking of such people being ignored by God or Jesus Christ, presumably on Judgment Day.

... This is partly for the benefit of the offenders themselves

1Cor 5:4-5 When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵*you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.*^d 

^d Some manuscripts add *Jesus*

The phrase “deliver this man to Satan” (v. 5; cf. **1Tim 1:20** ↓) is commonly understood as meaning that the man was to be cast out of the church (cf. NLT) and so into the world, Satan's domain, open to affliction by him. The following clause – “for the destruction of the flesh” probably means that affliction by Satan would act as a purifying process leading to the destruction of the man's sinful nature. Ultimately expelling such a person is done in the hope that they will be saved (v. 5b).

1Tim 1:19-20 ...holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ²⁰among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, *whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.* 

2Thes 3:14-15 *If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.* ¹⁵Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. 

The given aim (v. 14b) of dissociating or expulsion, alludes to the repentance of the previously unrepentant sinner. In addition, note that v. 15 qualifies the measure, implying that the disassociation was not to be done without compassion. Quite likely the hope of reconciliation is in view as well as correction.

Have multiple witnesses in disciplinary procedures

Deut 19:15 *A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.* 

Matt 18:16 *But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.* 

2Cor 13:1-2 This is the third time I am coming to you. *Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.* ²I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them— 

In quoting Deuteronomy 19:15 (v. 1b) Paul no doubt has in view dealing with sin amongst the Corinthians (v. 2).

1Tim 5:19 *Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.* 

Deut 17:2-7 If there is found among you, within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing his covenant, ³and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden, ⁴and it is told you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abomination has been done in Israel, ⁵then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones. ⁶*On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.* ⁷*The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.* So you shall purge^e the evil^f from your midst. 



^e Septuagint *drive out*; also verse 12

^f Or *evil person*; also verse 12

That the witnesses were to be the ones to begin the punishment was not only appropriate but would impress on them the seriousness of their testimony. Note that this passage may well be in view in Hebrews 10:28 – “Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

✦ Be prepared to punish wrongdoing:

2Cor 7:11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, *what punishment!* At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. 

The phrase “what punishment!” is a reference to being prepared to “punish wrongdoing” (GNT, NASB, NLT, NRSV).

Restoring a person who has sinned

Note that the following instructions largely appear to have in view people who have repented of their sin.

2Cor 2:5-8, 10-11 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. ⁶For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, ⁷so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.  ... ¹⁰Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, *what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ,* ¹¹so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs. 

Paul urges the Corinthians to forgive and discontinue the punishment of a person who had “caused pain” (v. 5) – and presumably had since repented. Continuing it would be destructive, unnecessary and possibly even vindictive. In vv. 10-11, Paul makes the important point that not forgiving such a person would leave the church members themselves susceptible to Satan’s schemes. Note that vv. 5, 10 suggest that the sin in question may have been something against Paul, which was also an affront to the Corinthians – hence Paul speaks of both them and him forgiving the offender (vv. 10-11).

Gal 6:1-2 Brothers,^g if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 

^g Or *Brothers and sisters*; also verse 18

Note that the context suggests that the phrase “one another’s burdens” (v. 2) encompasses the spiritual weaknesses of others. As such v. 2 would be speaking of supporting each other in overcoming sin, in line with v.1.

1Jn 5:16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God^h will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. 

^h Greek *he*

Praying for someone who has committed sin is shown here to be important in working for their restoration. Note that “death” probably refers to spiritual death, but some understand it to denote physical death. (Likewise in James 5:20 below “death” probably refers to spiritual death but could be interpreted as denoting physical death.) There are a number of possibilities for the meaning of “sin that leads to death”, including: not believing in Jesus Christ; habitual sin; blaspheming the Holy Spirit; and – in light of the context of this letter – denying the incarnation.

Jude 1:22-23 And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garmentⁱ stained by the flesh. 

ⁱ Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

In v. 22, “those who doubt” – and possibly also the others mentioned in v. 23 – appear to be people who had been influenced by the false teachers spoken of beforehand (cf. vv. 3-19), influenced to the point of doubting doctrinal truth. In v. 23b, with the reference to “fear” Jude exhorts his readers to be wary when helping those who had sinned, lest they themselves become entangled in sin, as no one is immune to temptation (cf. Gal 6:1 ↑).

Isa 57:14 And it shall be said, “Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people’s way.” 

This speaks of aiding God’s repentant people to return to him by removing any obstacles in the way – and so is applicable to helping repentant sinners in the church.

✦ The importance of turning back a wayward believer:

James 5:19-20 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. 



Note: Unchecked sin corrupts others

See also:

- *Note: False teachers often succeed in leading people astray . . .*, p. 1533
- *. . . False teachers can lead many astray*, p. 1533

1Cor 5:6 Your boasting is not good. *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?* 

Leaven, like yeast, would spread throughout and affect a whole lump of dough. Unchecked sin can likewise spread throughout and affect a whole church.

Gal 2:13 *And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.* 

Heb 12:15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; *that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ...* 

Deut 29:18 Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. *Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, ...* 

Note that this verse is in view in Hebrews 12:15 immediately above.

1Ki 14:16 And he will give Israel up because of *the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and made Israel to sin.* 

King Jeroboam is a prime example of one whose sin – largely through his position of power – led to the corruption of others.

✦ Disciplinary measures serve as warnings to others:

Deut 13:10-11 You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹¹*And all Israel shall hear and fear and never again do any such wickedness as this among you.* 

Other similar examples of such measures and their benefit as warnings can be found in Deuteronomy 17:12-13; 19:18-20; 21:21. Similarly 1 Timothy 5:20b speaks of rebuking elders publicly “so that the rest may stand in fear.” See also *Note: God’s judgments serve as examples and warnings to others*, p. 426.

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) Women in Leadership

Subsections

- In the OT Israelite nation, some women had roles as leaders . . .
- . . . and some women were prophetesses
- In the NT church, some women had significant ministerial roles . . .
- . . . One such role was prophesying
- Controversial passages on women not speaking in church
- Note: The oneness and interdependence of women and men “in” Jesus Christ

In the OT Israelite nation, some women had roles as leaders . . .

Judg 4:4-9a, 14-15 Now *Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.* ⁵*She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment.* ⁶*She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-*naphtali* and said to him, “Has not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of *Naphtali* and the people of *Zebulun*.’”* ⁷*And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand?”* ⁸*Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”* ⁹*And she said, “I will surely go with you.*  *...¹⁴And Deborah said to Barak, “Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the LORD go out before you?”* So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him. ¹⁵*And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak by the edge of the sword. And Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot.* 

Barak’s reply (v. 8) showed a lack of faith – later rebuked by Deborah (cf. v. 9b) – but also underlined his recognition of Deborah’s leadership role.



Judg 5:7 The villagers ceased in Israel; they ceased to be until I arose; *I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel.* 

The phrase “a mother in Israel” has the sense “a mother for Israel” (GNT, NLT), implying that Deborah had the role of leader and protector of Israel.

Mic 6:4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and *I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.* 

Miriam was the sister of Moses and Aaron (cf. [Ex 15:20](#) ↓).

... and some women were prophetesses

See also:

▪ [Judg 4:4](#) ↑

OT prophetesses (and prophets) did not only make prophecies. Being authorized to speak for God, they gave commands and other directions from God. As such their role was also one of leadership.

Ex 15:20 Then *Miriam the prophetess*, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. 

2Ki 22:14-15 So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah went to *Huldah the prophetess*, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter), and they talked with her. ¹⁵And *she said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: “Tell the man who sent you to me, ...* 

In the subsequent verses the prophetess Huldah gives her prophecy from God (cf. vv. 16-20).

Isa 8:3a And I went to *the prophetess* [Isaiah’s wife], and she conceived and bore a son. 

✦ The wise woman of the city of Abel:

2Sam 20:15-22 And all the men who were with Joab came and besieged him [Sheba] in Abel of Beth-maacah. They cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart, and they were battering the wall to throw it down. ¹⁶*Then a wise woman called from the city, “Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, ‘Come here, that I may speak to you.’”* ¹⁷And he came near her, and the woman said, “Are you Joab?” He answered, “I am.” Then she said to him, “Listen to the words of your servant.” And he answered, “I am listening.” ¹⁸Then she said, “They used to say in former times, ‘Let them but ask counsel at Abel,’ and so they settled a matter. ¹⁹I am one of those who

are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?” ²⁰Joab answered, “Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! ²¹That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba the son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David. Give up him alone, and I will withdraw from the city.” And the woman said to Joab, “Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall.” ²²*Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom.* And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, every man to his home. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king. 

The wise woman played a leadership role. Firstly she addressed Joab on behalf of her city (vv. 16-19). Then she advised her people on the best course of action (v. 22) – advice which they took, to their betterment.

In the NT church, some women had significant ministerial roles . . .

Acts 18:26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but *when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately.* 

Here a woman, Priscilla (cf. [Rom 16:3](#) ↓), is involved in the instruction of a noted preacher, Apollos.

Rom 16:1-4 I commend to you *our sister Phoebe, a servant[†] of the church at Cenchreae*, ²that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for *she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.* ³*Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,* ⁴who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. 

† Or *deaconess*

In v. 1, the Greek translated “servant” (v. 1) has also been rendered as “deaconess” (ESV text note, AMP) and “deacon” (NLT, NRSV). Thus it probably refers to a recognized ministerial position, suggesting that Phoebe was “a leader in the church” (CEV). Verse 4 suggests that Priscilla (v. 3; cf. [Acts 18:26](#) ↑) exercised some kind of leadership, implying that her and her husband’s ministry encompassed “all the churches of the Gentiles”.

Rom 16:6-7, 12 *Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you.* ⁷*Greet Andronicus and Junia,^k my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles,^l and they were in Christ before me.*  ... ¹²*Greet those workers in the Lord,*



Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. 

^k Or *Junias*

^l Or *messengers*

Here Paul lists a number of women who appear to have had notable ministerial roles, especially Junia who is said to have been “well known to the apostles” (v. 7).

Phil 4:3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion,^m *help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.* 

^mOr *loyal Syzygus*; Greek *true yokefellow*

... One such role was prophesying

See also:

- [1Cor 11:5](#) 

Acts 2:17-18 And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and *your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸*even on my male servantsⁿ and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.* 

ⁿ Greek *bondservants*; twice in this verse

Here Peter quotes a prophecy from Joel as having been fulfilled in the manifestation of the Spirit that had just occurred (cf. vv. 1-12). Although only men had been spoken of in this occurrence (cf. vv. 7, 15), presumably Peter saw an ongoing fulfillment of this prophecy in the church, including prophesying by women.

Acts 21:9 He had *four unmarried daughters, who prophesied.* 

This is referring to the daughters of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven chosen for ministry in 6:2-6.

‡ An earlier NT prophetess:

Luke 2:36a, 38 And *there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.*  ... ³⁸*And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.* 

Note that this was at the time of Jesus’ birth, prior to the Christian church.

Controversial passages on women not speaking in church

See also:

- [Wives should submit to their husbands](#), p. 1697

1Cor 14:33b-37 *As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ³⁷If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.* 

Some take this on face value, understanding it to mean that women should remain silent in church and not be in positions of teaching or authority, as they are to be “in submission” (v. 34b) to their husbands. Others believe that in saying that women should remain silent in church, Paul has in view social norms of the day, where apparently it was considered shameful for a woman to speak in public. Another view is that these instructions were aimed at curbing noisy and disorderly church meetings – in particular disorderly expression of some spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church (cf. vv. 26-33a). Proponents of the first view see these instructions as being relevant to every Christian church in every age and culture, unlike those who hold to the latter two interpretations. A further viewpoint is that these instructions were regarding married women, and so not necessarily applicable to all women. Note that “as the Law also says” (v. 34b) appears to have Genesis 3:16 primarily in view.

1Tim 2:11-14 *Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.* 

The use of Adam and Eve as validation, indicates that Paul’s statements in vv. 11-12 were not based on local culture. Verse 13 implies that the created order entails headship or authority. Regarding v. 14, two of the more common explanations are: it is implying that women are inherently more susceptible to being deceived; and it is illustrating that a woman taking the lead may well have negative effects.



‡ Verses that appear to be referring to women praying or prophesying aloud in church:

1Cor 11:4-5, 13 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵but *every wife^o who prays or prophesies* with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. ☞ ... ¹³Judge for yourselves: *is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered?* ☞

^o In verses 5-13, the Greek word *gunē* is translated *wife* in verses that deal with wearing a veil, a sign of being married in first-century culture

If these verses are referring to women praying and prophesying aloud in church, then their content contrasts with the verses above.

Note: The oneness and interdependence of women and men “in” Jesus Christ

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^p nor free, *there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ☞

^p Greek *bondservant*

Oneness in Jesus Christ takes primacy over all distinctions. In him there is no defining or ultimate distinction between men and women – for all believers are basically part of the one entity, the body of Christ. Neither male nor female is spiritually superior to the other, and both are equal before God.

1Cor 11:11-12 Nevertheless, *in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹²for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman.* And all things are from God. ☞

Paul sees women and men – and by association presumably also their roles – as being interdependent (v. 11), in accordance with their interdependence in nature (v. 12).

Pray for persecuted Christians

g) Church Members’ Duties to Leaders

See also:

- *a) Pray for Each Other (I): General*, p. 1322
- *b) Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask*, p. 1325
- *c) Encourage Each Other*, p. 1330

Subsections

- Love your leaders
- Respect and revere your leaders
- Honor your leaders
- Listen to your leaders and their teaching
- Obey your leaders
- Give your leaders material support . . .
- . . . Leaders deserve material support
- Church members can bring their leaders great joy, in loving them and others
- Church members can bring leaders joy by firm faith and obedient, godly lives

Love your leaders

See also:

- 1Thes 5:13 ↓

2Cor 6:11, 13 We have spoken freely to you,^a Corinthians; our heart is wide open. ☞ ... ¹³*In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.* ☞

^a Greek *Our mouth is open to you*

2Cor 7:2a *Make room in your hearts^r for us.* ☞

^r Greek lacks *in your hearts*

2Cor 8:7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and *in our love for you^s*—see that you excel in this act of grace also. ☞

^s Some manuscripts *in your love for us*

A number of other translation follow the alternative rendering in the text note (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV, NKJV, NLT), which speaks of the church members love for Paul.

2Cor 12:15 I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, *am I to be loved less?* ☞



The rhetorical question obviously implies that the Corinthians should love Paul all the more because of how much he gave of himself in his love for them.

✦ Pray for them:

1Thes 5:25 *Brothers, pray for us.* 📖

Here Paul calls on the Thessalonians to pray for him and his associates in their work of spreading the gospel and building God's kingdom in various regions (cf. *Pray for those spreading the gospel*, p. 1323; and *Pray to God for help in the work – and ask others to pray*, p. 1415). Such verses are readily applicable to praying for the leaders in one's own church.

Respect and revere your leaders

1Thes 5:12-13 We ask you, brothers, to *respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you*, ¹³*and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work*. Be at peace among yourselves. 📖

Lev 21:8 *You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy.* 📖

"You shall sanctify him" in this context speaks of treating the priests as holy (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV). Treating them as holy would have necessarily involved a deep respect for them. Note that "the bread of your God" refers to food sacrifices.

Josh 4:14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and *they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.* 📖

2Cor 7:15 And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, *how you received him with fear and trembling.* 📖

Honor your leaders

1Tim 5:17 *Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.* 📖

See comment below in . . . *Leaders deserve material support*, p. 1502.

Phil 2:25, 29 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 📖 ...
²⁹So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and *honor such men*, ... 📖

1Cor 16:17-18 I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, ¹⁸for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. *Give recognition to such men.* 📖

Such "recognition" would involve "acknowledgment" (NASB, NKJV) and "honor" (NLT).

Gal 4:13-14 You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴*and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.* 📖

✦ The islanders on Malta honored Paul and his companions:

Acts 28:10 *They also honored us greatly,*^t and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed. 📖

^t Greek *honored us with many honors*

At least the majority of the islanders would not have been believers (cf. v. 6), but they provide a good example for church members regarding honoring leaders.

Listen to your leaders and their teaching

See also:

- *Listen carefully to Jesus' teaching*, p. 1173
- *Pay attention to all Christian teaching*, p. 1174

Acts 2:42 *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* 📖

Acts 10:33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore *we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.* 📖

Heb 13:22 I appeal to you, brothers,^u *bear with my word of exhortation*, for I have written to you briefly. 📖

^u Or *brothers and sisters*

Deut 5:27 Go near and hear all that the LORD our God will say and speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and *we will hear and do it.* 📖



Deut 18:15, 19 [Moses:] “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen  ... [God:] ¹⁹And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. 

Based on the context, a number of commentators state that Moses is speaking here of a line of prophets, rather than just one. Jesus Christ’s mission is usually seen as a unique fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy (v. 15a). Moses’ exhortation is still very much applicable today. For believers should listen to those amongst them who speak God’s word – and in particular to Jesus Christ’s teaching.

Deut 27:9 Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, “Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the LORD your God. 

Neh 8:1-3 And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. ²So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. ³And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. 

Neh 8:13 On the second day the heads of fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law. 

These representatives of the people gathered to study the Law under Ezra’s teaching (cf. CEV).

Ps 78:1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! 

The speaker is the psalmist Asaph, who was a Levite.

Mal 2:7 For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people^v should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 

^v Hebrew *they*

Obey your leaders

See also:

▪ **Deut 5:27** 

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. 

Acts 16:4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 

2Cor 2:9 For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. 

Here “test” probably refers to testing their obedience to him (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT).

2Cor 7:15 And his [Titus’s] affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. 

Phil 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ... 

2Thes 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. 

2Thes 3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. 

Philem 1:21 Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. 

Deut 12:32 ^w “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it. 

^w Ch 13:1 in Hebrew

Here Moses is speaking to the Israelites, referring largely to the law and instructions he had passed on to them from God.

Deut 34:9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 



Josh 1:16-17 And they answered Joshua, “*All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.*”¹⁷*Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you.* Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses! 📖

Josh 22:2 ... and [Joshua] said to them, “*You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you.*” 📖

2Chr 23:8 *The Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded, and they each brought his men, who were to go off duty on the Sabbath, with those who were to come on duty on the Sabbath, for Jehoiada the priest did not dismiss the divisions.* 📖

1Cor 16:10, 15-16 When Timothy comes, *see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord,* as I am. 📖 ...¹⁵Now I urge you, brothers^x—you know that the household^y of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints—¹⁶*be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.* 📖

^x Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 20

^y Greek *house*

In v. 10 Paul urges the at times uncooperative Corinthians to not give any trouble to Timothy, who was apparently timid, so that he would be “at ease”. They were to respond to him appropriately as one who “is doing the work of the Lord”. As such they were to obey and submit to him – as to all such church workers (v. 16).

✦ Be committed to your leaders:

2Cor 7:7, 12 ... and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as *he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me,* so that I rejoiced still more. 📖 ...¹²So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that *your earnestness for us* might be revealed to you in the sight of God. 📖

Give your leaders material support . . .

See also:

- *Note: Priests and Levites were given parts of the people's offerings, God being their inheritance,* p. 399
- *Support others spreading the gospel . . . ,* p. 1757
- *. . . Give hospitality and aid to visiting preachers and workers,* p. 1758

Gal 6:6 *One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches.* 📖

Lev 7:34-36 *For the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed I have taken from the people of Israel, out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel.* ³⁵*This is the portion of Aaron and of his sons from the LORD's food offerings, from the day they were presented to serve as priests of the LORD.* ³⁶*The LORD commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel, from the day that he anointed them. It is a perpetual due throughout their generations.* 📖

Such portions of offerings were given to the priests for food (cf. comment below on 2 Chronicles 31:4-5).

Deut 12:19 *Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land.* 📖

Deut 18:1, 3-5 The Levitical priests, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel. *They shall eat the LORD's food offerings^z as their^a inheritance.* 📖 ...³*And this shall be the priests' due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether an ox or a sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach.* ⁴*The firstfruits of your grain, of your wine and of your oil, and the first fleece of your sheep, you shall give him.* ⁵*For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for all time.* 📖

^z Or *the offerings by fire to the LORD*

^a Hebrew *his*

2Chr 31:4-5 And he commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to *give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the LORD.* ⁵*As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.* 📖

The priests and Levites were allocated portions of offerings and tithes, allowing them to devote themselves to the work



involved in carrying out the priestly and ministerial requirements of the Law of the LORD (v. 4) – without having to set aside time to do other work for the sake of their livelihood.

Neh 12:44, 47 On that day men were appointed over *the storerooms, the contributions, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the Law for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered.* ¶ ...⁴⁷And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers; and they set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron. ¶

Luke 8:1-3 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him,²and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them^b out of their means. ¶

^b Some manuscripts *him*

... Leaders deserve material support

See also:

- Deut 18:1, 3-5 ↑; 2Chr 31:4 ↑; Neh 12:44 ↑

Matt 10:9-10 Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts,¹⁰no bag for your journey, nor two tunics^c nor sandals nor a staff, for *the laborer deserves his food.* ¶

^c Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

Here and in Luke 10:7a below Jesus is giving instructions – to his disciples here and seventy-two others below – on sending them out to do the work of proclaiming the kingdom in various towns. In both cases the final clause indicates that those in full-time work for the kingdom deserve to be supported in material matters.

Luke 10:7a And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for *the laborer deserves his wages.* ¶

1Cor 9:4-14 Do we not have the right to eat and drink?⁵Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife,⁴ as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?⁶Or is

it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

⁸Do I say these things on human authority? *Does not the Law say the same?*⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹²If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. ¶

^d Greek *a sister as wife*

Muzzling an ox “when it treads out the grain” (v. 9; cf. **1Tim 5:17-18** ↓) would unfairly prevent it from eating of the grain amidst which it was laboring, not allowing it to replenish its strength. Paul points out that this is more than relevant to workers of the gospel, who should have their needs met by those whom they work amongst.

1Tim 5:17-18 *Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.* ¹⁸For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” ¶

In v. 17, “double honor” may refer to remuneration in addition to respect for the work they do, or to extra remuneration – “double pay” (GNT, cf. CEV, NLT). The two quotations in v. 18 show that remuneration or material support is certainly involved.

2Tim 2:6 *It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.* ¶

This is quite possibly primarily referring to hardworking church leaders deservedly receiving material support from their congregation or “field” in which they labor (cf. **1Cor 9:7, 10-11** ↑). Alternatively spiritual rewards may be in view.

Num 18:21, 30-31 *To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting,* ¶ ...³⁰Therefore you shall say to them [the Levites], “When you have offered from



it the best of it, then the rest shall be counted to the Levites as produce of the threshing floor, and as produce of the winepress. ³¹And you may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward in return for your service in the tent of meeting. 

Church members can bring their leaders great joy, in loving them and others

See also:

- [Phil 4:1](#) 

2Cor 7:4, 7, 13 I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.  ... ⁷and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.  ... ¹³Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. 

In v. 4, Paul's joy – and related feelings – was in response to the Corinthians' attitude to him (v. 7), which demonstrated their love for him.

Phil 4:10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 

2Tim 1:4 As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. 

Timothy's deep love for his mentor was evidenced by his tears when they had parted. Because of this love for him, Paul knew that he would be filled with joy on seeing Timothy again. A parallel can be made with church members' love for their leader/s.

Phil 2:1-2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 

Paul states that his joy would be made complete by the Philippians' having unity and love for one another.

Phil 1:7 For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. 

Church members can bring leaders joy by firm faith and obedient, godly lives

Col 2:5 For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. 

Phil 4:1 Therefore, my brothers,^e whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. 

^e Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21

Here "joy" may be speaking of the joy Paul experienced in his mentoring relationship with the Philippians, with quite possibly their firm faith partly in view as per the subsequent clause. With it being mentioned along with "crown", it could also allude to: Paul's future joy when Christ comes and rewards him for his ministry amongst the Philippians; and/or joy which he has in anticipating his future reward for his work. The "crown" alludes to the wreath given to the victors at the Greek games; the Philippians would be as such for him to glory in.

1Thes 3:8-9 For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. ⁹For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ... 

3Jn 1:3-4 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers^f came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. ⁴I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. 

^f Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verses 5, 10

Rom 16:19 For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. 

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. 

Phil 1:3-5 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 



1Thes 2:19-20 *For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?*

²⁰*For you are our glory and joy.* 

Paul appears to have in view the Thessalonians' spiritual growth, encompassing such things as their faith and deeds. Paul's "joy" could well denote his future joy when Christ comes, although it is very much applicable also to the present.

2Cor 2:1-3 For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. ²For if I cause you pain, who is there *to make me glad* but the one whom I have pained? ³And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from *those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all.* 

The purpose of the letter referred to (v. 3) was to admonish the Corinthians over certain issues, leading them back to

obedient and godly ways – by which they would make Paul glad (v. 2) and rejoice (v. 3). Note that the last clause speaks of the Corinthians consequently sharing in Paul's joy.

✚ **Leaders should work for the joy of church members:**

2Cor 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but *we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.* 

Similarly in Philippians 1:25-26 Paul speaks of working with his readers for their joy in the faith – "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Teaching in the Church

Teaching is one of the main roles of most church leaders. Good teaching is based on God's word, and should be delivered in accordance with the directions and sound examples found in Scripture. On the topic of teaching, one must also be aware of the characteristics of "false" teachers who are so often present in the church, so as to recognize them and deal with them.

a) What to Teach: God's Word

See also:

- *Explain God's word and truths*, p. 1512

Subsections

- Teach and preach God's word
- Teach God's commands and ways
- Teach the truths of the faith . . .
- . . . Examples of spiritual truth being taught from Scripture
- Read God's word in church assemblies
- Use God's word as the authoritative standard in determining what is true . . .
- . . . and use God's word in determining what actions are legitimate
- Note: Do not add to or subtract from God's word – nor distort it

Teach and preach God's word

2Tim 3:16-17 *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷that the man of God^a may be competent, equipped for every good work. 

^a That is, a messenger of God (the phrase echoes a common Old Testament expression)

2Tim 4:1-2 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²*preach the word*; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 

Acts 6:2-4 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up *preaching the word of God* to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers,^b pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴*But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*" 

^b Or *brothers and sisters*

The "ministry of the word" (vv. 2, 4) is the "work of teaching God's word" (NCV™).

Acts 13:5 When they arrived at Salamis, *they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews*. And they had John to assist them. 

Note that often in NT verses, as is the case here, expressions such as "the word of God" refer to the gospel in particular (cf. AMP) – "the Good News of God" (NCV™).

Acts 15:35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, *teaching and preaching the word of the Lord*, with many others also. 

Acts 18:11 And he stayed a year and six months, *teaching the word of God among them*. 

1Thes 2:13 And we also thank God constantly^c for this, that when you received *the word of God, which you heard from us*, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. 

^c Or *without ceasing*

Titus 1:1-3 Paul, a servant^d of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began^e ³and at the proper time *manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior*; ... 

^d Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

^e Greek *before times eternal*

Heb 13:7a Remember *your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God*. 

1Pet 1:25 ... *but the word of the Lord remains forever.*" And *this word is the good news that was preached to you*. 

Ezek 2:7 And *you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear*, for they are a rebellious house. 



Rom 15:4 For *whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction*, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 📖

This implies that the Scriptures are filled with things to teach us – and so should be taught.

✦ **Let Christ's word dwell in you richly as you teach:**

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom*, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 📖

This is not specifically saying that we should use the word itself in teaching, but arguably this is implied. Paul is saying that we should be filled with the word and so be strongly influenced by it as we teach and admonish one another.

Teach God's commands and ways

Ex 18:20 ... and *you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do*. 📖

Ex 24:3 *Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules.*^f And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." 📖

^f Or *all the just decrees*

Deut 4:1, 5, 14 And now, O Israel, *listen to the statutes and the rules^g that I am teaching you, and do them*, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 📖 ...⁵*See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.* 📖 ...¹⁴*And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess.* 📖

^g Or *just decrees*; also verses 5, 8, 14, 45

Deut 33:10 *They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar.* 📖

This verse is from Moses' blessing of the tribe of Levi.

2Chr 17:9 *And they taught in Judah, having the Book of the Law of the LORD with them.* They went about through all the cities of Judah *and taught among the people.* 📖

Ezra 7:10, 25 For Ezra had set his heart to study *the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.* 📖 ...²⁵*And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws of your God. And those who do not know them, you shall teach.* 📖

Neh 8:7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites,^h *helped the people to understand the Law*, while the people remained in their places. 📖

^h Vulgate; Hebrew *and the Levites*

Matt 5:19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of *these commandments* and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but *whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* 📖

Matt 28:19-20a Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them inⁱ the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* 📖

ⁱ Or *into*

1Sam 12:23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and *I will instruct you in the good and the right way.* 📖

Ps 51:13 Then *I will teach transgressors your ways*, and sinners will return to you. 📖

1Thes 4:1 Finally, then, brothers,^j we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as *you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God*, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 📖

^j Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 10, 13

2Chr 26:5 He set himself to seek God in the days of *Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God*, and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper. 📖

Instruction "in the fear of God" (cf. **2Ki 17:28** ↓) speaks of teaching how to live in accordance with a fear of God, which primarily involves obeying God's commands (cf. CEV, NCV). Similarly in Psalms 34:11b David says, "I will teach you the fear of the LORD."

2Ki 17:28 So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel and *taught them how they should fear the LORD.* 📖



Note that here the people being taught were not God's people as such, but foreigners who had been settled into what had been the northern kingdom of Israel, in place of the deported Israelites. Also note that the priest referred to may have been of the false worship system that had held sway in the former northern kingdom of Israel. He certainly did not succeed in instilling true fear and obedience amongst the population at large (cf. vv. 29-41). Nevertheless, the verse rightly speaks of the importance of teaching God's people how to fear God.

Teach the truths of the faith . . .

1Tim 4:6, 10-11 *If you put these things before the brothers,^k you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. . . .¹⁰For to this end we toil and strive,¹ because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. ¹¹Command and teach these things.* 

^k Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

¹ Some manuscripts *and suffer reproach*

In v. 6a Paul exhorts Timothy to instruct the believers in the things that he had been writing about, which were composed of or in line with "the words of the faith" (v. 6b) and the good doctrine that Timothy himself had followed. Verse 10 contains more such truth that Timothy was to teach.

Matt 13:52 *And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."* 

Scribes were teachers of the law. Here Jesus is illustrating that in teaching one should set forth the "treasures" or truths of God's kingdom, including the new teachings that he brought and those of OT Scripture.

Titus 2:11-15a *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. ¹⁵Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority.* 

In v. 15a Paul refers to the content of the preceding verses in the chapter, which includes teaching on both the role of God's grace (vv. 11-12) and on Jesus Christ (vv. 13-14) – as well as earlier instructions to various groups on how to live (cf. vv. 2-10).

Titus 3:4-8 *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.* 

The trustworthy "saying" (v. 8a) containing the things that Titus was to "insist on" (v. 8a) or emphasize (cf. GNT, NIV) in his teaching, is the doctrinal statement in the preceding verses (vv. 4-7).

1Jn 1:5 *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* 

Job 27:11 *I will teach you concerning the hand of God; what is with the Almighty I will not conceal.* 

Job is basically saying that he will teach about the ways of God.

. . . Examples of spiritual truth being taught from Scripture

Matt 24:15-16, 29-30 *So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. . . .²⁹"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* 

Here Jesus quotes from or refers to Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11 (v. 15) and Isaiah 13:10, 34:4 (v. 29).

Luke 24:26-27, 45-47 *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷And*



beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸

Note that in vv. 46-47 Jesus is not directly quoting an OT passage. He appears to have a number in view.

Acts 2:25-31 For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence. ²⁹“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²

Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 (vv. 25-28) and then teaches how it applies to Jesus (vv. 29-31).

Acts 8:32-35 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” ³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶

Gal 3:5-14 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— ⁶just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? ⁷Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify^m the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ⁹So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. ¹⁰For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹Now it is

evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”ⁿ ¹²But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit^o through faith. ¹⁵

^m Or count righteous; also verses 11, 24

ⁿ Or The one who by faith is righteous will live

^o Greek receive the promise of the Spirit

Here Paul quotes from Scripture no less than six times in eight verses. He does so to teach that: those who believe or have faith are deemed righteous or justified along with Abraham (vv. 6-7) – including Gentiles (vv. 8-9) – as opposed to observing the law (vv. 10-12), through what Jesus Christ accomplished (vv. 13-14).

Read God’s word in church assemblies

1Tim 4:13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴

Ex 24:7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” ⁸

Deut 31:10-13 And Moses commanded them, “At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, ¹¹when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹²Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, ¹³and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.” ¹⁴

Josh 8:34-35 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. ³⁵There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived^p among them. ³⁶

^p Or traveled

2Ki 23:2 And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people,



both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. 

Neh 8:2-3, 18 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. ³And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.  ... ¹⁸And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule. 

Jer 36:5-6 And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, “I am banned from going to the house of the LORD, ⁶so you are to go, and on a day of fasting in the hearing of all the people in the LORD’s house you shall read the words of the LORD from the scroll that you have written at my dictation. You shall read them also in the hearing of all the men of Judah who come out of their cities. 

Luke 4:16-19 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” 

Acts 13:15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.” 

Acts 13:27 For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. 

Acts 15:21 For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues. 

Col 4:16 And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. 

1Thes 5:27 I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. 

Use God’s word as the authoritative standard in determining what is true . . .

See also:

- *Test teachers by comparing their teaching with the Scriptures and sound biblical doctrine*, p. 1530

Acts 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. 

Isa 8:19-20 And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. 

The “teaching” and the “testimony” (v. 20a) presumably refer to God’s law and/or the teachings and testimony or prophecies that God had given through Isaiah; certainly some aspects of God’s word are in view. One should turn to God’s word in seeking guidance and truth (v. 20a) – rather than to other sources (v. 19). Moreover, if any instruction is not in accordance with God’s word, then the person advocating it has no “dawn” (v. 20b), i.e. spiritual light.

Matt 11:2-5 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers^a are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. 

^a Leprosy was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

In response to John the Baptist’s query, Jesus quotes from the OT to show that he was indeed the “one who is to come” (v. 3) – i.e. the Messiah.



John 5:39-40, 46 You search *the Scriptures* because you think that in them you have eternal life; and *it is they that bear witness about me*, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.  ... ⁴⁶For *if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.* 

Jesus points to the authority of the Scriptures to validate the truth of his claims.

Acts 17:2-3 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days *he reasoned with them from the Scriptures*, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” 

Acts 18:28 ... for *he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.* 

Matt 22:23, 28-32 The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question,  ... ²⁸In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.” ²⁹But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ³¹And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³²*I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.*” 

The Sadducees were wrong both in their understanding of what the resurrection will involve and, more fundamentally, in not believing in the resurrection – with this disbelief being at the heart of their question. Jesus makes a general reference to the authority of Scripture in correcting their misunderstanding (vv. 29-30); and then quotes from Scripture to expose the fallacy of not believing in the resurrection (vv. 31-32).

Acts 15:13-19 After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴*Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.* ¹⁵And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, ¹⁶“*After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, ¹⁷that the remnant^r of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things ¹⁸known from of old.*” ¹⁹Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, ... 

^r Or rest

In vv. 15-18 James uses Scripture to affirm the validity of what had appeared to occur – the conversion of a significant number of Gentiles (v. 14; cf. vv. 7-9). Note that in v. 19 James goes on to conclude from this how they, the Jewish leaders of the church, should respond.

... and use God’s word in determining what actions are legitimate

See also:

- [Acts 15:13-19](#) 

Matt 12:1-7 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²But *when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.”* ³He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴*how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?* ⁵Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.” 

Jesus refers three times to the OT Scriptures (vv. 3-4, 5, 7) to refute the Pharisees’ accusation that the disciples’ actions were unlawful (vv. 1-2). The first two times were references to examples of necessity taking precedence over regulations in the law. In conjunction with this, in v. 7 Jesus quotes from Hosea 6:6 to advocate following the spirit of the law rather than a legalistic, judgmental application of it. For comment on v. 6, see the comment on [Matt 12:6](#) – under [God granted Jesus sovereign authority](#), p. 538.

Matt 19:3-6 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” ⁴He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” 

Matt 21:12-13 And *Jesus entered the temple^s and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple*, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall



be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers." 

^s Some manuscripts add *of God*

Here Jesus appears to appeal to the authority of Scripture to both denounce the actions of the money changers and to justify his own action. He uses the Scripture first to indicate what God's house should be and then to show what the money changers and sellers were making it.

Matt 26:50b-54 Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹And behold, *one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant^t of the high priest and cut off his ear.* ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But *how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"* 

^t Greek *bondservant*

In v. 54 Jesus was in effect saying that the Scriptures had stated or ordained that his time of trial should take place. By this Jesus implied that his disciples should therefore yield to the authority of Scripture and not resist his arrest (vv. 51-52).

Luke 4:3-12 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." ⁴And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" ⁵And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'" ⁹And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' ¹¹and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ¹²And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 

Note that vv. 10-11 illustrate that Scripture can be misused, with Satan doing so here. One needs to interpret Scripture – and other people's application of it – in the light of all Scripture, as Jesus demonstrates in his reply in v. 12.

✚ Keep to what is written in Scripture:

1Cor 4:6 I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers,^u that you may *learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.* 

^u Or *brothers and sisters*

Paul is urging the Corinthians not to go beyond principles taught in Scripture, which on the issue in question meant not being conceited in promoting one teacher over another.

Note: Do not add to or subtract from God's word – nor distort it

See also:

- [Luke 4:3-12](#) 
- [The teaching needs to be correct . . .](#), p. 1515
- [. . . and the teaching needs to be complete](#), p. 1515

Deut 4:2 *You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.* 

Deut 12:32 ^v "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. *You shall not add to it or take from it.* 

^v Ch 13:1 in Hebrew

Prov 30:5-6 Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. ⁶*Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.* 

Rev 22:18-19 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: *if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book,* ¹⁹*and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.* 

2Cor 4:2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. *We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word,* but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. 

2Pet 3:15-16 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. *There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.* 



Jer 23:36 But ‘the burden of the LORD’ you shall mention no more, for *the burden is every man’s own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God.*



Jeremiah uses a wordplay here, as the Hebrew for “burden” can also mean “oracle” (cf. ESB). The false prophets had been claiming that their whimsical and false oracles were of God. As such they misrepresented God’s word, to the detriment of what was really his word.

Zeph 3:4 Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men; her priests profane what is holy; they *do violence to the law.*

The clause “do violence to the law” (cf. Ezek 22:26) means to abuse the law (cf. CEV). Distorting the law is quite possibly in view (cf. GNT). Alternatively the reference may be to breaking it (cf. NCV, NLT).

Matt 5:19 Therefore *whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

✦ **Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees and teachers of the law for nullifying God’s word:**

Mark 7:9, 13 And he said to them, “*You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!*” ... ¹³*thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.*”

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) How to Teach

Subsections

- Explain God’s word and truths
- Where applicable, use illustrations in teaching
- Do not teach beyond what the hearers can understand
- The manner in which to teach
- The teaching needs to be correct . . .
- . . . and the teaching needs to be complete

- Keep reminding church members of teachings
- Note: Church members can themselves instruct one another

Explain God’s word and truths

See also:

- *Present the gospel accurately and plainly*, p. 1747

Deut 1:5 Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, *Moses undertook to explain this law, saying, ...*

Neh 8:7-8 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites,^w *helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. ⁸They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly,^x and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.*

^w Vulgate; Hebrew *and the Levites*

^x Or *with interpretation, or paragraph by paragraph*

Luke 24:27, 45 And *beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* ... ⁴⁵*Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ...*

Acts 8:30-31, 34-35 So Philip ran to him and *heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?”* And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ... ³⁴*And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.*

Acts 17:2-3 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days *he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”*

Acts 28:23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening *he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.*

In addition to expounding/explaining the kingdom of God, Paul’s efforts to convince these Jews about Jesus from the OT



Scriptures would have involved him explaining about Jesus and the testimony of the Scriptures to him.

Acts 18:26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, *they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately.* 📖

Where applicable, use illustrations in teaching

Rom 6:17-19 But thanks be to God, that *you who were once slaves of sin* have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, *having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.* ¹⁹*I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.* 📖

In v. 19a Paul appears to apologize for using a less than perfect illustration or analogy in describing believers as previously “slaves of sin” (v. 17) and now “slaves of righteousness” (v. 18). If this is the case, presumably he felt that – because of their human limitations (v. 19a) – his readers lacked spiritual perception and needed a somewhat stark illustration to grasp his point.

Rom 7:1-4 Or do you not know, brothers^y—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that *the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?* ²*For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.* ^z ³*Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.* ⁴*Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.* 📖

^y Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 4

^z Greek *law concerning the husband*

In order to illustrate that the law no longer has authority over believers (vv. 1, 4), Paul uses an illustration or an example of how death brings release from the law (v. 2-3), drawing a parallel between the two cases.

Rom 9:20-21 But *who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”* ²¹*Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?* 📖

1Cor 9:24-27 *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.* ²⁵*Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* ²⁶*So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.* ²⁷*But I discipline my body and keep it under control,^a lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.* 📖

^a Greek *I pummel my body and make it a slave*

Here Paul likens the Christian life and the reward of the afterlife to a race and its prize – to emphasize the focus, determination and discipline required. Note that “I discipline my body” (v. 27) means that Paul strongly disciplined himself, bringing his body with its desires into submission.

Gal 3:15, 17 *To give a human example, brothers:^b even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.* 📖 *...¹⁷This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.* 📖

^b Or *brothers and sisters*

Gal 4:1-5 I mean that *the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave,^c though he is the owner of everything, ²but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.* ³*In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles^d of the world.* ⁴*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* 📖

^c Greek *bondservant*; also verse 7

^d Or *elemental spirits*; also verse 9

Regarding the term “the elementary principles” (v. 3), the law may primarily be in view (cf. AMP) – which would fit comfortably with vv. 4-5. But this interpretation is debatable; for further comment see [So through Jesus Christ believers have been released from the law](#), p. 653.

2Tim 2:3-4 *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.* 📖

Paul likens the Christian life to that of a soldier both in endurance of hardship (v. 3) – such as persecution by enemies – and in undivided devotion to the cause (v. 4).



Do not teach beyond what the hearers can understand

2Cor 1:13 For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and acknowledge^e and I hope you will fully acknowledge—

^e Or *understand*; twice in this verse; also verse 14

The alternative to “acknowledge” given in the text note – “understand” – is preferred by most modern translations (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

Mark 4:33 *With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it.*

This appears to be speaking of Jesus teaching the people “as much as they could understand” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV; cf. AMP, NLT).

John 16:12 *I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.*

Here Jesus refrains from teaching his disciples certain truths, for at this point they were unable to understand and absorb them (cf. AMP, CEV).

1Cor 3:2 *I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ...*

‡ A warning regarding presenting sacred truths to the wicked:

Matt 7:6 *Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.*

Non-believers who are antagonistic against or contemptuous of the gospel are in view, as opposed to non-believers in general. There is no point trying – or to keep on trying – to give things that are holy and of God (cf. CEV) to people who cannot (or will not) appreciate or understand them.

The manner in which to teach

See also:

- Acts 18:25 ↓
- d) *Wise Speech (I): Instructions*, p. 1643

2Cor 4:2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but *by the open statement of the truth* we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.

The truth should be taught openly – plainly and frankly.

Col 1:28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and *teaching everyone with all wisdom*, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Teachers need to have godly wisdom (cf. **Prov 16:23** ↓). As such they should take care to apply it in their teaching, teaching with “all wisdom” which involves “comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God” (AMP).

2Tim 4:2 ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; *reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

Titus 2:7-8 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and *in your teaching show integrity, dignity,⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned*, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

Such “sound speech” (v. 8) involves instruction that is “sound and fit and wise and wholesome, vigorous and irrefutable and above censure” (AMP).

2Tim 2:23-25 Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. ²⁴*And the Lord’s servant^f must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,* ²⁵*correcting his opponents with gentleness.* God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ...

^f Greek *bondservant*

In v. 24 Paul appears to list aspects of a godly character with Timothy’s teaching role in view. In their instructing – as in their lives generally – teachers should ensure that they are not quarrelsome or resentful, but kind to everyone. Note that in v. 23 Paul may well be referring to silly, trivial issues. Particularly as a teacher, Timothy should avoid such things.

Ecc 12:10 *The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.*

Such words encourage learning (cf. **Prov 16:21** ↓).

Prov 16:21, 23 The wise of heart is called discerning, and *sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.* ... ²³*The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.*

These verses and 25:15 below have been included in this subsection as they deal with persuasiveness, which teachers sometimes need.

Prov 25:15 *With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone.*



Along with patience, gentle words and tactfulness increases the persuasiveness of one's speech.

The teaching needs to be correct . . .

See also:

- 2Cor 4:2 ↑; Titus 2:8 ↑
- *Note: Do not add to or subtract from God's word – nor distort it*, p. 1511

Titus 2:1 But as for you, *teach what accords with sound^g doctrine.* ☞

^g Or *healthy*; also verses 2, 8

Acts 18:25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit,^h he spoke and *taught accurately the things concerning Jesus*, though he knew only the baptism of John. ☞

^h Or *in the Spirit*

1Tim 4:16 *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.* Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. ☞

In telling Timothy to keep a close watch "on the teaching" presumably in part at least Paul has in view the need to ensure its correctness.

2Tim 1:13-14 *Follow the pattern of the soundⁱ words that you have heard from me*, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, *guard the good deposit entrusted to you.* ☞

ⁱ Or *healthy*

The expression "guard the good deposit" (v. 14) is an admonishment to Timothy to protect the gospel message that he was preaching from being changed or corrupted in any way.

2Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,^j a worker who has no need to be ashamed, *rightly handling the word of truth.* ☞

^j That is, one approved after being tested

Titus 1:9 He [an overseer] must *hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound^k doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.* ☞

^k Or *healthy*; also verse 13

Eccl 12:10 The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly *he wrote words of truth.* ☞

Jer 23:28 Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but *let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat?* declares the LORD. ☞

The false prophets were telling their dreams as if the dreams were or contained God's word. But telling just any dream as if it was God's word was like using straw instead of wheat for food.

Mal 2:6-7 *True instruction^l was in his mouth*, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. ⁷*For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people^m should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.* ☞

^l Or *law*; also verses 7, 8, 9

^m Hebrew *they*

The "instruction" (v. 7) that people should seek and get from a priest should be: "True instruction" (v. 6a).

. . . and the teaching needs to be complete

See also:

- *Note: Do not add to or subtract from God's word – nor distort it*, p. 1511

Acts 20:18b-20, 26-27 You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how *I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable*, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ☞ ... ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷for *I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.* ☞

Note that vv. 26-27 imply that teachers will be held accountable for knowingly failing to proclaim the whole will of God.

Col 1:25 ... of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, *to make the word of God fully known, ...* ☞

Deut 1:3 In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, *Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them, ...* ☞

Josh 8:34-35 And afterward *he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law.* ³⁵*There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly*



of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who livedⁿ among them. 

ⁿ Or *traveled*

Lev 10:11 ... and you are to *teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.* 

Jer 1:17 But you, dress yourself for work;^o arise, and *say to them everything that I command you.* Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. 

^o Hebrew *gird up your loins*

Jer 26:2 Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and *speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word.* 

Jer 42:4 Jeremiah the prophet said to them, "I have heard you. Behold, I will pray to the LORD your God according to your request, and *whatever the LORD answers you I will tell you. I will keep nothing back from you.*" 

Note that this is referring to conveying an answer from God, rather than teaching doctrine – but obviously it is also applicable to the latter.

Acts 5:20 "Go and stand in the temple and *speak to the people all the words of this Life.*" 

This is referring to proclaiming the Gospel to non-Christians, rather than primarily to teaching God's people (as is possibly also the case with Colossians 1:25 above) but it is applicable to both situations.

✦ **The church should be "a pillar and buttress of the truth":**

1Tim 3:15 ... if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is *the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.* 

The truth should be upheld by the church – which of course involves truth being upheld within the church.

Keep reminding church members of teachings

2Tim 2:14 *Remind them of these things,* and charge them before God^p not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. 

^p Some manuscripts *the Lord*

1Cor 15:1 Now *I would remind you, brothers,*^q *of the gospel I preached to you,* which you received, in which you stand, ... 

^q Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 6, 31, 50, 58

Phil 3:1 Finally, my brothers,^r rejoice in the Lord. *To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.* 

^r Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 13, 17

2Pet 1:12-13, 15 Therefore *I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.* ¹³*I think it right, as long as I am in this body,*^s *to stir you up by way of reminder,*  ... ¹⁵*And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.* 

^s Greek *tent*; also verse 14

2Pet 3:1-2 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. *In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,* ²*that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ...* 

Note that "the commandment of the Lord and Savior" probably refers to Jesus' teachings as a whole, although some commentators think that the command to love one another may primarily be in view.

1Jn 2:7 Beloved, *I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.* 

Note: Church members can themselves instruct one another

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* 

Rom 15:14 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers,^t *that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.* 

^t Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 30

The expression "filled with all knowledge" suggests that the Roman believers were amply filled with spiritual knowledge (cf. AMP; Col 3:16 ↑). Thus, such believers are competent to instruct each other.

1Cor 14:26 What then, brothers? *When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.* Let all things be done for building up. 



Along with giving one another “a lesson”, the other things listed here are also means by which believers learn and grow through each other.

Eph 5:18-19 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹*addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ...* 

This usage of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (v. 19; cf. **Col 3:16** ) is a form of ministry to others, with instruction quite possibly being in view here as one of the prime aims, as such things contain truths of the faith. (The same comment could be made regarding the identical phrase in Colossians 3:16 above.)

1Thes 4:18 Therefore *encourage one another with these words.* 

We should instruct each other in (and remind each other of) the truths of the faith, such as that in view here regarding Christ’s return (cf. vv. 13-17).

✦ **Learn together what is right and good:**

Job 34:4 *Let us choose what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good.* 

Here Elihu speaks of together discerning and learning what is right and good.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Traits of False Teachers (I): Their Teaching

Note that also included in this and the following sections on false teachers are verses regarding false prophets, ungodly priests and other ungodly religious leaders, including Pharisees. For similar to false teachers in the church, all these were in positions of spiritual authority amongst God’s people and taught misleading things.

Subsections

- False teachers speak lies and delusions of their own, in God’s name
- Their teaching is hollow – of worldly, human origin
- False teachers say what their listeners like to hear – appealing and pleasant things . . .
- . . . False teachers do not confront their listeners with their sin
- False teachers teach different doctrine to what is correct
- False teachers distort and oppose the truth
- False teachers typically deny Jesus Christ – and so are of the antichrist
- Other notes about their teaching
- Note: False teachers and their teaching are savage and destructive – causing controversies and divisions

False teachers speak lies and delusions of their own, in God’s name

See also:

- *False teachers are deceitful*, p. 1525

Jer 14:14 And the LORD said to me: “*The [false] prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.* 

Jer 23:16, 26, 31, 36 Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. *They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.*  ... ²⁶How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart,  ... ³¹Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the LORD, *who use their tongues and declare, ‘declares the LORD.’*  ... ³⁶*But ‘the burden of the LORD’ you shall mention no more, for the burden is every man’s own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God.* 

As noted earlier, the word for “burden” (v. 36) can mean “oracle”, depending on the context.

Jer 29:9 ... *for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD.* 



Ezek 13:3, 6-7, 17 Thus says the Lord GOD, Woe to *the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!*  ... ⁶*They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'Declares the LORD,' when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. ⁷Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, 'Declares the LORD,' although I have not spoken?'*  ... ¹⁷*And you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own minds. Prophecy against them ...* 

Ezek 22:28 And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, *seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken.* 

2Pet 2:3 And in their greed *they will exploit you with false words.* Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 

Their teaching is hollow – of worldly, human origin

See also:

- *False teachers lack understanding and knowledge*, p. 1526

Teaching that is hollow is devoid of truth, containing nothing of real value.

Jer 5:13 *The prophets will become wind; the word is not in them.* Thus shall it be done to them! 

Eph 5:6 *Let no one deceive you with empty words,* for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 

Titus 1:10 *For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers,* especially those of the circumcision party. 

Jude 1:12 These are hidden reefs^u at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; *waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ...* 

^u Or are blemishes

As clouds without rain and trees without fruit do not produce what they appear to promise, so the false teachers do not produce teaching of the soundness and quality that they claim. The phrase “twice dead” quite possibly refers to their physical death and either being effectively dead trees (not having fruit), or being eternally condemned. The term “uprooted” would similarly appear to be a reference either to

being devoid of any spiritual roots and life, and/or to eternal condemnation.

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive by *philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^v of the world, and not according to Christ.* 

^v Or elementary principles; also verse 20

As indicated in the text note, “the elemental spirits of the world” (cf. v. 20 ↓) may be speaking of the elementary principles of the world. Another possibility is demonic spirits, propagating teaching that is in accordance with worldly thinking.

Col 2:20-22 If with Christ you died to *the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—* ²¹*“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”* ²²*(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?* 

Here Paul has primarily in view the heresy of asceticism – which involved the observance of strict rules to supposedly gain God’s approval. Such thinking is based on a strain of worldly wisdom; it is merely human teachings rather than being of God.

1Jn 4:5 *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world,* and the world listens to them. 

Mark 7:1-13 Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, ²*they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.* ³*(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash^w their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders, ⁴and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.^x And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)* ⁵*And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”* ⁶*And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ⁸You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”* ⁹*And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!”* ¹⁰*For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ¹¹But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)^z— ¹²then you no longer permit him to do*



anything for his father or mother,¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

^w Greek *unless they wash with a fist*, probably indicating a kind of ceremonial washing

^x Greek *unless they baptize*; some manuscripts *unless they purify themselves*

^y Some manuscripts omit *and dining couches*

^z Or *an offering*

The Jewish leaders had developed their own traditions which as such were of human origin – merely “commandments of men ... the tradition of men” (vv. 7-8). Jesus berated them for focusing on their traditions more so than God’s commands. This was particularly serious when their traditions conflicted with God’s commands (vv. 9-11).

✦ **Their teaching involves “irreverent babble” and is not true knowledge:**

1Tim 6:20-21 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the *irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,”*²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.^a

^a The Greek for *you* is plural

The phrase ‘what is falsely called “knowledge”’ may refer primarily to Gnosticism. The Gnostics claimed to have an elite, secret knowledge, essential to salvation. Note that similar to the term “irreverent babble”, Paul earlier described such false teaching as “irreverent, silly myths” (4:7).

False teachers say what their listeners like to hear – appealing and pleasant things . . .

See also:

▪ Ezek 22:27-28 ↓; Jer 23:17 ↓; Ezek 13:22 ↓; Isa 30:9-11 ↓

2Tim 4:3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound^b teaching, but *having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ...*

^b Or *healthy*

Jer 29:8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and *do not listen to the dreams that they dream,*^c ...

^c Hebrew *your dreams, which you cause to dream*

The text note suggests that the last clause may be referring to dreams that the people encouraged the false prophets to have (cf. NIV).

2Pet 2:18-19 For, speaking loud boasts of folly, *they entice by sensual passions of the flesh* those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹*They promise them freedom,* but they themselves are slaves^d of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

^d Greek *bondservants*

Jer 6:14 *They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.*

The prophets and priests merely dealt superficially with the spiritual problems of the people, comforting them with false messages of peace (cf. Jer 23:17 ↓).

Jer 23:16-17 Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with *vain hopes*. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. ¹⁷*They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’*”

1Ki 22:11-13 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron and said, “*Thus says the LORD, ‘With these you shall push the Syrians until they are destroyed.’*” ¹²*And all the prophets prophesied so and said, “Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.”* ¹³*And the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, “Behold, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king. Let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably.”*

The false prophets simply prophesied what they knew the king would like to hear, favourable things. In v. 13 Micaiah is urged to do the same.

... False teachers do not confront their listeners with their sin

See also:

▪ Jer 6:14 ↑

Lam 2:14 Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; *they have not exposed your iniquity* to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading.

Ezek 22:27-28 Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, *shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain.* ²⁸*And her prophets have smeared whitewash*



for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken. 

Jer 23:17 They say continually to those who despise the word of the LORD, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.' 

The false prophets did not confront their listeners with their sin nor its consequences.

Ezek 13:22 Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not grieved him, and you have encouraged the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way to save his life, ... 

Far from confronting them with their sin, the false prophets actively and/or effectively encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways.

✦ **Rather than to be told what is right, the Israelites wanted to be told only pleasant things:**

Isa 30:9-11 For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; ¹⁰who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, ¹¹leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel." 

Such an attitude is also shown in 2 Timothy 4:3 in the previous subsection. Micah 2:11 similarly reflects this attitude: 'If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, "I will preach to you of wine and strong drink," he would be the preacher for this people!'

False teachers teach different doctrine to what is correct

Rom 16:17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 

2Cor 11:4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. 

Gal 1:6-8 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of

Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 

1Tim 1:3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ... 

1Tim 6:3-4a If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound^e words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. 

^e Or healthy

False teachers distort and oppose the truth

See also:

▪ [Gal 1:7](#) 

Acts 20:30 ... and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 

This refers to men "distorting the truth" (NRSV; cf. NCV, NIV, NLT).

2Pet 3:16 ... as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 

Jer 23:36 But 'the burden of the LORD' you shall mention no more, for the burden is every man's own word, and you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. 

Mic 3:9 Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, ... 

The last clause may be speaking of twisting the truth (cf. CEV), hence the inclusion of the verse here. More precisely, it may be referring to perverting justice/equity (cf. AMP, NKJV, NRSV). Note that along with other leaders of Israel, false prophets and ungodly priests appear to be in view here (cf. vv. 5-7, 11).



2Cor 4:2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. *We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word*, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

The methods of Paul and his associates contrasted with those of false teachers.

2Tim 3:8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so *these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind* and disqualified regarding the faith.

2Tim 4:15 Beware of him yourself, for *he strongly opposed our message*.

Note that this refers to Alexander the coppersmith, not necessarily a false teacher in the church.

False teachers typically deny Jesus Christ – and so are of the antichrist

False teachers typically deny or dilute key aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not clear what the false teachers' denial of Jesus Christ below in 2 Peter 2:1 and Jude 1:4b encompassed, although his sovereignty as Lord could largely be in view. In the verses from 1 John and 2 John, the false teaching in view is the Gnostic heresy, which denied that the man Jesus was God's promised Christ incarnated as a human.

2Pet 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, *even denying the Master who bought them*, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

The phrase "the Master who bought them" appears to suggest that the false teachers had once been saved. But a number of commentators argue that more likely it is referring only to Jesus Christ having paid the price of redemption – as he has for the whole world – and that they had not necessarily appropriated it.

Jude 1:4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and *deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*.

1Jn 2:22-23 *Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.* ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

Note that v. 23 explains and elaborates on the last clause of v. 22, stating implications of denying or acknowledging Jesus Christ.

1Jn 4:3 ... and *every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already*.

Here "every spirit" refers to the spirits influencing the false teachers. The last clause probably means that the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world, at work in such false teachers (cf. 2Jn 1:7 ↓).

2Jn 1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, *those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist*.

Any such false teacher is a deceiver and an enemy of Christ (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT), effectively doing the work of the antichrist.

✦ False teachers do not have the Holy Spirit:

Jude 1:19 It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, *devoid of the Spirit*.

Other notes about their teaching

See also:

- 2Pet 2:1 ↑; Jude 1:4 ↑

Col 2:4 I say this in order *that no one may delude you with plausible arguments*.

False teaching can sound plausible.

Col 2:18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, *going on in detail about visions*,^f puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ...

^f Or *about the things he has seen*

Col 2:23 *These [regulations] have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh*.

This false asceticism (cf. v. 20; 1Tim 4:3 ↓) was a component of Gnostic teaching, which was evident in an early form in Paul's day. It involved strict regulations, including abstinence from food and other things. Despite appearing to be wise and to engender self-control, these regulations were in fact useless in controlling physical desires.

1Tim 1:3-4 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,⁴ nor to *devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship⁸ from God that is by faith*.



‡ Or *good order*

1Tim 4:2-3 ...through the insincerity of a liars whose consciences are seared, ³who *forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods* that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 📖

Jude 1:10 But *these people blaspheme all that they do not understand*, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. 📖

Ezek 22:26 *Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.* 📖

The things listed are descriptive of the ungodly priests' teaching and/or of actions of theirs that would presumably have been reflected in their teaching.

Matt 23:4, 13, 15 *They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear,^h and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.* 📖 ... ¹³"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you *shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.*ⁱ 📖 ... ¹⁵Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, *you make him twice as much a child of hell^j as yourselves.* 📖

^h Some manuscripts omit *hard to bear*

ⁱ Some manuscripts add here (or after verse 12) verse 14: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation*

^j Greek *Gehenna*; also verse 33

Verse 4 indicates that false teaching can be burdensome and restrictive. Verse 13 speaks of how false teachers hamper people from progressing into God's kingdom. Indeed often those they influence are turned further from God's way than even the false teachers themselves, as v. 15 implies.

✦ **They do not strengthen their people spiritually:**

Ezek 13:5 *You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the LORD.* 📖

In failing to strengthen the people spiritually, the false prophets left them vulnerable to punishment on the day of God's judgment.

Note: False teachers and their teaching are savage and destructive – causing controversies and divisions

Matt 7:15 *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.* 📖

Acts 20:29-30 I know that after my departure *fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;* ³⁰*and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.* 📖

Phil 3:2 *Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.* 📖

The term "dogs" may well refer to the savageness of those who advocated such false teaching, which here was the supposed need of circumcision (cf. **Titus 1:10-11** ↓). With dogs being considered an unclean animal by the Jews, the term may also be used here to denote the moral impurity of such people.

John 10:10 *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.* I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. 📖

See comment under *False teachers are generally greedy for personal gain*, p. 1524.

Titus 1:10-11 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹They must be silenced, since *they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.* 📖

Titus 3:9-10 But avoid *foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.* ¹⁰*As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ...* 📖

Verse 10 suggests that Paul's instructions in v. 9 have in view the things mentioned as being typically associated with false teachers. Note that Paul gives similar instructions to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:23 – "Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels."

2Pet 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as *there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.* 📖



1Tim 6:4b-5 *He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.* 📖

The quarreling “about words” (v. 4) may have been regarding the technical meaning of certain words. The fondness of false teachers and “people who are depraved in mind” (v. 5) for such controversies and quarrels, leads to animosity amongst themselves as well as affecting the unity of the church as a whole.

Rom 16:17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for *those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.* 📖

Jude 1:18-19 They^k said to you, “*In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.*” ¹⁹*It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.* 📖

^k Or *Christ, because they*

False teachers and others adhering to false teaching are in view here (vv. 3-4, 10).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Traits of False Teachers (II): Characteristics

Subsections

- The minds and consciences of false teachers are corrupted
- False teachers typically follow their sinful desires
- False teachers are generally greedy for personal gain
- False teachers are deceitful
- False teachers are often conceited and contemptuous
- False teachers lack understanding and knowledge
- Note: False teachers stand condemned . . .
- . . . False teachers face destruction

The minds and consciences of false teachers are corrupted

See also:

- [Jude 1:16](#) ↴; [2Pet 2:19](#) ↴

Titus 1:15-16 To the pure, all things are pure, but *to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.* ¹⁶*They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.* 📖

Paul is speaking against false teachers, probably ones who were advocating various ascetic regulations such as prohibitions of certain foods. Paul states that for those who are spiritually pure, all such non-moral things are pure. In contrast, those persons whose minds and consciences are defiled do not have a clear perspective on what is and is not pure, leading them to mistakenly deem such things as impure. In v. 16, the corrupt state of the minds and consciences of the false teachers is further evidenced by their hypocritical and detestable behavior.

1Tim 6:5 ... and constant friction among *people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth*, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 📖

2Tim 3:8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so *these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.* 📖

Col 2:18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,¹ puffed up without reason by *his sensuous mind*, ... 📖

¹ Or *about the things he has seen*

The minds of false teachers are characteristically of the flesh (cf. NASB, NKJV) and “sinful” (NLT) – indicative of being corrupted.

1Tim 4:1-2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ²through the insincerity of *liars whose consciences are seared*, ... 📖

1Tim 1:5-6 The aim of our charge is love that issues from *a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.* ⁶*Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion*, ... 📖

The context shows that here Paul is speaking of false teachers, with “vain discussion” quite probably a reference to their false teaching. The fact that they had wandered away



from the particular good things listed (v. 5b), indicates that their minds and consciences had been corrupted.

False teachers typically follow their sinful desires

2Pet 2:9-10, 12-14, 19 ... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^m and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,¹⁰ and especially *those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion* and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ...¹² But these, like irrational animals, *creatures of instinct*, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction,¹³ suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. *They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime.* They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions,ⁿ while they feast with you. ¹⁴*They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin.* They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! ...¹⁹ They promise them freedom, but *they themselves are slaves^o of corruption.* For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. ...

^m Or *temptations*

ⁿ Some manuscripts *love feasts*

^o Greek *bondservants*

Jude 1:4, 16, 18 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, *ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality* and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. ...¹⁶ These are grumblers, malcontents, *following their own sinful desires*; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. ...¹⁸ They^p said to you, "In the last time there will be *scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.*" ...

^p Or *Christ, because they*

Jer 23:11, 14 *Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares the LORD.* ...¹⁴ *But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.* ...

This does not specifically mention sinful desires or passions, but it further speaks of associated sinful actions, that are typical of false prophets or teachers.

✦ **False teachers may exhibit a form of godliness, but do not have its power:**

2Tim 3:5 ... *having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.* Avoid such people. ...

This speaks of false teachers having an external appearance or form of godliness, but not practicing it and so not allowing its power to permeate their lives.

False teachers are generally greedy for personal gain

See also:

▪ **Rom 16:18** ↓

Note that "personal gain" is not limited to material or financial gain (although these are what the following verses refer to). Other things such as power and prestige are also sought by many false teachers.

1Tim 6:4b-5 He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, *imagining that godliness is a means of gain.* ...

Titus 1:11 They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by *teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.* ...

2Pet 2:3a, 14b-15 *And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.* ...¹⁴ ... *They have hearts trained in greed.* Accursed children! ¹⁵Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. *They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,* ...

Balaam was a pagan prophet or diviner, who was prepared to use his "religious" position for financial gain (cf. Numbers 22-24). The false teachers followed his way (v. 15; cf. **Jude 1:11-12** ↓) in being greedy for money as he was. Also their immorality paralleled his work in enticing the Israelites into immortality (cf. Numbers 31:16; Rev 2:14).

Jude 1:11-12 Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and *abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error* and perished in Korah's rebellion. ¹²These are hidden reefs^q at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, *shepherds feeding themselves*; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ...

^q Or *are blemishes*



John 10:1, 8, 10, 12-13 Truly, truly, I say to you, *he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.*  ... ⁸*All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.*  ... ¹⁰*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*  ... ¹²*He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.* ¹³*He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.* 

The thieves and robbers represent false Messiahs and/or the false or bad religious leaders who have their own interests at heart, such as the Pharisees and the false prophets of old. Verse 1 appears to be speaking of such people using ungodly methods to put themselves in positions of influence over the people. In v. 12, the mercenary “hired hand” – most likely signifying the religious leaders – puts self-interest ahead of caring for the flock, similarly to the thieves and robbers.

Isa 56:11 *The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all.* 

Jer 6:13 For from the least to the greatest of them, *everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.* 

The phrase “everyone is greedy for unjust gain” refers to the people generally, but the universality of the greed – from “the least to the greatest” – and the subsequent reference to “prophets and priests”, indicates that the false prophets and priests are included.

Ezek 13:19 *You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death souls who should not die and keeping alive souls who should not live, by your lying to my people, who listen to lies.* 

Ezek 34:2-4 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: *Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ³You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them.* 

Note that vv. 3b-4 indicate that in their selfishness, the leaders of Israel – including the spiritual leaders – neglected those for whom they should have been caring.

Mic 3:5, 11 Thus says the LORD *concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry “Peace” when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.*  ... ¹¹*Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, “Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.”* 

Note that v. 5 appears to portray the false prophets as giving favorable prophecies to those who fed or paid them and showing animosity in unfavorable prophecies against those who would not.

‡ They want people to be devoted to them:

Gal 4:17 *They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.* 

“They want to shut you out” refers to false teachers trying to shut the readers off from Paul.

False teachers are deceitful

See also:

- [Jer 6:13](#) ↑
- ... *Those who follow Satan likewise are deceitful*, p. 183
- *Demons are deceitful, propagating what is false*, p. 193
- *False teachers speak lies and delusions of their own, in God’s name*, p. 1517

Rom 16:18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,^r and *by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.* 

^r Greek *their own belly*

2Cor 11:13-15 For *such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.* ¹⁴And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵So it is no surprise if *his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.* Their end will correspond to their deeds. 

Matt 7:15 Beware of *false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.* 



Eph 4:14 ... so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, *by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

Col 2:4 I say this in order *that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.*

The term "delude" implies willful deceit.

1Tim 4:1-2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by *devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars* whose consciences are seared, ...

Both the evil spiritual forces behind false teachers and the lying false teachers themselves are deceitful.

2Tim 3:13 ... while evil people and *impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving* and being deceived.

Titus 1:10 For there are many who are insubordinate, *empty talkers and deceivers*, especially those of the circumcision party.

2Jn 1:7 For many *deceivers have gone out into the world*, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. *Such a one is the deceiver* and the antichrist.

The clause "have gone out into the world" may be indicating that such deceitful false teachers had departed from certain churches – who recognized them for what they were – and now were a threat to other churches.

✦ They secretly introduce false teaching:

2Pet 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as *there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies*, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

False teachers typically introduce their false teachings "subtly and stealthily" (AMP) – which further evidences their deceitfulness.

False teachers are often conceited and contemptuous

Col 2:18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,^s *puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind*, ...

^s Or *about the things he has seen*

1Tim 6:3-4a If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound^t words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, *he is puffed up with conceit* and understands nothing.

^t Or *healthy*

2Pet 2:18 For, *speaking loud boasts of folly*, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

Boasting (cf. [Jude 1:16](#) ↓) evidences conceit.

Jude 1:16 These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; *they are loud-mouthed boasters*, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

Note the additional typical actions mentioned.

2Pet 2:10 ... and especially those [false teachers] who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and *despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones*, ...

Jude 1:18 They^u said to you, "*In the last time there will be scoffers*, following their own ungodly passions."

^u Or *Christ, because they*

False teachers are in view. Their scoffing shows their contemptuousness.

False teachers lack understanding and knowledge

See also:

- [1Tim 6:4](#) ↑

Matt 15:14 Let them alone; *they are blind guides*.^v And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

^v Some manuscripts add *of the blind*

The Pharisees were spiritually blind, lacking insight.

1Tim 1:6-7 Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, *without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.*

1Tim 6:5 ... and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and *deprived of the truth*, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.



2Tim 3:8-9 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so *these men also oppose the truth*, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. ⁹But they will not get very far, for *their folly will be plain to all*, as was that of those two men. 

2Pet 2:12 But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, *blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant*, will also be destroyed in their destruction, ... 

2Pet 3:16 ... as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. *There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction*, as they do the other Scriptures. 

Peter may well have in view that “the ignorant and unstable” false teachers found the things referred to, too hard to understand.

Jude 1:10 But *these people blaspheme all that they do not understand*, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. 

Isa 56:10-11 *His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.* ¹¹The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But *they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all.* 

Note that additionally v. 10b portrays Israel’s religious leaders as lazy.

Jer 10:21 For *the shepherds are stupid* and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered. 

Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because *you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.* 

The priests had themselves rejected knowledge and so the people consequently also lacked knowledge.

✦ They wrongly claim to know God:

Titus 1:16 *They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.* 

Similarly Jeremiah 2:8 speaks of ungodly priests not knowing God – “Those who handle the law did not know me ...”

Note: False teachers stand condemned . . .

See also:

▪ **2Pet 2:3** 

Matt 23:13, 33 But *woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.*^w  ... ³³*You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?* 

^w Some manuscripts add here (or after verse 12) verse 14: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation*

With the use of “woe” (v. 17; cf. [Luke 1:52](#) ; [Luke 17:1](#) ; [Isa 5:20](#) ), Jesus pronounces grief and in particular condemnation. Creating great emphasis, Jesus actually uses the condemnatory statement in v. 17a as a refrain throughout Matthew 23 (cf. vv. 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29).

Luke 11:52 *Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.* 

Gal 1:8-9 But *even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.* ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again: *If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.* 

Titus 3:10-11 *As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,* ¹¹*knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.* 

Paul does not say how or why such a false teacher is “self” condemned (v. 11). The thought may be that one condemns oneself by not heeding warnings (v. 10) and being “warped and sinful” (v. 11).

Jude 1:4 For *certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.* 

Luke 17:1 And he said to his disciples, *“Temptations to sin^x are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!* 

^x Greek *Stumbling blocks*



This is not specifically referring to false teachers, but no doubt is applicable to them. The same applies to the following verse from Isaiah.

Isa 5:20 *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!* 

... False teachers face destruction

See also:

- [Matt 23:33](#) 

Matt 7:19 *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* 

Jesus said this when speaking about false prophets (cf. vv. 15-16). The “fire” is probably a reference to their eternal destiny in hell.

2Cor 11:15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. *Their end will correspond to their deeds.* 

Gal 5:10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and *the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty*, whoever he is. 

The final destruction of such false teachers is quite possibly primarily in view.

2Pet 2:1-6, 9, 12-13a, 17 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, *bringing upon themselves swift destruction.* ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. *Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.* ⁴For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell^y and committed them to chains^z of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, *when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;* ⁶if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;^a  ... ⁹then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^b and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,  ... ¹²But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, *born to be caught and destroyed*, blaspheming about matters of which

they are ignorant, *will also be destroyed in their destruction,* ¹³*suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing.* They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime.  ... ¹⁷These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. *For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.* 

^y Greek Tartarus

^z Some manuscripts pits

^a Some manuscripts *an example to those who were to be ungodly*

^b Or temptations

The term “swift destruction” (v. 1) means that their destruction will be “sudden” (GNT) rather than immediate, possibly referring to their eternal destiny rather than demise in the present life.

2Pet 3:16 ... as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable *twist to their own destruction*, as they do the other Scriptures. 

Jer 14:15 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not come upon this land’: *By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed.* 

Jer 23:15 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts *concerning the prophets: “Behold, I will feed them with bitter food and give them poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has gone out into all the land.”* 

Ezek 13:14-16 And I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, *you shall perish in the midst of it*, and you shall know that I am the LORD. ¹⁵*Thus will I spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash, and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it,* ¹⁶*the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord GOD.* 

The references to a “wall” may refer to the protective walls of Jerusalem. Metaphorically speaking, the false prophets whitewashed the walls of Israel’s security – leading the people to think that they would have peace when in fact judgment loomed.



‡ Anyone who relaxes any commandment is the “least” in God’s kingdom:

Matt 5:19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 📖

The phrase “in the kingdom of heaven” implies that such people may still be accepted into the kingdom rather than being shut out and in hell. As such it would have in view other redeeming aspects of their lives and beliefs. However being “called least in the kingdom of heaven” may be referring to the consummation of the kingdom and its reign enveloping all creation, with such people being deemed as the least of all people – in effect condemned.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Guarding against False Teachers

Subsections

- Watch out for false teachers and their teaching . . .
- . . . Do not be deceived or led astray by false teachers
- Test teachers by comparing their teaching with the Scriptures and sound biblical doctrine
- False teachers can be recognized by their “fruit” and actions
- Do not tolerate false teachers and their teaching . . .
- . . . Have nothing to do with false teachers
- Note: False teachers often succeed in leading people astray . . .
- . . . False teachers can lead many astray

Watch out for false teachers and their teaching . . .

See also:

- *Do not be deceived by false claims, for Christ’s return will be only after certain events – and obvious to all*, p. 1808
- *Distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and demons*, p. 1817
- *Evaluate all things*, p. 1930

Matt 7:15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 📖

Matt 16:11-12 How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”¹²Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. 📖

Acts 20:29-31 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. 📖

Rom 16:17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 📖

Phil 3:2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. 📖

Paul refers here to those who taught that circumcision was necessary to gain God’s approval.

1Jn 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 📖

John speaks here of his readers not being caught out by false prophets or teachers, because “he” who is in them – most likely referring to the Holy Spirit – is greater than Satan.

. . . Do not be deceived or led astray by false teachers

See also:

- *Do not be deceived, nor deceive yourself*, p. 1931

Jer 29:8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream,^c ... 📖

^c Hebrew *your dreams, which you cause to dream*

Eph 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 📖

Col 2:8, 18 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^d of the world, and not



according to Christ.  ... ¹⁸Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,^e puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ...



^d Or *elementary principles*; also verse 20

^e Or *about the things he has seen*

2Thes 2:3 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness^f is revealed, the son of destruction,^g ... 

^f Some manuscripts *sin*

^g Greek *the son of perdition* (a Hebrew idiom)

2Jn 1:7-8 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we^h have worked for, but may win a full reward. 

^h Some manuscripts *you*

We should watch out that we do not get led astray by false teachers and lose our reward.

Luke 21:8 And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. 

Heb 13:9 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. 

2Pet 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 

Note that in saying “knowing this beforehand”, Peter is referring to earlier informing them of the threat of false teachers.

‡ Those who are mature in the faith are not deceived by false teaching:

Eph 4:13-14 ... until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,ⁱ to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 

ⁱ Greek *to a full-grown man*

Test teachers by comparing their teaching with the Scriptures and sound biblical doctrine

See also:

- [2Jn 1:9](#) ↓
- [Use God’s word as the authoritative standard in determining what is true . . .](#), p. 1509
- [c\) Traits of False Teachers \(I\): Their Teaching](#), p. 1517

Isa 8:19-20 And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. 

Although mediums and spiritists are primarily in view (v. 19), v. 20 is readily applicable to assessing any teachers by comparing their teaching with God’s word. The last statement indicates that if any instruction is not in accordance with God’s word (v. 20a), then the person advocating it has no spiritual light.

Acts 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. 

1Tim 6:3-4a If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the soundⁱ words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. 

ⁱ Or *healthy*

This implies that teaching that does not agree with that of Jesus Christ and what is known to be godly teaching, is doctrinally false.

1Jn 4:1-3, 6 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.  ... ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 

In vv. 1-3, “spirit” refers to the spirit influencing a person to either acknowledge Jesus Christ or not – indicative of whether the “spirit” is the Holy Spirit or an evil one. Verse 6 indicates that those teachers who did not listen to the



apostles were not from God. Similarly we can recognize present-day teachers to be false if they: do not acknowledge Jesus Christ and what the NT states about him; or do not believe or follow the apostles' writings.

✦ The test of fulfilled prophecy:

Deut 18:21-22 *And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'— ²²when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.* 

If what someone proclaims in God's name does not come true, it shows them to be a false prophet. However if it does take place this does not necessarily mean that they are of God (cf. Deut 13:1-3; Matt 24:24; 2Thes 2:9-10; Rev 13:13-14); we must still evaluate what they teach.

False teachers can be recognized by their "fruit" and actions

See also:

- *d) Traits of False Teachers (II): Characteristics*, p. 1523

Matt 7:16-18 *You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.* 

Jesus is speaking of recognizing false prophets. As used here, "fruit" is that which one's inner being or character produces – basically one's words (cf. **Matt 12:33-34** ↓) and actions. In a secondary sense, the effect of one's words and actions – particularly on other people – is also one's produce or "fruit".

Matt 12:33-34 *Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.* 

In v. 33 Jesus appears firstly to be speaking of the good works he had done – in particular driving out demons (cf. vv. 22-32) – as being evidence that he was of God, not Satan. In v. 34 he indicates that the principle expressed in v. 33 likewise showed the nature of the Pharisees – which in their case was evil.

1Jn 3:7-8, 10 *Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the*

devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

 ... ¹⁰*By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.* 

In speaking of how to recognize who are the children of God and who are not, John is speaking of people in the church community – and appears to primarily have in view recognizing false teachers (v. 7a; cf. 2:18-26).

2Jn 1:9 *Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.* 

Quite likely John has false teachers in view (cf. v. 7, 10). Any teacher who "goes beyond Christ's teaching" (NCV™) or the teaching "about Christ" (CEV) – in what they teach and/or how they live – is shown to "not have God".

Titus 1:16 *They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.* 

The ungodly actions of these Cretan false teachers was clear evidence against them.

Do not tolerate false teachers and their teaching . . .

Rev 2:2 *I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.* 

1Tim 1:3-4 *As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship^k from God that is by faith.* 

^k Or good order

Titus 1:10-11 *For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.* 



Gal 2:4-5 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— ⁵*to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment*, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. 📖

Do not tolerate and so do not succumb to false teachers and their teaching.

Col 2:16 *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.* 📖

False teachers are in view here. As part of not putting up with them and their teaching, we should not give any credence to what they think of what we do or believe.

2Cor 11:4, 19-20 *For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.* 📖 ... ¹⁹*For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves!* ²⁰*For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.* 📖

This and the following references (Gal 3:1; Rev 2:14-16, 20) contain rebukes for tolerating false teachers and even accepting their teaching. Here the Corinthians were so extreme in their quest for more knowledge and wisdom, that they were willing to put up with teachers who were fools (vv. 4, 19) and even with abuse from them (v. 20).

Gal 3:1 *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?* It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. 📖

Rev 2:14-16, 20 *But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.* ¹⁵*So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.* ¹⁶*Therefore repent.* If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. 📖 ... ²⁰*But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants¹ to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.* 📖

¹ Greek *bondservants*

... Have nothing to do with false teachers

Rom 16:17 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; *avoid them.* 📖

1Cor 15:33-34 *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*^m ³⁴*Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning.* For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. 📖

^m Probably from Menander's comedy *Thais*

The bad company referred to (v. 33) appears to be false teachers who denied the resurrection. As such, the implication is that the Corinthians should "not go on sinning" (v. 34), disassociating from them, spurning them and their teaching.

2Tim 3:5 ... having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. *Avoid such people.* 📖

Paul appears to have false teachers at least primarily in view here (cf. vv. 6-9).

Titus 3:9-10 But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰*As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ...* 📖

1Tim 4:7 *Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.* Rather train yourself for godliness; ... 📖

In conjunction with having nothing to do with false teachers, have nothing to do with their teaching.

2Jn 1:10-11 *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting,* ¹¹*for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.* 📖

Deut 18:20 *But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, orⁿ who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.* 📖

ⁿ Or *and*

Although believers do not put to death such false prophets or teachers, this does point to the need to dissociate from them. (This also highlights the evil and foolishness of being presumptuous in proclaiming something as being of God.)



✦ Work against false teachers:

2Cor 11:12-13 And *what I do I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do.*

¹³*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.*

Note that Paul's work against false teachers can also be seen in the previous subsection, in him advocating the silencing of false teachers in 1 Timothy 1:3-4 and Titus 1:10-11.

Note: False teachers often succeed in leading people astray . . .

Rom 16:18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,^o and *by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

^o Greek *their own belly*

Gal 1:6-7 I am astonished that *you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.*

1Tim 4:1-2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times *some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ²through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ...*

1Tim 6:20-21 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of *what is falsely called "knowledge," ²¹for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.* Grace be with you.^p

^p The Greek for *you* is plural

2Tim 2:17-18 ... and *their talk will spread like gangrene.* Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. *They are upsetting the faith of some.*

Here "upsetting" (cf. **Titus 1:11**) may have the sense of "undermining" (AMP; cf. NLT) or even "destroying" (CEV, NCV; cf. NIV, NKJV).

2Pet 2:18 For, speaking loud boasts of folly, *they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.*

Rev 2:20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is *teaching and seducing my servants^q to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.*

^q Greek *bondservants*

. . . False teachers can lead many astray

See also:

▪ **2Tim 2:17**

Matt 24:11, 24 And *many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.* ... ²⁴*For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*

The phrase "if possible" (v. 24) is not necessarily speaking of whether or not such deception of the elect is possible. It may simply be referring to the intent of the deceivers. (cf. ZBC)

Gal 5:7-9 You were running well. *Who hindered you from obeying the truth?* ⁸*This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

The quotation in v. 9 is used to illustrate that false teaching (cf. vv. 7b-8a) – the "persuasion" – can spread through a whole church.

Titus 1:11 They must be silenced, since *they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.*

2Pet 2:2 And *many will follow their sensuality,* and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Isa 3:12b *O my people, your guides mislead you* and they have swallowed up^r the course of your paths.

^r Or *they have confused*

Isa 9:15-16 ... the elder and honored man is the head, and *the prophet who teaches lies is the tail; ¹⁶for those who guide this people have been leading them astray,* and those who are guided by them are swallowed up.

The prophets along with "the elder and honored man" led astray the people as a whole (cf. **Isa 3:12b** ; **Jer 50:6** .

Jer 50:6 *My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray, turning them away on the mountains. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their fold.*



Mal 2:8 But you have turned aside from the way. *You have caused many to stumble by your instruction.* You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, ... 

✦ **Nevertheless, God's foundation stands firm:**

2Tim 2:19 *But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."* 

The "firm foundation" most likely refers to either God's truth or the church. Despite the efforts of the false teachers (cf. vv.

16-18), God's foundation stands firm. The foundation is sealed with two complementary facets of the faith, referred to by the two quotations. The first points to God's firm hold on those who are his. The second underlines a key aspect of what identifies and affirms them as truly being God's people.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Unit G

Relating to People

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Love

I. Loving Qualities

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I. Loving Qualities

The importance of love could hardly be more emphatically stated by the Bible. Love should encompass every area of our lives and be the basis of all that we do in relating to people. Other personal qualities reflective of love are also regularly applicable in our relationships with other people (and are also discussed in this section).

Note that the teaching in this and the subsequent chapters in *Part G. Relating to People* is also relevant to the preceding part of this book, *Part F. Church Life*.

a) Love

See also:

- *d) Love Each Other (I): General*, p. 1313
- *e) Love Each Other (II): How*, p. 1316

Subsections

- What love is
- The supremacy of love
- Live in love
- Do things in love
- Love others as you love yourself . . .
- . . . "Love your neighbor as yourself" sums up God's law
- Love your enemies and do good to them . . .
- . . . Do not repay evil with evil, but with good

What love is

See also:

- *e) Love Each Other (II): How*, p. 1316

1Cor 13:4-7 *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;^a it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* 

^a Greek *irritable and does not count up wrongdoing*

The Greek rendered as "bears" (v. 7a) can be understood to speak of protecting (cf. NIV) and supporting (cf. CEV), along

with persevering. The subsequent two phrases in v. 7, "believes all things, hopes all things", probably mean that love is ever prepared to believe the best of others and hopes the best for them (cf. ESB).

1Jn 3:16-18 *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.* ¹⁷But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, *let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.* 

Jesus Christ exemplified love for us (v. 16) and so we should love by emulating him in living sacrificially for others. In conjunction with this, we should not merely love with words but with actions and sincerity (vv. 17-18).

1Jn 4:10-11, 19 *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.  ... ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. 

Just as we should try to emulate Jesus Christ's love as shown in laying down his life for us (cf. **1Jn 3:16** ↑), so we should try to emulate God's love in sending his Son to die for us (vv. 10-11). In accordance with this teaching, v. 19 suggests that our love for others is prompted by and is an emulation of God's love for us.

2Jn 1:6 *And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.* 

This appears to be saying that we manifest love by walking in obedience to God's commands (v. 6a), one of which is in fact the command to love one another (v. 6b) – "walk in love" (AMP, NIV; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

The supremacy of love

See also:

- *Loving God is of the utmost importance*, p. 1143

Mark 12:28-33 *And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'³² There is no other commandment greater than these."* ³²And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You



have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. ³³*And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.*"

Obviously this speaks of the utmost importance of love for God, as well as of love for others, the subject of this section.

1Cor 12:31; 13:1-3, 8, 13 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you *a still more excellent way*. ^{13:1}If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, *but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal*. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, *but have not love, I am nothing*. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, ^b*but have not love, I gain nothing*. ... ⁸*Love never ends*. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ... ¹³So now *faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love*.

^b Some manuscripts *deliver up my body [to death] that I may boast*

Col 3:12-14 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And *above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony*.

This points to the supremacy of love over other virtues – suggesting it is “more important than anything” (CEV; cf. NLT). Verse 14 infers that love “is the perfect bond of unity” (NASB).

James 2:8 If you really fulfill *the royal law* according to the Scripture, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*,” you are doing well.

The reference to this command as “the royal law” points to its supremacy amongst laws regarding our relationships with others.

1Pet 4:8 *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins*.

“Above all” points to loving others as the most important thing to do in our relationships with others. Note that this quotes Proverbs 10:12 – “... love covers all offenses.” It does not mean that loving others atones for sin, but that love forgives and “buries” the sins of others – particularly wrongs against oneself.

✦ **Better a little with love than much with hatred:**

Prov 15:17 *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it*.

Live in love

See also:

▪ *Love is expressed with actions*, p. 1317

Eph 5:2 *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us*, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1Jn 4:16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and *whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*.

2Jn 1:6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that *you should walk in it*.

As suggested earlier, the last clause is saying that we should: “Live a life of love.” (NCV™)

Rom 13:8 *Owe no one anything, except to love each other*, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

This implies that we are to continually love one another.

1Cor 14:1 *Pursue love*, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

We are to strive hard to be loving, showing love in all aspects of our lives.

1Tim 6:11b *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness*.

Similarly 2 Timothy 2:22 says, “... pursue righteousness, faith, love ...”

Do things in love

1Cor 16:14 *Let all that you do be done in love*.

Gal 5:6, 13 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but *only faith working through love*. ... ¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but *through love serve one another*.



Eph 4:1-2 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, *bearing with one another in love, ...*

Eph 4:15-16 Rather, *speaking the truth in love*, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that *it builds itself up in love.*

The body of Christ “builds itself up in love” (v. 16) by each part of it doing its work in love.

Phil 1:15-16 Some indeed *preach Christ* from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶The latter *do it out of love*, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

1Thes 5:13a ... and to *esteem them very highly in love* because of their work.

Rom 15:30 *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit*, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ...

Paul appears to exhort his readers by or in love – which comes from the Holy Spirit. However, alternatively he may be urging them to act according to the love given to them (cf. NLT).

Philem 1:8-9 Accordingly, *though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required*, ⁹*yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you*—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—

Similar to Romans 15:30 above, the love referred to appears to be that with which Paul makes his appeal (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

✦ An exhortation against an action not done in love:

Rom 14:15 *For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.*

Love others as you love yourself . . .

Lev 19:18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*: I am the LORD.

Mark 12:31, 33 The second is this: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* There is no other commandment greater than these." ... ³³And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to *love one's neighbor as oneself*, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

James 2:8 *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.*

Lev 19:34 You shall treat *the stranger who sojourns with you* as the native among you, and *you shall love him as yourself*, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Luke 10:25-37 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷And he answered, “You shall *love the Lord your God* with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, *and your neighbor as yourself.*” ²⁸And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” ²⁹But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵And the next day he took out two denarii^c and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” ³⁷He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

^c A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer

In v. 29 the lawyer asked who was his neighbor, whom he should love as himself (cf. v. 27b). But in concluding his reply, Jesus turned the question around, asking instead who had acted as a neighbor, showing love to another. The implication of Jesus' reply is that the key to fulfilling the command to love one's neighbor as oneself (v. 27) is not in determining who is one's neighbor, but in one's willingness



to love as a neighbor. We should accordingly love all people we encounter.

... "Love your neighbor as yourself" sums up God's law

See also:

- [Mark 12:31, 33](#) ↑

The whole moral law – all that involves our relationships with other people – is summed up by the command to love others as ourselves. In doing so, we fulfill or carry out the law.

Rom 13:8-10 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. 📖

Gal 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 📖

Matt 22:37-40 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." 📖

Just as all aspects of the law involving our relationships with other are summed up by the command to love your neighbor as yourself, so all aspects of the law involving our relationship with God are summed up by the command to love God "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (v. 37). As such, all "the Law and the Prophets" are based on (cf. CEV, NIV, NLT) and depend (cf. Amp, GNT, NCV, NASB) on these two commandments.

✚ **Do to others what you would want them to do to you:**

Matt 7:12 So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. 📖

To do to others what you wish they would do to you (cf. [Luke 6:31](#) ↓) is the practical application of "love your neighbor as yourself" (NEL). As such, it likewise sums up God's law.

Love your enemies and do good to them . . .

Matt 5:43-44 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ...* 📖

Luke 6:27-36 But I say to you who hear, *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic^d either. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. ³²"If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. ³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.* 📖

^d Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

Verses 29-30 largely speak of meekness in the face of mistreatment; the context suggests that such non-retaliation is an aspect of loving our enemies. Verse 35 shows that those who love and do good to their enemies – not simply just to those who do the right thing by them (v. 32-34) – will be considered God's children, as such love and kindness to enemies reflects God's own kindness to "the ungrateful and the evil". Verse 36 reiterates this theme, most likely having primarily in view showing mercy to enemies – as opposed to exacting vengeance on them.

Ex 23:4-5 *If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. ⁵If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.* 📖

... Do not repay evil with evil, but with good

See also:

- [Luke 6:27-28](#) ↑
- [Do not take revenge . . .](#), p. 1556
- [. . . Rather than taking revenge, wait for God to act](#), p. 1557



Lev 19:18 *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.* ￼

Rom 12:17-21 *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.* ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it^e to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* ²⁰*To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."* ²¹*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* ￼

^e Greek *give place*

To be "overcome by evil" (v. 21) means here to succumb to repaying evil with evil, being enveloped by evil through acting in evil – letting "evil get the best of you" (NLT). We need to bear in mind that evil not only threatens us from outside sources, but can also well up from within ourselves, permeating us. Rather than being "overcome by evil", one should defeat evil by doing good, as depicted in v. 20. Note that v. 20b depicts the significant impact that doing good has on one's enemy, probably implying that it is more incisive than retaliation (cf. [2Ki 6:23](#) ↓).

1Thes 5:15 *See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.* ￼

1Pet 3:9 *Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.* ￼

Rather than responding in kind to those who revile or curse us, we are to respond by blessing them (cf. [Luke 6:28](#) ↑; [Rom 12:14](#) ↓; [1Cor 4:12](#) ↓). In such contexts, to bless others is effectively to pray for God's blessing on them. In doing so, we ourselves will be blessed by God – as indicated by the last clause.

Rom 12:14 *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.* ￼

1Cor 4:12b-13a *When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³when slandered, we entreat.* ￼

Verse 13a appears to speak of responding diplomatically to slander – with kind or gentle words (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV, NLT, NRSV) – having the aim of making peace.

2Ki 6:21-23 As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?" ²²He answered, "*You shall not strike them down.* Would you strike down those whom you have taken

captive with your sword and with your bow? *Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.*" ²³*So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master.* And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel. ￼

The men concerned were a large force of enemy soldiers that Elisha had delivered into the hands of the king of Israel, through God striking them with temporary blindness (cf. vv. 18-20). Verse 23 suggests that largely by this repayment of intended evil with good, the hostility of the enemies was dissolved.

2Chr 28:9-11, 15 But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded, and he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria and said to them, "Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but *you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven.*" ¹⁰*And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. Have you not sinned of your own against the LORD your God?* ¹¹*Now hear me, and send back the captives from your relatives whom you have taken, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.*" ￼

... ¹⁵And the men who have been mentioned by name rose and *took the captives, and with the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them. They clothed them, gave them sandals, provided them with food and drink, and anointed them, and carrying all the feeble among them on donkeys, they brought them to their kinsfolk at Jericho, the city of palm trees.* Then they returned to Samaria. ￼

Our own guilt before God (v. 10b) is one significant reason as to why we should not ill treat our enemies (v. 9b-10a), but rather do good to them (v. 15).

‡ Love is not resentful:

1Cor 13:5b It does not insist on its own way; *it is not irritable or resentful;*^f ... ￼

^f Greek *irritable and does not count up wrongdoing*

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Generosity

See also:

- *c) Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions*, p. 1589
- *d) Justice and the Needy (II): Insights*, p. 1593

Subsections

- Be generous
- Lend to others
- Share with others
- Practice hospitality . . .
- . . . Examples of hospitality
- Be kind and gracious . . .
- . . . Insights on and examples of kindness
- Generosity brings oneself great blessing

Be generous

See also:

- Ps 37:25-26 ↴; Ps 112:5 ↴
- *Give generously*, p. 1375
- *Generosity brings oneself great blessing*, p. 1547

1Tim 6:18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to *be generous* and ready to share, ... 📖

Ps 37:21 The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but *the righteous is generous and gives*; ... 📖

Prov 21:26 All day long he [the sluggard] craves and craves, but *the righteous gives and does not hold back*. 📖

Rom 12:8 ... the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; *the one who contributes, in generosity*; the one who leads,^g with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. 📖

^g Or *gives aid*

This is speaking of how spiritual gifts should be used, although these exhortations are applicable to all believers.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food *with glad and generous hearts*, ... 📖

2Cor 8:1-2, 7 We want you to know, brothers,^h about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of

Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, *their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part*. 📖 ... ⁷But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for youⁱ—see that you *excel in this act of grace* also. 📖

^h Or *brothers and sisters*

ⁱ Some manuscripts *in your love for us*

The last clause refers to contributing to the needs of other believers – “the grace of giving” (NCV™; cf. NIV) – which is in view in vv. 1-2.

2Cor 9:13 By their approval of this service, they^j will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and *the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others*, ... 📖

^j Or *you*

Deut 15:12-15 If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold^k to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. ¹³And when you let him go free from you, *you shall not let him go empty-handed*. ¹⁴*You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him*. ¹⁵You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. 📖

^k Or *sells himself*

Prov 14:31 Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but *he who is generous to the needy honors him*. 📖

✚ **Do good to others according to the good that God does to you:**

Num 10:29, 32 And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, “We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, ‘I will give it to you.’ Come with us, and *we will do good to you, for the LORD has promised good to Israel*.” 📖 ... ³²And if you do go with us, *whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same will we do to you*.” 📖

Deuteronomy 15:12-15 above similarly makes the point that we ought to treat others in accordance with the way God has treated us, making this point in reference to granting freedom as well as in regard to being generous.



Lend to others

Deut 15:7-8 If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, *you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother,* ⁸*but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.*

Ps 37:25-26 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. ²⁶*He is ever lending generously,* and his children become a blessing.

Ps 112:5 *It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;* who conducts his affairs with justice.

Matt 5:42 *Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.*

Luke 6:34-35 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. ³⁵*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.*

Note that these two verses indicate that when we lend money we should not do so with the expectation that it will necessarily be paid back.

Share with others

See also:

- ... *Share what you have with those in need,* p. 1338

Luke 3:11 And he answered them, *“Whoever has two tunics¹ is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.”*

¹ Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

Eph 4:28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

1Tim 6:18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ...

Heb 13:16 *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*

↳ David's rule for sharing spoils of war:

1Sam 30:22-25 Then all the wicked and worthless fellows among the men who had gone with David said, “Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may lead away his wife and children, and depart.” ²³But David said, “You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us. He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us. ²⁴Who would listen to you in this matter? *For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. They shall share alike.*” ²⁵*And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day.*

Practice hospitality . . .

See also:

- ... *Give hospitality and aid to visiting preachers and workers,* p. 1758

Rom 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and *seek to show hospitality.*

1Pet 4:9 *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

Heb 13:2 *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

Isa 58:7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and *bring the homeless poor into your house;* when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Matt 25:34-35, 38-40 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, *I was a stranger and you welcomed me,* ... ³⁸*And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?* ³⁹*And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?* ⁴⁰*And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,^m you did it to me.’*

^mOr *brothers and sisters*

This speaks of welcoming strangers into one's home (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).



1Tim 5:10 ... and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, *has shown hospitality*, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. 

Titus 1:7b-8 He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸*but hospitable*, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 

... Examples of hospitality

Gen 18:2-8 He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth ³and said, “O Lord,ⁿ if I have found favor in your sight, *do not pass by your servant*. ⁴*Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree*, ⁵*while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on*—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” ⁶*And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick! Three seahs^o of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.”* ⁷*And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly.* ⁸*Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.* 

ⁿ Or *My lord*

^o A *seah* was about 7 quarts or 7.3 liters

The last statement (v. 8b) suggests that Abraham stood by so as to be ready to serve them. Note that the three “men” apparently included the two angels mentioned in 19:1-3 immediately below. The third may have been a manifestation of God, being referred to as “the LORD” a number of times in the rest of the chapter.

Gen 19:1-3 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth ²and said, “*My lords, please turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way.*” They said, “No; we will spend the night in the town square.” ³*But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.* 

Ex 2:20 He said to his daughters, “Then where is he? Why have you left the man? *Call him, that he may eat bread.*” 

Judg 19:20-21 And the old man said, “*Peace be to you; I will care for all your wants. Only, do not spend the night in the square.*” ²¹*So he brought him into his house and gave the donkeys feed. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.* 

2Sam 17:27-29 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, ²⁸*brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils,*^p ²⁹*honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat, for they said, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”* 

^p Hebrew adds *and parched grain*

Job 31:32 ... (*the sojourner has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler*), ... 

Acts 28:2, 7 The native people^q showed us unusual kindness, for *they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.*  ... ⁷Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named *Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.* 

^q Greek *barbaroi* (that is, non-Greek speakers); also verse 4

Rom 16:23a *Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you.* 

‡ Do not accept the hospitality of a stingy person:

Prov 23:6-8 *Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy;^r do not desire his delicacies, ⁷for he is like one who is inwardly calculating.^s “Eat and drink!” he says to you, but his heart is not with you. ⁸You will vomit up the morsels that you have eaten, and waste your pleasant words.* 

^r Hebrew *whose eye is evil*

^s Or *for as he calculates in his soul, so is he*

Verse 8 seems to be implying that accepting such hospitality will result in a stingy host’s attitude manifesting itself in unsavory ways.

Be kind and gracious . . .

See also:

- *Speak graciously*, p. 1645

Kindness is often spoken of in regard to generosity; hence the inclusion here of this and the following subsection.



However kindness is a broad concept. The corresponding Hebrew and Greek words are also inclusive of other such things as: mercy or compassion; faithfulness or loyalty; and gentleness. Thus, like love, kindness is also quite pertinent to the other sections in the first half of this chapter. A similar comment can be made regarding graciousness.

Mic 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to *love kindness*,^t and to walk humbly with your God?

^t Or *steadfast love*

Zec 7:9 Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, *show kindness and mercy to one another*, ...

Eph 4:32 *Be kind to one another*, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

2Tim 2:24 And the Lord's servant^u must not be quarrelsome but *kind to everyone*, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ...

^u Greek *bondservant*

Col 3:12 *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience*, ...

Prov 31:26 *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue*.

The last clause is speaking either of advocating kindness (cf. NCV), or teaching/instructing with kindness (cf. NLT). Such things are associated with wisdom.

Ps 109:16 For *he* [a wicked person] *did not remember to show kindness*, but pursued the poor and needy and the brokenhearted, to put them to death.

One implication of this is that we should show kindness.

Ps 112:4 Light dawns in the darkness for *the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous*.

1Pet 2:18-20 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.¹⁹*For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.*²⁰For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But *if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God*.

... Insights on and examples of kindness

Job 6:14 *He who withholds^v kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty*.

^v Syriac, Vulgate (compare Targum); the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Prov 11:16-17 *A gracious woman gets honor, and violent men get riches. ¹⁷A man who is kind benefits himself, but a cruel man hurts himself*.

Prov 21:21 *Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor*.

Luke 6:35 *But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil*.

Acting kindly – by such actions as spoken of in the first part of the verse – identifies us with God, who is kind to all.

1Cor 13:4 *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant* ...

Gen 19:19a Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and *you have shown me great kindness in saving my life*.

Note that this and the following verses contain examples of kindness.

Gen 50:21 So do not fear; *I will provide for you and your little ones.* *Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them*.

Similarly to the second statement, in Ruth 2:13, Ruth says to Boaz: "... you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant."

Josh 2:12-14 [Rahab:] Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, *as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house*, and give me a sure sign¹³ that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."¹⁴And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land *we will deal kindly and faithfully with you*."

Ruth 3:10 And he said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. *You have made this last kindness greater than the first* in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.



Here Boaz speaks of Ruth indicating her willingness to marry him for the sake of her deceased husband. As he was a close relative, doing so would provide her deceased husband with an heir. Boaz speaks of this as a great kindness – or “family loyalty” (GNT, NLT; cf. CEV) – as she was prepared to do this despite the fact that Boaz was considerably older than her. The kindness that Ruth had showed earlier – “the first” – was her great commitment and personal sacrifice in taking care of her impoverished mother-in-law, Naomi.

Acts 28:2 *The native people^w showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.* 📖

^w Greek *barbaroi* (that is, non-Greek speakers); also verse 4

At least the majority of the islanders would not have been believers (cf. v. 6), but their example of kindness is a striking example for all.

✦ Kindness is a “fruit” of the Spirit:

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* 📖

Generosity brings oneself great blessing

Ps 112:5 *It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice.* 📖

Prov 11:24-25 *One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.²⁵ Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.* 📖

Verse 24 contains a striking paradox, with an eternal application – the one who gives, gains more; while the one who does not give, will end up being in need.

Prov 14:21 *Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.* 📖

Prov 22:9 *Whoever has a bountiful^x eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.* 📖

^x Hebrew *good*

The term “bountiful eye” here denotes a generous person (cf. GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

Acts 20:35 *In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’* 📖

Luke 6:35 *But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.* 📖

Luke 6:38 *...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.* 📖

Jesus figuratively speaks of the amount of blessing being a large amount, maximized like a measure of wheat being pressed down and shaken together “to make room for more” (NLT).

2Cor 9:6 *The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully^y will also reap bountifully.* 📖

^y Greek *with blessings*; twice in this verse

Ps 37:26 *He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.* 📖

Presumably this means that a generous man’s children become a blessing to him – even in being blessed themselves (cf. AMP, NIV).

Prov 18:16 *A man’s gift makes room for him and brings him before the great.* 📖

Prov 19:6 *Many seek the favor of a generous man,^z and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts.* 📖

^z Or *of a noble*

✦ Give to a number of recipients:

Eccl 11:1-2 *Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.² Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth.* 📖

This could be referring to being generous (i.e. giving to many) – or it may be intended as commercial advice (i.e. invest in many ventures). In either case, such action will eventually bring a return (v. 1b). Furthermore such diversification of one’s assets will mean that one will have a number of possible sources to call upon should disaster come upon the land (v. 2).

Pray for persecuted Christians



c) Mercy

Mercy involves such things as: not penalizing those subject to one's judgment and retribution (due to things like wrongful action or debt); and doing more than one is bound to do in helping others. It is showing kindness beyond what is required of one or is otherwise considered fitting.

Subsections

- Show mercy
- Be merciful and God will show you mercy
- Be compassionate
- Forgive others . . .
- . . . Forgive and God will forgive you
- Do not judge others . . .
- . . . If you judge others, God will judge you accordingly
- Note: Human judgment is typically superficial and inadequate

Show mercy

Zec 7:9 Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, ...

Luke 6:36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Ps 112:4 Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.

Matt 9:13 Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Here Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 to self-righteous Pharisees, whose lack of understanding of Jesus' mission was not unrelated to their failure to understand God's requirements for them. God requires mercy towards others, even above religious rituals (cf. [Matt 23:23](#) ↓).

Matt 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

Luke 10:36-37 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

Jude 1:22-23 And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment^a stained by the flesh.

^a Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

In v. 22 Jude tells his readers to show mercy to those who doubt – "those whose faith is wavering" (NLT) – which was possibly due to the influence of false teachers. In v. 23b the proposed objects of mercy appear to be those who had sinned. Showing mercy to such sinners needs to be accompanied by fear of sin's enticement.

Prov 21:10 The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes.

To not show mercy is a characteristic of wicked people.

✚ Show mercy cheerfully:

Rom 12:8 ... the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads,^b with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

^b Or gives aid

This is speaking of the spiritual gift of doing "acts of mercy" for the needy, rather than to showing mercy in general. However the principal of showing mercy cheerfully is readily applicable to the latter – as indeed it is to all that we do.

Be merciful and God will show you mercy

Ps 18:25 With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; ...

Matt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.



The final clause refers to being shown mercy by God.

Matt 18:32-35 Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And *should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?*’ ³⁴And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,^c until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

^c Greek *torturers*

James 2:12-13 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³For *judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*

In this context, the final statement appears to indicate that if we are merciful we will receive God’s mercy rather than his judgment on judgment day.

Be compassionate

See also:

- *Jesus was compassionate*, p. 524

Compassion is generally the emotion underlying mercy; it is expressed in merciful action.

Judg 21:6 And the people of Israel had compassion for Benjamin their brother and said, “One tribe is cut off from Israel this day.

1Sam 23:21 And Saul said, “*May you be blessed by the LORD, for you have had compassion on me.*

Ps 103:13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

Luke 10:33-35 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and *when he saw him, he had compassion.* ³⁴He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵And the next day he took out two denarii^d and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, “Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.”

^d A *denarius* was a day’s wage for a laborer

The Good Samaritan’s compassion, led him to act mercifully (vv. 34-35; cf. v. 37).

Luke 15:20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, *his father saw him and felt compassion*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

Col 3:12 *Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ...*

Heb 10:34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

Job 30:25 *Did not I weep for him whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy?*

Job’s deep compassion for the needy is evident here – and indeed is exemplary.

‡ **Be tenderhearted:**

Eph 4:32 *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

1 Peter 3:8 also speaks of being tenderhearted: “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.”

Forgive others . . .

See also:

- Eph 4:32

Luke 17:3-4 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and *if he repents, forgive him, ⁴and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.*

Col 3:13 ... bearing with one another and, *if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

This suggests that we should forgive others of any perceived wrong against ourselves even if they have not acknowledged it and asked to be forgiven.

Luke 23:33-34a And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, *there they crucified him*, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴And *Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*^e

^e Some manuscripts omit the sentence *And Jesus . . . what they do*



Acts 7:59-60 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. 

Stephen's prayer in v. 60a implies that he forgave those who were killing him, emulating Jesus' example (cf. [Luke 23:33-34a](#) [†]).

2Cor 2:7-8, 10-11 ... so you should rather turn to *forgive and comfort him*, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.  ... ¹⁰Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ¹¹so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs. 

Paul urges the Corinthians to forgive and discontinue the punishment of a church member who has "caused grief" (v. 5) – and presumably has since repented. In doing so they are to reaffirm their love for him (v. 8). In vv. 10-11, Paul makes the important point that not forgiving such a person would leave the church members themselves susceptible to Satan's schemes. In saying this Paul may have had in mind that not forgiving others can lead to such things as bitterness and hard-heartedness, which Satan can readily use.

2Tim 4:16 At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! 

Here Paul shows forgiveness towards those who had deserted him.

Prov 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses. 

The phrase "covers all offenses" (cf. [Prov 17:9](#) [↓]) means to overlook (cf. CEV, GNT) or forgive (cf. NCV) all offences. The last clause is quoted or referred to in 1 Peter 4:8b – "...love covers a multitude of sins."

Prov 17:9 Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends. 

Gen 50:15-21 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." ¹⁶So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, ¹⁷'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰As for

you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people^f should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. 

^f Or a numerous people

It is not clear whether the instructions of vv. 16-17 were fabricated or not. However, it is clear from Joseph's response (vv. 19-21) that he did indeed forgive his brothers, as his father had supposedly requested (v. 17).

... Forgive and God will forgive you

Matt 6:12-15 ... and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.^g ¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 

^g Or the evil one; some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*

Verse 12 is from the Lord's Prayer. In vv. 14-15 Jesus comments on it.

Mark 11:25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."^h 

^h Some manuscripts add verse 26: *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses*

Luke 6:37 Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ... 

Matt 18:21-35 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."ⁱ ²³"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.^j ²⁴When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.^k ²⁵And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant^l fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'²⁷And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,^m and seizing him, he began



to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³²Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,ⁱ until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

☰

ⁱ Or seventy-seven times

^j Greek *bondservants*; also verses 28, 31

^k A *talent* was a monetary unit worth about twenty years' wages for a laborer

^l Greek *bondservant*; also verses 27, 28, 29, 32, 33

^m A *denarius* was a day's wage for a laborer

ⁿ Greek *torturers*

In v. 22 Jesus is implying that we should always forgive, rather than put a limit on the number of times that we do it.

✦ Forgive because Jesus Christ forgave you:

Col 3:13 ... bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, *forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* ☰

Not only should we forgive others so that we will be forgiven, but we should also forgive because we have been forgiven by Christ – forgive "because the Lord forgave you" (NCV™).

Do not judge others . . .

We are not to judge others in a condemnatory manner, as if we were in some position of authority to do so; nor in a self-righteous sense, which is inevitably hypocritical. Note, however, that there are Bible verses instructing us to make judgments or choices regarding good and bad people or things. For example in 1 Corinthians Paul speaks of the need for believers to judge those in the church (cf. 5:12), and also says that: "The spiritual man makes judgments about all things..." (2:15). See also *Evaluate all things*, p. 1930; *e) Guarding against False Teachers*, p. 1529; and *e) Dealing with Sin in the Church*, p. 1490.

John 8:15 You judge according to the flesh; *I judge no one.* ☰

Jesus appears to be saying that he did not set himself up to judge anyone (cf. 3:17, AMP). We should follow his example. Note that some commentators think that Jesus is actually

meaning that he did not judge in the referred-to worldly fashion of his adversaries – i.e. "by human standards"

Rom 14:1-4, 10, 12-13 As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ²One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master^o that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ☰ ... ¹⁰Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ☰ ... ¹²So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. ¹³Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ☰

^o Or lord

Believers are not to judge each other on disputable matters – matters that Scripture does not discuss or is not concerned with. The reminders in vv. 10, 12 that we ourselves will be judged by God, is a sobering deterrent to judging other servants of his. The suggestion is that such condemnatory judgment of other servants of God leaves us more liable to being so judged by God – as per the theme of the following subsection.

1Cor 4:5 Therefore *do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes*, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. ☰

In light of the inadequacy of human judgment (cf. vv. 3-4) and the limitedness of human knowledge, Paul exhorts his readers to wait for the Lord's judgment.

James 4:11-12 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.^p *The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.* ¹²There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But *who are you to judge your neighbor?* ☰

^p Or brothers and sisters

Speaking evil against another – and so judging them – breaks such laws as ones against slander and for love (cf. Lev 19:16-18). By consciously acting contrary to such laws, or any law, one in a sense deems or judges God's law to be flawed.

Matt 7:3-5 *Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?* ⁴Or how



can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. 

Jesus figuratively urges his listeners not to be judgmental (cf. vv. 1-2 ) in criticizing what may seem to them to be faults in others, while being oblivious to their own often greater faults.

John 8:3-11 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" ⁶This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." 

Jesus' statement in v. 7 implied that none of the woman's accusers was qualified to begin executing judgment, a point that was not lost on them (vv. 9-10). Even Jesus did not condemn her (v. 11a), but he did require her to repent (v. 11b). For further comment on the passage see *Note: The sexually immoral who believe and repent are forgiven and granted righteousness*, p. 1921.

... If you judge others, God will judge you accordingly

See also:

▪ **Rom 14:10, 12-13** 

We will all face God's judgment (cf. **Rom 14:10, 12** ) , but the following verses speak of the same condemnatory standard of judgment being applied by God to those who exercise it themselves.

Matt 7:1-2 *Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.* 

Luke 6:37 *Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ...* 

Note that this follows an exhortation to be merciful (cf. v. 36), suggesting that refraining from judging and also forgiving (as per the latter part of the verse) are two aspects of showing mercy.

Rom 2:1, 3 *Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.  ... ³Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?* 

In asserting that those who pass judgment do the same things (v. 1b) Paul may well have had in mind that all people commit the same sins, even if in varying degrees. The truth of this is seen in the light of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, where Jesus condemns thoughts which mirror actual sinful deeds. Additionally, perhaps there is also a psychological or spiritual phenomenon whereby we make ourselves more vulnerable to particular sins by condemning others for such sins.

James 5:9 *Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.* 

Grumbling or complaining against others is an outward expression of inner condemnatory judgment of them – which leaves oneself open to such judgment.

Ezek 7:27 The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair, and the hands of the people of the land are paralyzed by terror. According to their way I will do to them, and according to their judgments I will judge them, and they shall know that I am the LORD. 

The phrase "according to their judgments" may be referring to the standards they had used in judging others – hence the verse's inclusion here. Alternatively, it may well be speaking of the standards they had used in their harsh treatment of others, with God indicating here that he would use similar standards in determining the degree of punishment that he would inflict on them.

‡ **Believers are not to judge non-believers, but do have a responsibility to judge believers:**

1Cor 5:12-13 *For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³God judges⁴ those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."* 

⁴ Or will judge



Judgment of those outside the church should be left to God (v. 13a). However believers have a responsibility to keep fellow church members accountable – even taking disciplinary action if necessary (v. 13b).

Note: Human judgment is typically superficial and inadequate

1Sam 16:1, 3, 6-7 The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” ...³And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.” ...⁶When they came, he [Samuel] looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is before him.”⁷But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

John 7:23-24 If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well? ²⁴Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.

John 8:15 You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.

The implication here is that human standards are flawed and inadequate to base judgment upon.

1Cor 4:3-4 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

In the first statement Paul speaks of his disregard of human judgment. He then further alludes to its inadequacy by pointing to his own insufficiency to judge even himself.

James 2:2-7 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” ⁴have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of

the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

Such typical human judgment is not only superficial (vv. 2-3), it is: discriminatory and evil (v. 4); inconsistent with God’s purposes (vv. 5-6a); even incompatible with one’s own experience (v. 6b); and tends to favor those who despise our Lord (v. 7).

1Cor 2:14-15 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

This points to the inadequacy of human judgment. In view of v. 14, v. 15b appears to be speaking of non-spiritual people’s judgment (cf. NLT), judgment that is necessarily worldly or merely human. Being without the Spirit of God, such people cannot understand things that are of the Holy Spirit (v. 14) and so are in no position to judge those who have the Holy Spirit (v. 15b). Regarding the first clause of v. 15, Paul appears to mean that in having the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 12) believers have the capacity – at least to some degree – to understand and make judgment about all things (cf. v. 10), with spiritual truths probably being primarily in view (cf. vv. 6-13, 16) as opposed to other people. For further comment see [Having the Holy Spirit is linked with having wisdom and knowledge](#), p. 847.

Prov 16:2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit.

People’s ability to evaluate their own ways is limited and superficial (cf. [Prov 21:2a](#) ↓) – in contrast to God’s ability to evaluate or judge people.

Prov 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.

✦ Paul’s resolve to no longer regard or judge people from a superficial, worldly viewpoint:

2Cor 5:16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

Here “regard” involves judging (cf. CEV, GNT) or evaluating (cf. NLT) others.

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) Gentleness

See also:

- *d) Antithesis of Pride: Humility*, p. 1903

Subsections

- Be gentle
- Be patient, bearing with others
- Be meek
- Do not take revenge . . .
- . . . Rather than taking revenge, wait for God to act
- Seek peace, including peace with others . . .
- . . . and seek peace for others – in part through prayer
- Live and act in a quiet manner

Be gentle

See also:

- *Jesus was gentle and humble – as a servant*, p. 526
- *Speak gently*, p. 1645

Titus 3:1-2 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to *be gentle*, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. 

2Cor 10:1 *I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!*— 

Generally at least, we should exhort others in a manner reflective of “the meekness and gentleness” that characterized Jesus Christ, as Paul begins to do here. Moreover, meekness and gentleness should generally be reflected in how we interact with others.

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* 

As gentleness is a “fruit” of the Holy Spirit’s work in us, we should accordingly seek to be gentle.

Gal 6:1 Brothers,^r if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should *restore him in a spirit of gentleness*. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 

^r Or *Brothers and sisters*; also verse 18

Eph 4:1-2 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ...* 

Phil 4:5 *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ...* 

Here the Greek translated as “reasonableness” is often translated as “gentleness” (CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NRSV).

1Thes 2:7 *But we were gentle^s among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.* 

^s Some manuscripts *infants*

1Tim 3:3 ... not a drunkard, *not violent but gentle*, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 

1Tim 6:11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.* 

1Pet 3:3-4 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart *with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.* 

1Pet 3:15 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; *yet do it with gentleness and respect, ...* 

Be patient, bearing with others

See also:

- [Gal 5:22](#) 
- *Endure persecution and suffering patiently*, p. 2008

1Thes 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle,^t encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, *be patient with them all.* 

^t Or *disorderly, or undisciplined*

Eph 4:2 ... with all humility and gentleness, *with patience, bearing with one another in love, ...* 



Col 3:12-13 *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,* ¹³*bearing with one another* and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

2Tim 4:2 ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, *with complete patience* and teaching.

Rom 15:1 We who are strong have an obligation to *bear with the failings of the weak*, and not to please ourselves.

1Cor 13:4 *Love is patient* and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ...

Col 1:11 *May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience* with joy, ...

Prov 25:15 *With patience a ruler may be persuaded*, and a soft tongue will break a bone.

Eccl 7:8 Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and *the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.*

The second part of the verse is true enough as a general principle. If it has the first part of the verse in view, it may more specifically be meaning that patience is better than pride in accomplishing something.

Be meek

See also:

- [Col 3:12](#)
- *Jesus was meek*, p. 525
- *Submit to one another*, p. 1302
- *Be humble towards others*, p. 1905

The concept of “meekness” involves an approach of non-retaliation (as per the following two subsections) – even non-resistance (cf. [Matt 5:38-42](#)) – in the face of offences. It is akin to being submissive, involves forbearance and is characterized by humility, gentleness and quietness.

Num 12:3 Now the man *Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.*

Ps 37:11 *But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.*

God's judgment may be partially in view, following which the meek would or will inherit God's land.

Isa 29:19 *The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD*, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

This is taken from prophecies of future restoration for Israel, in which the meek will obtain joy.

Matt 5:5 *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

Here “the earth” refers to the new or renewed earth at the consummation of the messianic kingdom. Note that Jesus may have been alluding to Psalms 37:11 above.

Matt 5:38-42 You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹But I say to you, *Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.* ⁴⁰*And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic,^u let him have your cloak as well.* ⁴¹*And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.* ⁴²*Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.*

^u Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

The command to “not resist the one who is evil” (v. 39a) is given in respect to one's own rights; it is not saying that we should not stand against an evil person on behalf of others. The illustrations that follow (vv. 39b-42; cf. [Luke 6:29-30](#)) show that one should not retaliate and not insist on one's rights. Some commentators view these as hyperbole, while others consider such a view to be watering down the extent of what is being taught.

Luke 6:29-30 *To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic^v either.* ³⁰*Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.*

^v Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

1Cor 6:7 *To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?*

Paul is speaking of believers taking out lawsuits against other believers. With his first statement, Paul appears to refer to spiritual failure, either: in seeking retribution, as opposed to being meek and forgiving; or in being at odds with a fellow believer/s, as opposed to being unified as parts of the body of Christ.



2Cor 10:1 I, Paul, myself entreat you, *by the meekness and gentleness of Christ*—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!—

Titus 2:9 *Slaves^w are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ...*

^w Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

1Pet 2:18-23 *Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.* ¹⁹*For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.* ²⁰*For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.* ²¹*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* ²²*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.* ²³*When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

The phrase “mindful of God” (v. 19) more specifically has in view being “conscious of his will” (GNT), with submission to one’s master – even a harsh one (v. 18) – being of God’s will.

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in *the meekness of wisdom.*

One can infer from this that meekness comes from wisdom. Such an association with wisdom underlines the importance of meekness.

2Sam 16:11-12 And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! *Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to.*” ¹²It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me,^x and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today.”

^x Septuagint, Vulgate *will look upon my affliction*

In the latter part of v. 11, David asserts that the cursing he was receiving (cf. vv. 5-8) may well have been prompted by God (cf. v. 10) – reason enough to meekly leave alone the curser. Note that in v. 12 David raises the possibility of God’s blessing for meekly enduring such treatment.

Prov 12:16 The vexation of a fool is known at once, but *the prudent ignores an insult.*

Prov 19:11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, and *it is his glory to overlook an offense.*

Do not take revenge . . .

See also:

▪ . . . *Do not repay evil with evil, but with good*, p. 1541

Lev 19:18 *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*

Prov 24:29 *Do not say, “I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done.”*

1Sam 24:16-19 As soon as David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. ¹⁷He said to David, “*You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil.*” ¹⁸*And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands.* ¹⁹*For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.*

David had refused to take the opportunity to kill Saul (cf. [vv. 12-13](#) ↴), despite the fact that Saul had been seeking to capture him and probably kill him.

Job 31:29-30, 40 “*If I have rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me, or exulted when evil overtook him*” ³⁰*(I have not let my mouth sin by asking for his life with a curse),* . . . ⁴⁰*let thorns grow instead of wheat, and foul weeds instead of barley.*” The words of Job are ended.

In conjunction with not taking revenge against our enemies (v. 30), v. 29 indicates that we should also not rejoice when they encounter trouble (cf. [Prov 24:17-18](#) ↴).

Ezek 25:12, 15, 17 “Thus says the Lord GOD: *Because Edom acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance on them,* . . . ¹⁵“Thus says the Lord GOD: *Because the Philistines acted revengefully and took vengeance with malice of soul to destroy in never-ending enmity,* . . . ¹⁷*I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I lay my vengeance upon them.*”

This illustrates that taking revenge ourselves – particularly maliciously – can in fact lead to God’s vengeance against us.



Luke 9:53-55 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"^y ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them.^z 

^y Some manuscripts add *as Elijah did*

^z Some manuscripts add *and he said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy people's lives but to save them"*

Jesus strongly disapproved of paying back the Samaritans' unfriendliness with harm.

... Rather than taking revenge, wait for God to act

Rather than taking revenge in order to impose what we consider to be just vengeance and/or to alleviate any suffering caused us by others, we should wait for God to act – for him to take vengeance and/or deliver us.

Rom 12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it^a to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 

^a Greek *give place*

Gen 50:15, 19 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him."  ... ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?" 

Rather than taking revenge himself, Joseph acknowledged that the execution of any due vengeance was God's prerogative.

1Sam 24:12-15 May the LORD judge between me and you, may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you. ¹³As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness.' But my hand shall not be against you. ¹⁴After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! After a flea! ¹⁵May the LORD therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand. 

Note that this precedes vv. 16-19 in the previous subsection.

1Sam 25:32-33, 39 And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³Blessed be your discretion, and *blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from avenging myself with my own hand!*  ... ³⁹When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD who has avenged the insult

I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing. The LORD has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife. 

Prov 20:22 Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you. 

Prov 24:17-18 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, ¹⁸lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him. 

This indicates that vindictive attitudes may in fact lead to God discontinuing punishment on one's enemy.

1Pet 2:23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 

Rather than retaliate, Jesus entrusted himself to God, trusting that God had his suffering and destiny in hand. As such, Jesus waited for God to fulfill his purpose in the suffering.

✦ Paying back evil for good brings evil on oneself:

Prov 17:13 If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house. 

Seek peace, including peace with others . . .

See also:

- *Live in peace and harmony with each other*, p. 1302

The verses in this subsection appear to primarily have in view being at peace with others ourselves, but a number of them can also be applied to promoting peace between others, as per the following subsection. Similarly, at least one or two verses in the following subsection could possibly have primarily in view being at peace with others ourselves, rather than promoting peace for others.

Ps 34:14 Turn away from evil and do good; *seek peace and pursue it.* 

Rom 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 

Heb 12:14 *Strive for peace with everyone*, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 

2Tim 2:22 So flee youthful passions and *pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace*, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 



We should strive for “harmony and concord with others” (AMP).

James 3:17 But *the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.* 📖

Zec 8:19b *Therefore love truth and peace.* 📖

Ps 120:7 *I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war!* 📖

Ps 37:37 Mark the blameless and behold the upright, for *there is a future for the man of peace.* 📖

Matt 5:23-26 *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.*^b 📖

^b Greek *kodrantēs*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/64 of a *denarius* (which was a day’s wage for a laborer)

Seeking peace with others often involves: seeking reconciliation (vv. 23-24); and seeking to amicably resolve disputes (v. 25).

... and seek peace for others – in part through prayer

Est 10:3 For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for *he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.* 📖

In governing Mordecai worked for the welfare and peace of his people.

Zec 8:16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; *render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; ...* 📖

Phil 4:2-3 *I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³Yes, I ask you also, true companion,^c help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.* 📖

^c Or *loyal Syzygus*; Greek *true yokefellow*

Apparently there had been a serious disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche. Here Paul himself seeks to make peace between them (v. 2) and also urges Syzygus (cf. text note) to likewise help these women resolve their differences (v. 3a).

Prov 12:20 Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but *those who plan peace have joy.* 📖

Matt 5:9 *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons^d of God.* 📖

^d Greek *huioi*; see Preface

People who “work for peace” (GNT, NLT, cf. NCV) will be deemed to be children of God because they show that they partake of his nature and/or participate in working for his purposes.

James 3:18 *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* 📖

Peacemakers do their work in a peaceful way, producing righteousness. This could be speaking of righteousness in the lives of themselves or of others – or even both. It is applicable to both.

Ps 122:6-8 *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! “May they be secure who love you! ⁷Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!” ⁸For my brothers and companions’ sake I will say, “Peace be within you!”* 📖

This is illustrative of seeking and praying for the peace of the city or locality where one lives (cf. **Jer 29:7** ↓; **1Tim 2:1-2** ↓; **Prov 29:8** ↓) – as well as for Jerusalem itself.

Jer 29:7 But *seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.* 📖

1Tim 2:1-2 *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.* 📖

‡ Wise people will calm anger:

Prov 29:8 Scoffers set a city aflame, but *the wise turn away wrath.* 📖

In light of the first part of the verse, the second part may primarily be speaking of wise people promoting peace amongst others by calming a situation inflamed with anger.



Live and act in a quiet manner

See also:

- [Wait for God patiently and quietly](#), p. 1952

1Thes 4:10b-11 But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more,¹¹ and to *aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs*, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ...

Note that minding your own business is complementary to leading a quiet life.

1Pet 3:3-4 Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—⁴but *let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.*

Ps 35:20 For they do not speak peace, but against *those who are quiet in the land* they devise words of deceit.

Although not the main point of the verse, this does suggest that living quietly is a good thing to do.

Eccl 9:17 *The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.*

This indicates that the wise speak with “quiet words” (GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV; cf. CEV, NKJV).

Isa 42:2 *He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ...*

This is referring to the Messiah, with his relatively quiet and discreet approach in his incarnation.

Matt 1:19 And her husband *Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.*

Amos 5:13 *Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time.*

We should not infer from this that we should never speak out during times when evil powers hold sway. Nevertheless it does point to the fact that there will be times when God's interests are better advanced through quiet work.

Prov 9:13 *The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive^e and knows nothing.*

^e Or *full of simpleness*

It is foolish to be “loud and brash” (NLT).

[Pray for persecuted Christians](#)



II. Antitheses of Love

We have various tendencies that work counter to love. These largely involve selfish attitudes and ill feelings – along with the adverse speech and actions that they produce. These greatly inhibit and harm our relationships with others, and must be avoided.

a) Selfish Attitudes

See also:

- *b) Generosity*, p. 1543

Subsections

- Do not pursue selfish ends . . .
- . . . Examples of selfishness
- Do not be greedy
- Do not covet
- Seek the interests of others before your own . . .
- . . . Do so even at great cost to yourself, as Jesus Christ did
- Be considerate and reasonable

Do not pursue selfish ends . . .

Ps 119:36 *Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!* 

Jer 45:5 *And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not, for behold, I am bringing disaster upon all flesh, declares the LORD. But I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you may go.* 

God's command to Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, was given in the context of the impending judgment that would engulf the land, thwarting any aspirations for great things or of greatness. However God's command to not seek greatness is very much applicable to his people at any time.

Rom 2:8 *... but for those who are self-seeking^a and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.* 

^a Or *contentious*

1Cor 13:5b *It [love] does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;*^b ... 

^b Greek *irritable and does not count up wrongdoing*

Phil 2:3 *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* 

Rivalry is generally indicative of selfishness. Moreover, the Greek translated here as "rivalry" can also be translated as "selfishness" (NASB, NCV; cf. NLT) or "selfish ambition" (GNT, NIV, NKJV, NRSV).

James 3:14-16 *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.* 

In v. 14 "the truth" most likely refers to the reality of this envy and selfish ambition (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). Another possibility is that it denotes the truth of the gospel, which is effectively denied or negated by these things.

Prov 18:1 *Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.* 

This suggests that pursuing selfish ends defies sound judgment (cf. CEV).

2Cor 1:17 *Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say "Yes, yes" and "No, no" at the same time?* 

The phrase "according to the flesh" suggests that Paul claims that he did not make plans in a worldly way (cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV), in a way that served his own interests – "from selfish motives" (GNT) – so that he would be inclined to easily change his mind to suit himself. Paul implies that to do so would be like saying "Yes" and "No" in the one breath.

. . . Examples of selfishness

Gen 13:8-11 *Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen."⁹Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left."¹⁰And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)¹¹So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley,*



and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. 

^c Hebrew *we are men, brothers*

Lot's selfish choice (v. 11) is in direct contrast with Abram's considerate and unselfish act in giving him the choice (vv. 9-10).

Isa 56:11 The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds who have no understanding; *they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all.* 

Ezek 34:8 As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but *the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, ...* 

Matt 23:25 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.* 

The Greek translated here as "self-indulgence" can also be translated as "selfishness" (CEV, GNT). It speaks of pleasing only oneself (cf. NCV).

Mark 10:35-37, 41 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, *we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.*" ³⁶And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷And *they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."*  ... ⁴¹And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. 

The reaction of the other ten disciples (v. 41) implies that they correctly interpreted James and John's request as selfish.

Phil 1:17 *The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.* 

3Jn 1:9-10 I have written something to the church, but *Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority.* ¹⁰So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, *talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.* 

Verse 10 shows the lengths Diotrephes was prepared to go to in order to further his own interests and selfish ends.

Do not be greedy

See also:

- *False teachers are generally greedy for personal gain,* p. 1524
- *So, do not love money . . .*, p. 1911

Matt 23:25 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.* 

1Cor 5:11 But now I am writing to you *not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.* 

This underlines the gravity of greed (along with sexually immorality).

Prov 15:27 *Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but he who hates bribes will live.* 

Prov 28:25 *A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the LORD will be enriched.* 

Jer 8:10 *Therefore I will give their wives to others and their fields to conquerors, because from the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for unjust gain; from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.* 

This evidences the fact that greed leads to other sins, such as deceit, a reminder of the fact that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils" (1Tim 6:10).

1Cor 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous^d will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^e ¹⁰nor thieves, *nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* 

^d Or *wrongdoers*

^e The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

Ps 10:3 For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and *the one greedy for gain curses^f and renounces the LORD.* 

^f Or *and he blesses the one greedy for gain*

‡ **Greedy people are never satisfied:**

Hab 2:5 "Moreover, wine^g is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest.^h *His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he*



has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.”

^g Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scroll *wealth*

^h The meaning of the Hebrew of these two lines is uncertain

Like death, greedy people are never satisfied (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NRSV). Isaiah 56:11a makes a similar point, referring to wicked leaders as “dogs” – “The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough.”

Do not covet

We are not to crave or desire anything that belongs to another person.

Ex 20:17 *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”*

Deut 7:25 The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. *You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God.*

This appears to indicate that in coveting the silver and gold on these idols of “gods”, the people would risk being led into worship of them.

Luke 12:15 And he said to them, *“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*

In the latter part of the verse Jesus points out that life is not about and does not depend on how much one has.

Eph 5:3, 5-6 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ... ⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

The description of such a person as “an idolater” (v. 5) probably refers primarily to being covetous, rather than also to the preceding adjectives. Covetous people serve their own interests, effectively putting themselves and material things in the place of God. The phrase “these things” (v. 6) refers to the sins mentioned in v. 5, which include being covetous. God’s wrath comes on people because of such things.

Col 3:5 *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:*ⁱ sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

ⁱ Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

Covetousness is in a real sense idolatry as greedy people in effect idolize money or materialism (cf. Eph 5:5 ↑). Their hearts are set on such things, which thus become the object of their endeavors. They are “really serving a false god” (NCV™).

Acts 20:33 *I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.*

Josh 7:20-21 And Achan answered Joshua, “Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹*when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels,*^j *then I coveted them and took them.* And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

^j A *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

In 6:18-19 Joshua had warned the people that they were not to take any of Jericho’s great riches for themselves. Achan’s coveting led to him disobeying this command, which had horrific consequences – for all the people and in particular himself (cf. vv. 4-5, 24-25).

Mic 2:1-2 *Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds!* When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. ²*They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.*

Verse 1 indicates that coveting (v. 2) is sin and will bring woe. These verses also show that coveting can lead to other sins (cf. James 4:1-2 ↓), involving the perpetration of great injustice.

‡ **Coveting can lead to quarrels and fights:**

James 4:1-2 *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?* Is it not this, that your passions^k are at war within you?¹ ²*You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.* You do not have, because you do not ask.

^k Greek *pleasures*; also verse 3

¹ Greek *in your members*

Here “murder” is probably hyperbole – “you are ready to kill” (GNT, NCV). The intense, destructive attitude that it depicts would appear here to arise from coveting, particularly in view of the following statement.



Seek the interests of others before your own . . .

See also:

- *Rather than insist on your own rights, act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel*, p. 1754

1Cor 10:24, 33 *Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.* ☞ ... ³³just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. ☞

Verse 24 is not saying that we should never do anything for our own good. Paul is meaning that we should not focus on or be looking out for our own good, but rather for the good of others.

Phil 2:4 *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* ☞

Phil 2:20-21 *For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.* ²¹*For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.* ☞

Paul appears to correlate being concerned about the interests of others (v. 20b) – in contrast to looking out for one’s own interests (v. 21a) – with being concerned about the interests of Jesus Christ (v. 21b). Note that in v. 20 Paul is speaking of Timothy, whose exemplary genuine concern for the welfare of the Philippians (v. 20) contrasted with the self-interest of others (v. 21a).

Rom 15:1-3 *We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.* ²*Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.* ³*For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.”* ☞

We should bear with the shortcomings of others, pleasing and encouraging them, rather than pleasing ourselves to their detriment (vv. 1-2; cf. ch. 14). In Psalm 69:9 – quoted in v. 3b – David spoke of how he had faithfully put pleasing God ahead of pleasing himself, at the cost of suffering the insults that his association with God brought. Paul quotes it to underline the fact that even Christ did not please himself (v. 3a), his point being that likewise we should please others ahead of pleasing ourselves (vv. 1-2).

Num 14:12, 19 [God, to Moses:] *I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.* ☞ ... [Moses:] ¹⁹*Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.* ☞

Here Moses provides a notable example of seeking the interests of others rather than one’s own. Rather than accepting God’s offer of greatness (v. 12b), Moses put the people’s interests ahead of such glory for himself (v. 19).

... Do so even at great cost to yourself, as Jesus Christ did

See also:

- **Rom 15:3** ↑
- **Num 14:12, 19** ↑
- *Be prepared to suffer hardship for church members*, p. 1489

Matt 20:26b-28 *But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,^m ²⁷and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,ⁿ ²⁸even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* ☞

^mGreek *diakonos*

ⁿGreek *bondservant (doulos)*

Even Christ did not come to be served, but to serve, even giving his life for others. We should similarly serve others, even seeking their interests at great cost to ourselves.

2Cor 8:9 *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* ☞

Note that this selflessness of Christ was to an extent paralleled by Paul in his work, in which Paul spoke of being “poor, yet making many rich” (6:10).

1Jn 3:16-17 *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.* ¹⁷*But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?* ☞

Putting the interests of others ahead of our own is particularly pertinent in regard to the interests of fellow believers. We should all the more be prepared to do so at the cost to ourselves of material possessions (v. 17) and even to the point of laying down our lives for them (v. 16).

Gen 44:32-33 *For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.’* ³³*Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.* ☞



The speaker is Judah. The boy is his brother Benjamin, his father Isaac's youngest son.

Ruth 2:11 But Boaz answered her, *"All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before."*

1Chr 21:17 And David said to God, *"Was it not I who gave command to number the people? It is I who have sinned and done great evil. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand, O LORD my God, be against me and against my father's house. But do not let the plague be on your people."*

As punishment for David's act of pride and self-reliance in spite of all that God had done for him, God had sent a plague on Israel. Here David unselfishly asks that he bear the full brunt of the punishment rather than it continue on his people.

Rom 16:3-4 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, *who risked their necks for my life*, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

Gal 4:14-15 ... and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵What then has become of the blessing you felt? For I testify to you that, *if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.*

The hyperbole in the latter part of v. 15 underlines the willingness the Galatians had had in aiding Paul even at great personal cost.

1Thes 2:9 For you remember, brothers, *our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*

Be considerate and reasonable

See also:

- ... *Do not do anything that will cause another to "stumble"*, p. 1333

Neh 5:18 Now what was prepared at my expense^o for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this *I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people.*

^o Or prepared for me

Nehemiah did not demand his rights as the governor, being considerate of the heavy demands that were already on the people (cf. NCV, Nlrv, NLT).

Prov 25:17, 20 *Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, lest he have his fill of you and hate you. ...²⁰Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda.*

These verses contain examples of actions that are inconsiderate.

Prov 27:14 *Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing.*

Doing something which is in itself uplifting, at an inappropriate time or occasion is in fact detrimental. It reflects a lack of consideration, amongst other things.

1Pet 3:7 Likewise, *husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you^p of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

^p Some manuscripts *since you are joint heirs*

This directive reflects the need to be considerate (cf. AMP, NIV, NRSV).

Phil 4:5 *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.* The Lord is at hand; ...

James 3:17 *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*

† Do not ignore the problems of others:

Deut 22:1-4 *You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray and ignore them. You shall take them back to your brother. ²And if he does not live near you and you do not know who he is, you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall stay with you until your brother seeks it. Then you shall restore it to him. ³And you shall do the same with his donkey or with his garment, or with any lost thing of your brother's, which he loses and you find; you may not ignore it. ⁴You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and ignore them. You shall help him to lift them up again.*

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Ill Feelings

See also:

- [Do not covet](#), p. 1562

Note that in this and the following sections, many of the subsections begin with verses giving directions, followed by verses containing outcomes, examples or insights.

Subsections

- [Avoid anger](#)
- [Do not hate](#)
- [Get rid of bitterness](#)
- [Do not bear malice](#)
- [Do not be jealous . . .](#)
- [. . . Do not envy](#)
- [Do not show contempt](#)

Avoid anger

See also:

- [Ezek 35:11](#) ↓
- [Being quick-tempered is foolish and ungodly](#), p. 1662

The inclusion of the topic of “Anger” under “Ill Feelings” needs qualifying. Anger is not always necessarily wrong (cf. comment on [Eph 4:26-27](#) ↓). In fact at times anger is attributed to God and to Jesus Christ.

[Ps 37:8](#) *Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.* 📖

[Eccl 7:9](#) *Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.* 📖

[Eph 4:26-27, 31](#) *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.* 📖
...³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 📖

Not all anger is sinful in itself, but one needs to be wary of anger as it can easily lead to sin, hence the warning in v. 26a. One should also not allow anger to linger on and fester (v. 26b), as this would give the devil a starting point from which to make advances (v. 27).

[Gal 5:19-20](#) Now *the works of the flesh are evident*: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, *fits of anger*, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ... 📖

[1Tim 2:8](#) I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands *without anger* or quarreling; ... 📖

[James 1:19-20](#) Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, *slow to anger*;²⁰ *for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.* 📖

[Prov 14:29](#) *Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding*, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. 📖

[Prov 15:18](#) A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but *he who is slow to anger quiets contention.* 📖

[Prov 16:32](#) *Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty*, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. 📖

[Prov 19:11](#) *Good sense makes one slow to anger*, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. 📖

Being slow to anger is a sign of wisdom.

[Prov 19:19](#) *A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.* 📖

[Prov 27:4](#) *Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming*, but who can stand before jealousy? 📖

[Prov 29:22](#) *A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.* 📖

[Prov 30:33](#) For pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and *pressing anger produces strife.* 📖

The phrase “pressing anger” appears to refer to stirring up anger (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV).

[Gen 49:6-7](#) *Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstringed oxen.⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.* 📖

✚ **Being angry with another makes one subject to judgment:**

[Matt 5:21-22](#) You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’²² But I say to you that *everyone who is angry*



with his brother^q will be liable to judgment; whoever insults^r his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell^s of fire. 

^q Some manuscripts insert *without cause*

^r Greek says *Raca to* (a term of abuse)

^s Greek *Gehenna*; also verses 29, 30

Here "brother" "may refer to people in general or to other followers" (CEV text note). "You fool!" (v. 22) appears to be an insult spoken in anger.

Do not hate

See also:

▪ [Gal 5:19-20](#) 

Lev 19:17 *You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.* 

Note that the last clause may mean that if our neighbor has done something wrong and we do not take them to task about it, then we also bare some responsibility. Alternatively, in the light of the first statement in the verse, it may mean that if our neighbor has done something that induces us to be hateful, we should rebuke them rather than hate them in our hearts, which would cause us also to be guilty of sin.

Titus 3:3 *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.* 

1Jn 2:9, 11 *Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.*  ... ¹¹*But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.* 

Here and in the following verses from 1 John, "brother" quite probably refers to a fellow believer – although arguably the teaching can be understood to extend to one's neighbor, i.e. all people.

1Jn 3:15 *Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.* 

Not dissimilar to Jesus' comment regarding anger in Matthew 5:21-22 in the previous subsection, John correlates hate with murder. It is an attitude of the heart that is outwardly fulfilled in murder (cf. [Deut 19:11](#) ); it is the spiritual equivalent of murder. And one who unrepentantly hates, like an unrepentant murderer, does not have eternal life "abiding in him".

1Jn 4:20 *If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot^t love God whom he has not seen.* 

^t Some manuscripts *how can he*

For comment, see the comment on [1Jn 4:20-21](#) – under . . . [Not loving other Christians has negative implications](#), p. 1314.

Gen 37:4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, *they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.* 

This illustrates that hatred breeds unkindness and animosity (cf. vv. 18-28; [Num 35:20](#) ; [Deut 19:11-12](#) .

Num 35:20-21a *And if he pushed him out of hatred or hurled something at him, lying in wait, so that he died, ²¹or in enmity struck him down with his hand, so that he died, then he who struck the blow shall be put to death.* 

This and Deuteronomy 19:11-12 below speak of how hatred can lead to violence and even murder.

Deut 19:11-12 *But if anyone hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and attacks him and strikes him fatally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities, ¹²then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there, and hand him over to the avenger of blood, so that he may die.* 

Prov 10:12 *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.* 

Prov 15:17 *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.* 

‡ God treated Edom according to the manifestation of its hatred of its Israelite neighbors:

Ezek 35:11 ... therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, *I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them.* And I will make myself known among them, when I judge you. 

Get rid of bitterness

Eph 4:31 *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.* 

Note that bitterness may be listed first as often it is a key factor in the development of the other things listed.

Acts 8:23 For I see that *you are in the gall^u of bitterness* and in the bond of iniquity. 

^u That is, a bitter fluid secreted by the liver; bile



Rom 3:14 *"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."* 

Heb 12:15 *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ...* 

Bitterness can express itself in ways that influence and defile others.

James 3:14 *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.* 

Ps 73:21-22 *When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, ²²I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.* 

‡ Do not be resentful:

1Cor 13:5b It [love] does not insist on its own way; *it is not irritable or resentful;*^v ... 

^v Greek *irritable and does not count up wrongdoing*

Do not bear malice

See also:

- **Eph 4:31** 

Malice involves ill will towards others, wanting to cause them harm or to see them suffer.

Col 3:8 *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.* 

1Pet 2:1 *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.* 

1Cor 5:8 *Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* 

Note that in light of the references to leaven (here and in v. 6) and also to the Passover lamb (cf. v. 7), the "festival" quite probably alludes to the Festival of Unleavened Bread. It is used here either as a reference to celebrating the sacrifice of "Christ, our Passover lamb" (v. 7), or alternatively to the Christian life being a joyful life or "festival", in the light of Christ's sacrifice and its implications.

Ex 23:1 *You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.* 

Ezek 25:6-7a For thus says the Lord GOD: *Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel, ⁷therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand against you, and will hand you over as plunder to the nations.* 

Matt 22:15-18 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances."¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸But *Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?* 

^w Greek *for you do not look at people's faces*

Rom 1:28-29a And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do *what ought not to be done.* ²⁹*They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.* 

‡ Malice is associated with hatred:

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, *passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.* 

Do not be jealous . . .

Rom 13:13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, *not in quarreling and jealousy.* 

1Cor 3:3 ... for you are still of the flesh. For *while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?* 

Gal 5:19-20 *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ...* 

James 3:14-16 *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.* ¹⁵*This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* ¹⁶*For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.* 



As noted earlier, “the truth” most likely is referring to the reality of this jealousy and selfish ambition (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). Boasting about such things and denying them are opposite approaches, but they are both inappropriate.

Job 5:2 Surely vexation kills the fool, and *jealousy slays the simple*.

Prov 27:4 Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but *who can stand before jealousy?*

Here “who” may refer to the one who is jealous, rather than the one who is the object of the jealousy. Jealousy has an irresistible, detrimental effect on those in whom it abides (cf. Job 5:2 ↑) – as does envy (cf. Ps 73:2-3 ↓; Prov 14:30 ↓).

Num 11:26-29 Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” ²⁸And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them.” ²⁹But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!”

Moses provides an excellent example of spurning jealousy.

1Sam 18:6-9 As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments.^x ⁷And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, “Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” ⁸And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?” ⁹And Saul eyed David from that day on.

^x Or triangles, or three-stringed instruments

Following this incident, Saul kept a “jealous eye” (NIV®, NLT) on David.

Acts 7:9 And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him ...

This and the following references (13:45; 17:5a), illustrate how jealousy can lead to wicked actions.

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

Acts 17:5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

... Do not envy

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Prov 3:31 Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways, ...

This and the following two extracts from Proverbs may allude to how being envious of wicked people can lead one to follow their ways.

Prov 23:17 Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.

Prov 24:1, 19-20 Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them, ... ¹⁹Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, ²⁰for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

Note that Psalms 37:1-2 is quite similar to vv. 19-20.

1Cor 13:4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ...

Ps 73:2-3 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. ³For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Envy (v. 3) can lead to one losing one’s grip (v. 2) on such things as godliness and a sound mindset and existence.

Prov 14:30 A tranquil^y heart gives life to the flesh, but envy^z makes the bones rot.

^y Or healing

^z Or jealousy

Ecc 4:4 Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man’s envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

Striving to achieve goals simply to satisfy envy is a common but pointless exercise.

Mark 15:9-10 And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.



Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 

✦ Paul's godly jealousy for his converts' undivided devotion to Christ:

2Cor 11:2 For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 

Do not show contempt

See also:

- *Do not scoff*, p. 1571

"Contempt" means to regard someone (or something) as inferior, insignificant or foolish.

Gen 16:1, 4-5 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar.  ... ⁴And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, *she looked with contempt on her mistress.*^a ⁵And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, *she looked on me with contempt.* May the LORD judge between you and me!" 

^a Hebrew *her mistress was dishonorable in her eyes*; similarly in verse 5

This indicates that contempt is wrong – "the wrong done to me" (v. 5a).

Prov 3:34 Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.^b 

^b Or *grace*

To be "scornful" is to have contempt and often involves the expression of it.

Prov 14:21 Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor. 

To despise someone is to look upon them with contempt.

Prov 17:5 Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished. 

Mocking someone is not only showing contempt towards them, but also to God as their Maker.

Prov 18:3 When wickedness comes, contempt comes also, and with dishonor comes disgrace. 

This underlines the evil nature of contempt, indicating that it is or can be bred by wickedness.

Prov 23:22 Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. 

Ezek 22:7 Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you. 

Here God is condemning "the princes of Israel" (v. 6).

Matt 5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother^c will be liable to judgment; *whoever insults^d his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell^e of fire.* 

^c Some manuscripts insert *without cause*

^d Greek says *Raca to* (a term of abuse)

^e Greek *Gehenna*; also verses 29, 30

Insults are indicative of contempt.

Matt 18:10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.^f 

^f Some manuscripts add verse 11: *For the Son of Man came to save the lost*

Note that "little ones" may refer primarily to young or new believers, instead of children generally. Alternatively, it may denote believers in general, who should humble themselves like little children (cf. v. 4).

Luke 18:9-14 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^g thus: 'God, I thank you that *I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.* ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*" 

^g Or *standing, prayed to himself*

Gal 4:14 ... and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. 

Titus 2:15 Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. 



Titus was not to let anyone “look down” (GNT, NRSV) on him or what he had to say – implying that it would have been wrong for any of the church members to treat him with such disrespect and contempt.

Deut 17:12-13 *The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. ¹³And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again.*

Because of their association with God in their roles, showing such contempt (cf. NIV) for a judge or a priest was to a large extent being contemptuous of God (cf. [Prov 17:5 ↑](#)).

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Adverse Speech

See also:

- [Do not lie](#), p. 1615
- [Do not give false testimony](#), p. 1615
- [d\) Wise Speech \(I\): Instructions](#), p. 1643

Subsections

- [Do not quarrel](#)
- [Do not curse](#)
- [Do not scoff](#)
- [Do not slander](#)
- [Do not gossip](#)
- [Do not grumble, particularly against others](#)

Do not quarrel

See also:

- [Avoid foolish controversies and quarreling](#), p. 1302

2Tim 2:24 *And the Lord’s servant^h must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ...*

^h Greek *bondservant*

Titus 3:1-2 *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*

2Tim 2:14 *Remind them of these things, and charge them before Godⁱ not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.*

ⁱ Some manuscripts *the Lord*

Whether this is referring to quarreling about the technical meaning of certain words or some other matter, the issues involved were certainly trivial. Doing so was not only pointless but also destructive, a foolish practice (cf. v. 23) – akin to sin.

Matt 12:19 *He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; ...*

This is speaking of the Messiah.

Gen 13:8 *Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen.”^j*

^j Hebrew *we are men, brothers*

Strife accompanies quarreling (cf. [Prov 17:14 ↓](#); [Prov 20:3 ↓](#); [Prov 26:21 ↓](#)); one leads to the other.

Gen 45:24 *Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, “Do not quarrel on the way.”*

Prov 17:14, 19 *The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out. ... ¹⁹Whoever loves transgression loves strife; he who makes his door high seeks destruction.*

Strife and quarreling are sinful in themselves; but they also lead to sin – which may well be the gist of v. 19a.

Prov 20:3 *It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.*

Prov 21:9, 19 *It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife. ... ¹⁹It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.*

In the same vain Proverbs 19:13 says, “... a wife’s quarreling is a continual dripping of rain.” (cf. 27:15-16).

Prov 26:17, 21 *Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears. ... ²¹As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.*



Ex 21:18 *When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist and the man does not die but takes to his bed, ...* 

This illustrates that quarrelling can easily lead to violence (cf. [Isa 58:4](#) ↓).

Isa 58:4 Behold, you fast only *to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist*. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. 

Ex 17:1-3 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore *the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?"* ³*But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"* 

‡ God hates discord being sewn amongst brothers:

Prov 6:16-19 *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.* 

Do not curse

Rom 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; *bless and do not curse them.* 

James 3:9-10 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and *with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.* ¹⁰*From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers,^k these things ought not to be so.* 

^k Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

Lev 19:14 *You shall not curse the deaf* or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. 

Lev 20:9 *For anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him.* 

Job 31:29-30 If I have rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me, or exulted when evil overtook him ³⁰*(I have not let my mouth sin by asking for his life with a curse), ...* 

Ecc 10:20 *Even in your thoughts, do not curse the king, nor in your bedroom curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.* 

One reason for not cursing others is that they may come to hear of it.

Ps 10:7 *His mouth is filled with cursing* and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity. 

Cursing is characteristic of "the wicked" (v. 2).

Ps 59:12-13 For the sin of their mouths, the words of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride. *For the cursing and lies that they utter, ¹³consume them in wrath; consume them till they are no more, that they may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth.* Selah 

Rather than cursing those who curse, the psalmist asks God to deal with such people accordingly (cf. [Ps 109:17](#) ↓), because of "the cursing and lies that they utter" (v. 12b).

Ps 109:17 *He loved to curse; let curses come^l upon him! He did not delight in blessing; may it be far^m from him!* 

^l Revocalization; Masoretic Text *curses have come*

^m Revocalization; Masoretic Text *it is far*

Prov 26:2 *Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, a curse that is causeless does not alight.* 

An undeserved curse will bring no harm to the innocent person it is directed against (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

‡ It would inevitably be hypocritical to be upset by being cursed by others:

Ecc 7:21-22 *Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.* ²²*Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.* 

Do not scoff

Job 36:18 *Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing, and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside.* 

Ps 1:1 Blessed is the manⁿ who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, *nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ...* 

ⁿ The singular Hebrew word for *man* (*ish*) is used here to portray a representative example of a godly person; see Preface



Prov 9:12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

This may well be referring in particular to scoffing at wisdom – “whoever makes fun of wisdom will suffer for it.” (NCV™, cf. GNT, NLT)

Prov 14:6 A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain, but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding.

Scoffing is incompatible with wisdom (cf. [Prov 9:12 ↑](#); [Prov 11:12 ↓](#)).

Prov 15:12 A scoffer does not like to be reproved; he will not go to the wise.

Prov 19:29 Condemnation is ready for scoffers, and beating for the backs of fools.

Scoffing leads to one being punished.

Prov 21:24 “Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.

Pride and arrogance are characteristics of a scoffer.

Prov 22:10 Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.

Prov 24:9 The devising^o of folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind.

^o Or *scheming*

Prov 29:8 Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath.

Isa 29:20 For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off, ...

2Pet 3:3-4 ... knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

Prov 11:12 Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent.

‡ Do not taunt:

Zeph 2:8-10 “I have heard the taunts of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites, how they have taunted my people and made boasts against their territory. ⁹Therefore, as I live,” declares the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Moab shall become like Sodom, and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, a land

possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever. The remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation shall possess them.” ¹⁰This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they taunted and boasted against the people of the LORD of hosts.

Do not slander

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

1Pet 2:1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

Lev 19:16 You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life^p of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

^p Hebrew *blood*

Ex 23:1 You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.

Ps 15:1-3 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? ²He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; ³who *does not slander with his tongue* and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; ...

Note that the last clause appears to have gossip (cf. GNT, NCV) in view – the theme of the following subsection.

Ps 50:20-21 You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son. ²¹These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I^q was one like yourself. But now *I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.*

^q Or *that the I AM*

As the text note implies, God is the speaker – the one who will rebuke and charge (v. 21) such slanderers.

Ps 101:5 [David:] *Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy.* Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.

Prov 10:18 The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

Prov 11:13 *Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets,* but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.



Prov 30:10 *Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty.* 📖

Titus 3:2 ... to *speak evil of no one*, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. 📖

To “speak evil of” another (cf. **James 4:11** ↓) includes slandering (cf. NIV), but is not limited to it.

James 4:11 *Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.^r The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law.* But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 📖

^r Or *brothers and sisters*

For comment, see the comment on **James 4:11-12** – under *Do not judge others . . .*, p. 1551.

3Jn 1:10 So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, *talking wicked nonsense against us*. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. 📖

Do not gossip

See also:

- **Ps 15:3** ↑

Prov 16:28 A dishonest man spreads strife, and *a whisperer separates close friends.* 📖

A “whisperer” (cf. **Prov 18:8** ↓; **Prov 26:20** ↓) is a gossip.

Prov 17:9 Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but *he who repeats a matter separates close friends.* 📖

Prov 18:8 *The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.* 📖

The first clause remarks on the attractiveness of listening to gossip – something which arguably is as bad as actually doing the gossiping, for doing so makes gossip possible and encourages it. The second clause may similarly have the attractiveness of gossip in view – but it could instead be implying that it is detrimental to the listener (cf. NLT), having an affect on one’s inmost being.

Prov 26:20 For lack of wood the fire goes out, and *where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.* 📖

This suggests that gossip is a key cause of quarreling.

Rom 1:29 *They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.* They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. *They are gossips, ...* 📖

2Cor 12:20 For *I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish*, and that you may find me not as you wish—that *perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.* 📖

1Tim 5:13 Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also *gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.* 📖

‡ **Avoid people who talk too much:**

Prov 20:19 Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore *do not associate with a simple babbler.*^s 📖

^s Hebrew *with one who is simple in his lips*

Avoid people who talk too much because of the likelihood of them gossiping, both to you and about you.

Do not grumble, particularly against others

James 5:9 *Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged;* behold, the Judge is standing at the door. 📖

1Pet 4:9 Show hospitality to one another *without grumbling.* 📖

Phil 2:14-15 *Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ...* 📖

Avoiding grumbling about or “finding fault” (NirV®) with others is vital to being “without blemish” (v. 15) ourselves.

Jude 1:16 *These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires;* they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. 📖

Ex 16:2-3, 8 *And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, ³and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”* 📖 ... ⁸And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in



the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because *the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.*" 

The people's complaints against Moses and Aaron were in effect against God (v. 8), whom Moses and Aaron represented, heightening the seriousness of their grumbling.

✦ Do not revile others:

1Cor 6:10 ... nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, *nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* 

To "revile" is to verbally attack someone in an abusive and/or insulting fashion.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Adverse Force

Subsections

- Do not use violence . . .
- . . . God hates and punishes violence
- Do not murder
- Do not rape
- Do not kidnap
- Do not oppress

Do not use violence . . .

Ezek 45:9 Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! *Put away violence and oppression*, and execute justice and righteousness. Cease your evictions of my people, declares the Lord GOD. 

Jonah 3:8 ...but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. *Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.* 

Prov 3:31 *Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways,* ... 

Jer 22:3 Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And *do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow*, nor shed innocent blood in this place. 

1Tim 3:2-3 Therefore an overseer^t must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^u sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, *not violent but gentle*, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 

^t Or *bishop*; Greek *episkopos*; a similar term occurs in verse 1

^u Or *a man of one woman*; also verse 12

Prov 13:2 From the fruit of his mouth a man eats what is good, but *the desire of the treacherous is for violence.* 

. . . God hates and punishes violence

See also:

- [Prov 6:16-17](#) ↴

Note that some of the verses in the following subsections – which speak of particular violent actions – further indicate that God hates and punishes violence.

Ps 11:5 The LORD tests the righteous, but *his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.* 

Ezek 8:17 Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations that they commit here, *that they should fill the land with violence and provoke me still further to anger?* Behold, they put the branch to their^v nose. 

^v Or *my*

Note that it is not clear as to exactly what the expression "put the branch to their nose" means. Whatever the case, it was obviously, like violence, offensive to God (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Mal 2:16 "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her,^w says the LORD, the God of Israel, *covers^x his garment with violence*, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." 

^w Hebrew *who hates and divorces*

^x Probable meaning (compare Septuagint and Deuteronomy 24:1-4); or "*The LORD, the God of Israel, says that he hates divorce, and him who covers*

It is the alternative translation in the footnote (cf. AMP, NASB, NIV, NRSV) that is pertinent to the theme of this subsection.



Gen 6:11, 13 *Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ...¹³And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh,^y for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.* 📖

^y Hebrew *The end of all flesh has come before me*

Ezek 7:23 *Forge a chain!^z For the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence.* 📖

^z Probably refers to an instrument of captivity

Isa 14:5-6 *The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers, ⁶that struck the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution.* 📖

‡ **Those who rely on violence will die by it:**

Matt 26:52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For *all who take the sword will perish by the sword.* 📖

Do not murder

Ex 20:13 *You shall not murder.*^a 📖

^a The Hebrew word also covers causing human death through carelessness or negligence

Matt 5:21 You have heard that it was said to those of old, '*You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.*' 📖

1Pet 4:15 But *let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.* 📖

1Jn 3:12 *We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.* 📖

Gen 9:5-6 *And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. ⁶"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.* 📖

Ex 21:14 But *if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.* 📖

The NT does not propagate the death penalty. Nevertheless its mention here in regard to murder – as with other topics

in this section (cf. **Deut 2:25** ↓) – serves to illustrate the seriousness of the crime (cf. **Gen 9:6** ↑).

Deut 27:24-25 '*Cursed be anyone who strikes down his neighbor in secret.*' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'²⁵*"Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.*' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 📖

Such cursing pronounced God's punishment.

2Ki 24:3-4 *Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, ⁴and also for the innocent blood that he had shed. For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD would not pardon.* 📖

Prov 6:16-17 *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ...* 📖

Prov 28:17 *If one is burdened with the blood of another, he will be a fugitive until death;^b let no one help him.* 📖

^b Hebrew *until the pit*

The reference to being a "fugitive" is speaking of being a fugitive from justice or possibly from a tormented conscience (cf. AMP).

Ezek 35:6 *... therefore, as I live, declares the Lord God, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you.* 📖

Hab 2:10 *You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life.* 📖

James 4:1-2 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions^c are at war within you?^d *²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.* 📖

^c Greek *pleasures*; also verse 3

^d Greek *in your members*

As noted earlier, here "murder" is probably hyperbole – "you are ready to kill" (GNT, NCV). However it portrays an intense, destructive attitude which can lead to actual murder.

James 5:1, 6 Come now, you rich, *weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.* 📖 ... *⁶You have condemned and murdered the righteous person.* He does not resist you. 📖



1Jn 3:15 *Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.* ☞

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. ☞

Lev 19:16 You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life^e of your neighbor: I am the LORD. ☞

^e Hebrew *blood*

In light of the first clause, in the second clause the meaning may be: "nor shall you [secure yourself by false testimony or by silence and] endanger the life of your neighbor" (AMP; cf. NIV). Supplementary to commands not to murder is this command to not do such things that would endanger another's life.

✦ **OT regulations governing and distinguishing between murder and manslaughter:**

Num 35:16-17, 20-25 *But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. ¹⁷And if he struck him down with a stone tool that could cause death, and he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. ☞ ... ²⁰And if he pushed him out of hatred or hurled something at him, lying in wait, so that he died, ²¹or in enmity struck him down with his hand, so that he died, then he who struck the blow shall be put to death. He is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him. ²²"But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or hurled anything on him without lying in wait ²³or used a stone that could cause death, and without seeing him dropped it on him, so that he died, though he was not his enemy and did not seek his harm, ²⁴then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these rules. ²⁵And the congregation shall rescue the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he had fled, and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. ☞*

Another such law determining if a killing was in fact murder is that regarding the killing of a thief in Exodus 22:2-3a: "If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, ³but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him."

Do not rape

Deut 22:25 *But if in the open country a man meets a young woman who is betrothed, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die.* ☞

Gen 34:2, 7 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, *he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her.* ☞ ... ⁷The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry, because *he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing must not be done.* ☞

Judg 20:5-6 And the leaders of Gibeah rose against me and surrounded the house against me by night. They meant to kill me, and *they violated my concubine*, and she is dead. ⁶So I took hold of my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel, for *they have committed abomination and outrage in Israel.* ☞

2Sam 13:10-14 Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. ¹¹But when she brought them near him to eat, *he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister."* ¹²She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate^f me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. ¹³As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the outrageous fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." ¹⁴But he would not listen to her, and *being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.* ☞

^f Or *humiliate*; also verses 14, 22, 32

The damaging effect that this incident had on Tamar is shown later in vv. 19-22. Amnon himself – Tamar's half-brother – paid the ultimate price for his evil act, with Tamar's full brother Absalom killing him for it (vv. 26-29). Note that the above-mentioned incidences of rape also drew gruesome revenge (cf. Gen 34:25-29; Judg 20:33-48).

Do not kidnap

Ex 21:16 *Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.* ☞



Deut 24:7 *If a man is found stealing one of his brothers of the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die.* So you shall purge the evil from your midst. 

1Tim 1:9-10 ... understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, *enslavers*,^g liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound^h doctrine, ... 

^g That is, those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery

^h Or *healthy*

Such “enslavers” are “kidnappers” (CEV, GNT, NASB, NKJV), as reflected in the text note.

Gen 40:15 For *I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews*, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit. 

Joseph was effectively kidnapped – the most infamous example in the Bible.

Do not oppress

Oppression entails unjust use of power, often involving violence or threat of violence.

Lev 19:13a *“You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him.* 

Ezek 45:9 Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! *Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness. Cease your evictions of my people*, declares the Lord GOD. 

Isa 33:15-16 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, *who despises the gain of oppressions*, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil, ¹⁶he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure. 

Isa 58:3 *‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,ⁱ and oppress all your workers.* 

ⁱ Or *pursue your own business*

God ignores any supposed religious acts of oppressors.

Ezek 18:5-7 If a man is righteous and does what is just and right— ⁶if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor’s wife or approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity, ⁷*does not oppress anyone*, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, ... 

Ecc 7:7 *Surely oppression drives the wise into madness*, and a bribe corrupts the heart. 

Isa 30:12-13 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, *“Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them,* ¹³*therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant;* ... 

Jer 6:6 For thus says the LORD of hosts: “Cut down her trees; cast up a siege mound against Jerusalem. *This is the city that must be punished; there is nothing but oppression within her.* 

Jer 22:13 *Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages,* ... 

The things spoken of here are acts of oppression.

Zeph 3:1 *Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city!* 

‡ Lament over the plight of the oppressed:

Ecc 4:1-2 *Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.* ²*And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



Justice

I. Justice in Action

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I. Justice in Action

Topics encompassed by the theme of justice together form a very large proportion of what the Bible says about how to relate to other people. It is essential that we incorporate the Bible's teaching on these topics into our own lives. In doing so, we must be mindful that acting justly involves not only doing what is right ourselves; it also involves ensuring that others are treated fairly – notably the needy.

a) Do What Is Just and Right

Subsections

- Practice justice
- Practice righteousness along with justice . . .
- . . . Do what is right
- Do no wrong to others
- Strive to do what is right in the eyes of both God and people
- Acting justly brings blessing
- Injustice brings God's judgment

Practice justice

Mic 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and *what does the LORD require of you but to do justice*, and to love kindness,^a and to walk humbly with your God?

^a Or *steadfast love*

Deut 16:20 *Justice, and only justice, you shall follow*, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Isa 1:17 ... learn to do good; *seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.*

Jer 7:5 For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you *truly execute justice one with another*, ...

Hos 12:6 "So you, by the help of your God, return, *hold fast to love and justice*, and wait continually for your God."

Matt 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected

the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

Lev 19:36 *You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin:*^b I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

^b An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters; a *hin* was about 4 quarts or 3.5 liters

Job 31:13-15 *If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me, ¹⁴what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him? ¹⁵Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?*

God's judgment (v. 14; cf. [Lam 3:34-36 ↓](#)) – particularly in light of the equality of all people before him (v. 15) – provides great incentive to act justly towards others.

Ps 94:15 *... for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it.*

During a time when the wicked held sway, the psalmist had confidence that a time would come when the righteous would again have justice – and all the upright would follow it.

Prov 12:5 *The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.*

Jer 5:1 Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, *one who does justice* and seeks truth, that I may pardon her.

Jerusalem was devoid of justice.

Lam 3:34-36 *To crush underfoot all the prisoners of the earth, ³⁵to deny a man justice in the presence of the Most High, ³⁶to subvert a man in his lawsuit, the Lord does not approve.*

✚ **Unlike the wicked, those who seek God understand justice:**
Prov 28:5 *Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand it completely.*

Practice righteousness along with justice . . .

See also:

- [Pursue righteousness . . .](#), p. 1865
- [. . . Be righteous and upright](#), p. 1866



In accordance with justice, God commands us to act towards others in righteousness. The need to act righteously is reflected in the following subsections.

Gen 18:19 For I have chosen^c him, that he may command his children and his household after him to *keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice*, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

^c Hebrew *known*

Job 29:14 *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban.*

Job figuratively portrays himself and his actions as being characterized by righteousness and justice.

Ps 106:3 *Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!*

Prov 21:3 *To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

Isa 56:1 Thus says the LORD: “*Keep justice, and do righteousness*, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.”

Jer 22:3a Thus says the LORD: *Do justice and righteousness*, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed.

Ezek 45:9 Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and *execute justice and righteousness*. Cease your evictions of my people, declares the Lord GOD.

Amos 5:24 *But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

... Do what is right

Deut 6:18 *And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD*, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers ...

2Ki 22:2 *And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD* and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

Ps 15:1-2 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? ²He who walks blamelessly and *does what is right* and speaks truth in his heart; ...

Prov 23:16 My inmost being^d will exult when your lips *speak what is right.*

^d Hebrew *My kidneys*

Eph 6:1 Children, *obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Rev 22:11 Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and *the righteous still do right*, and the holy still be holy.

Note that the first part of the verse is not condoning wickedness. With the nearness of Jesus Christ's return in view, John appears to be mean: Let those intent on committing evil do so for they will be repaid soon enough.

2Ki 7:8-9 And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank, and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them. ⁹Then they said to one another, “*We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news*. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. *Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household.*”

In the midst of a famine, these lepers reasoned that they had nothing to lose by going to the camp of the Arameans (cf. vv. 3-4) who were besieging their city of Samaria (cf. 6:24). On arrival they discovered the Arameans had fled leaving everything behind.

Do no wrong to others

See also:

- *d) Adverse Force*, p. 1574

Lev 25:17 *You shall not wrong one another*, but you shall fear your God, for I am the LORD your God.

Lev 19:35 *You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity.*

Deut 23:15-16 You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. ¹⁶He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your towns, wherever it suits him. *You shall not wrong him.*

Note that this is speaking of the case of a foreign slave, presumably fleeing from oppression.



Jer 22:3b And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

Ps 15:3 ... who does not slander with his tongue and *does no evil to his neighbor*, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; ...

Ezek 18:8 ... does not lend at interest or take any profit,^e withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man, ...

^e That is, profit that comes from charging interest to the poor; also verses 13, 17 (compare Leviticus 25:36)

Dan 6:22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and *also before you, O king, I have done no harm.*

Acts 25:8 Paul argued in his defense, "*Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.*"

2Cor 7:2 Make room in your hearts^f for us. *We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one.*

^f Greek lacks *in your hearts*

1Thes 4:6 ... *that no one transgress and wrong his brother* in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.

1Sam 24:11-13 See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that *there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it.* ¹²May the LORD judge between me and you, *may the LORD avenge me against you, but my hand shall not be against you.* ¹³*As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes wickedness.'* But my hand shall not be against you.

1Sam 29:6 Then Achish called David and said to him, "As the LORD lives, you have been honest, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the campaign. For *I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me to this day.* Nevertheless, the lords do not approve of you.

1Cor 6:8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!^g

^g Or *brothers and sisters*

Doing wrong to fellow believers is particularly bad in that it shows disloyalty or unfaithfulness, in addition to being unjust.

✚ **Do not put off doing good:**

Prov 3:27-28 *Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,^h when it is in your power to do it.* ²⁸*Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you.*

^h Hebrew *Do not withhold good from its owners*

Strive to do what is right in the eyes of both God and people

Rom 12:17 Repay no one evil for evil, but *give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.*

2Cor 8:21 ... for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.

Acts 24:16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

Paul is in effect saying that he tried "not to do anything wrong in the eyes of God and man" (NIRV®).

Rom 14:18 *Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.*

✚ **As Jesus grew up, he grew in favor with both God and people:**

Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in statureⁱ and in favor with God and man.

ⁱ Or *years*

Acting justly brings blessing

See also:

- *d) Repayments for the Wicked and the Righteous*, p. 460
- *d) Justice and the Needy (II): Insights*, p. 1593

Note that in addition to the verses in this and the following subsection, there are a number of other verses throughout this chapter that speak of acting justly bringing blessing and injustice bringing God's judgment (or other consequences). Usually they speak of a particular kind of just or unjust action



and are included in a subsection dealing with the action in view. The verses in this and the following subsection largely speak more generally of justness and/or unjustness.

Ps 50:23 The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; *to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!* 

Ps 106:3 *Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!* 

Ps 112:5 *It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice.* 

Isa 33:14-16 The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: *“Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?”* ¹⁵*He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil,* ¹⁶*he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure.* 

The “consuming fire” and “everlasting burning” (v. 14) appear to be references to God (cf. Deut 4:24; 9:3; Heb 12:29). As such the question would effectively be asking: “Who can dwell with God?” The answer is those who are righteous and act justly (v. 15). Alternatively God’s judgment may be primarily in view in v. 14 (cf. GNT). The passage would then be indicating that only the righteous and just will be able to stand in God’s judgment. In either case, v. 16 adds that the just will be secure and have sufficient provisions.

Isa 56:1-2 Thus says the LORD: *“Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.* ²*Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”* 

One can infer from v. 1 that those who maintain justice and do what is right will experience God’s salvation as opposed to his judgment, when God’s righteousness is manifested and revealed. In v. 2, the blessedness spoken of is in part for not doing any evil (v. 2a) and so would apply to those who act justly and do what is right (v. 1a; cf. Ps 106:3).

Isa 64:5a *You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways.* 

The phrase “meet him” speaks of God welcoming (cf. GNT, NLT) or coming to the aid of (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV) those who joyfully do what is right.

Jer 22:15 Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar? *Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him.* 

Ezek 18:5-9 *If a man is righteous and does what is just and right—* ⁶*if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor’s wife or approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity,* ⁷*does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment,* ⁸*does not lend at interest or take any profit,* ⁹*withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man,* ⁹*walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live,* declares the Lord GOD. 

^j That is, profit that comes from charging interest to the poor; also verses 13, 17 (compare Leviticus 25:36)

Acts 10:34-35 So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” 

Injustice brings God’s judgment

See also:

- *d) Repayments for the Wicked and the Righteous*, p. 460
- *God will punish those who mistreat the needy*, p. 1597
- *God will punish those who ignore the needy*, p. 1598
- *Deceptive practices bring oneself harm*, p. 1619
- *Deceptive practices ultimately bring God’s judgment*, p. 1620
- *Ill-gotten gain has ill consequences*, p. 1624
- *... Unjust rule brings God’s judgment*, p. 1725

Job 31:2-3 *What would be my portion from God above and my heritage from the Almighty on high? ³Is not calamity for the unrighteous, and disaster for the workers of iniquity?* 

Ezek 9:9-10 Then he said to me, “The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. *The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice.* For they say, “The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see.’ ¹⁰*As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will bring their deeds upon their heads.”* 

Amos 5:7, 10-12, 16-17 *O you who turn justice to wormwood^k and cast down righteousness to the earth!*  ... ¹⁰*They hate*



him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth. ¹¹Therefore because you trample on^l the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. ¹²For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins— you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate. ... ¹⁶Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord: “In all the squares there shall be wailing, and in all the streets they shall say, ‘Alas! Alas!’ They shall call the farmers to mourning and to wailing those who are skilled in lamentation, ¹⁷and in all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through your midst,” says the LORD.

^k Or to bitter fruit

^l Or you tax

In v. 17, “for I will pass through your midst” speaks ominously of God’s judgment.

Mic 3:9-12 Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, *who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight*, ¹⁰*who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity*. ¹¹*Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, “Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.”* ¹²*Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.*

Mic 7:3-4 *Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well; the prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together.* ⁴*The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand.*

“The day of your watchmen” (v. 4) refers to the day that their “watchmen” the prophets warned them about – the day God would inflict his punishment on them, a time of perplexity (cf. AMP, NKJV) and panic (cf. CEV, NirV).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Administering Justice

See also:

- *c) Authorities’ Duties to Citizens (II): Justice*, p. 1723

Subsections

- Administer and maintain justice
- Judge justly
- Do not show partiality in judging . . .
- . . . Nor show partiality in other matters
- Further instructions about legal judgments
- Have the same laws for foreigners as for the native-born
- OT laws of compensation
- Note: Avoid going to court

Administer and maintain justice

See also:

- Prov 31:9
- *Authorities should rule justly*, p. 1723

Jer 21:12 O house of David! Thus says the LORD: “Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed, lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of your evil deeds.”

Deut 33:21 He chose the best of the land for himself, for there a commander’s portion was reserved; and he came with the heads of the people, *with Israel he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments for Israel.*

Isa 1:17 ... learn to do good; *seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.*

“Seek justice” means to “See that justice is done” (CEV, GNT).

Isa 56:1 Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.”

Ezek 18:8 ... does not lend at interest or take any profit,^m withholds his hand from injustice, *executes true justice between man and man,* ...

^mThat is, profit that comes from charging interest to the poor; also verses 13, 17 (compare Leviticus 25:36)



Ezek 45:9 Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and *execute justice and righteousness*. Cease your evictions of my people, declares the Lord GOD.

Ps 82:3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Lev 25:53 He shall treat him as a servant hired year by year. He shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight.

The Israelites were to see to it that such servants or slaves (cf. v. 47) were treated justly.

Prov 24:11 Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

This appears to be speaking of rescuing those who have been wrongly condemned to die.

Prov 21:15 When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.

✦ Oppose the wicked:

Prov 28:4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them.

Judge justly

See also:

- *Do not accept bribes*, p. 1623

Prov 31:9 Open your mouth, *judge righteously*, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Zec 7:9 Thus says the LORD of hosts, *Render true judgments*, show kindness and mercy to one another, ...

Zec 8:16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; *render in your gates judgments that are true* and make for peace; ...

Note that the “gates” of the cities was where official business was carried out.

Ex 23:6-7 You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. ⁷Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked.

Deut 1:16 And I charged your judges at that time, ‘Hear the cases between your brothers, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the alien who is with him.

Deut 16:18-20 You shall *appoint judges and officers* in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and *they shall judge the people with righteous judgment*. ¹⁹You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. ²⁰Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Deut 25:1 If there is a dispute between men and they come into court and *the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty*, ...

Ps 58:1 Do you indeed decree what is right, you gods?^a Do you judge the children of man uprightly?

^a Or *mighty lords* (by revocalization; Hebrew *in silence*)

The second rhetorical question implies that one should indeed judge uprightly.

Prov 17:15, 26 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD. ... ²⁶To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good, nor to strike the noble for their uprightness.

Isa 5:22-24 Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, ²³who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right! ²⁴Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

✦ Judge carefully as well as fairly, on behalf of God, who is with you:

2Chr 19:5-7, 11b He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, ⁶and said to the judges, “Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment. ⁷Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes.” ... ¹¹ ... Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the upright!^o

^o Hebrew *the good*

In saying “you judge not for man but for the LORD” (v. 6), the thought may well be that the judges were judging “on the authority of the Lord” (GNT) – effectively “on the Lord’s behalf” (NRSV). In making decisions on matters of justice, judges are in a real sense acting on behalf of or in place of God – “for the judgment is God’s” (Deut 1:17). Note that



the declaration that God would be with them whenever they gave a verdict (v. 6b) is reflected in v. 11b.

Do not show partiality in judging . . .

See also:

- Deut 16:19 ↑; 2Chr 19:5-7 ↑

Ex 23:3 ... nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.



Partiality by judges is usually to the detriment of the poor, who can least afford to be the victims of it. But it is also wrong to show them favoritism.

Lev 19:15 You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

Deut 1:17 You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. And the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.

Prov 24:23-25 These also are sayings of the wise. *Partiality in judging is not good.* ²⁴Whoever says to the wicked, "You are in the right," will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations, ²⁵but those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.

Prov 18:5 It is not good to be partial to^p the wicked or to deprive the righteous of justice.

^p Hebrew to lift the face of

. . . Nor show partiality in other matters

Prov 28:21 To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong.

1Tim 5:21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

James 2:1-4, 9 My brothers,⁴ show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ²For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my

feet," ⁴have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ... ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

⁴ Or brothers and sisters; also verses 5, 14

Note that v. 4 indicates that showing partiality means that one has made an unfair judgment, "acting like a crooked judge" (CEV).

James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

Jude 1:16 These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

Gen 37:3-4 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.^r ⁴But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

^r See Septuagint, Vulgate; or (with Syriac) a robe with long sleeves. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain; also verses 23, 32

Showing favoritism breeds ill will.

Further instructions about legal judgments

Ezek 44:24 In a dispute, they shall act as judges, and they shall judge it according to my judgments. They shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts, and they shall keep my Sabbaths holy.

Judges decisions should be made in accordance with God's laws (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Deut 19:15 A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.

Deut 19:18-19 The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, ¹⁹then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil^s from your midst.

^s Or evil person

Accusations should be thoroughly investigated and any false witnesses should be punished appropriately.



Deut 25:2-3 ... then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense. ³Forty stripes may be given him, but not more, lest, if one should go on to beat him with more stripes than these, your brother be degraded in your sight. 

Any punishment should be in accordance with what the crime deserves (v. 2), but it should not be degrading (v. 3).

Deut 17:8-11 If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose. ⁹And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. ¹⁰Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the LORD will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. ¹¹According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left. 

Verses 10-11 point out the obligation to abide by the judge's decision. Note that local courts are being referred to in v. 8a.

Ecc 8:11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. 

This highlights the need for sentences to be carried out promptly.

John 7:51 "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" 

A person must not be condemned without first being given a hearing.

‡ There are two sides to every story:

Prov 18:17 The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him. 

The other person referred to is the opponent of the first person (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT).

Have the same laws for foreigners as for the native-born

See also:

▪ *Note: Treat foreigners the same as your native-born*, p. 1592

Lev 24:22 You shall have the same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the LORD your God. 

Num 15:29-30 You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them. ³⁰But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. 

Verse 29 is saying that there shall be only one law for anyone who sins unintentionally – applicable to both native Israelites and foreigners among them.

Num 9:14 And if a stranger sojourns among you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its rule, so shall he do. You shall have one statute, both for the sojourner and for the native. 

Note that the regulations spoken of here concern worship – rather than civil law – which is also primarily in view in 15:14-16 immediately below.

Num 15:14-16 And if a stranger is sojourning with you, or anyone is living permanently among you, and he wishes to offer a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD, he shall do as you do. ¹⁵For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the LORD. ¹⁶One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you. 

Lev 18:26 But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you ... 

‡ All God's laws were read to all the people including foreigners:

Josh 8:35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived^t among them. 

^t Or traveled



OT laws of compensation

Ex 21:18-19 *When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist and the man does not die but takes to his bed, ¹⁹then if the man rises again and walks outdoors with his staff, he who struck him shall be clear; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall have him thoroughly healed.* 

Ex 21:26-27 *When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free because of his eye. ²⁷If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth.* 

Ex 21:33-34 *When a man opens a pit, or when a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴the owner of the pit shall make restoration. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead beast shall be his.* 

Ex 21:35-36 *When one man's ox butts another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and share its price, and the dead beast also they shall share. ³⁶Or if it is known that the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has not kept it in, he shall repay ox for ox, and the dead beast shall be his.* 

Ex 22:5-6 *If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard. ⁶"If fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution.* 

Ex 22:14-15 *If a man borrows anything of his neighbor, and it is injured or dies, the owner not being with it, he shall make full restitution. ¹⁵If the owner was with it, he shall not make restitution; if it was hired, it came for its hiring fee.^u* 

^u Or it is reckoned in (Hebrew comes into) its hiring fee

The owner's presence (v. 15a) presumably should have ensured that the animal was not mistreated or neglected; as such the borrower was not liable for injury or death.

† The principle to determine the penalty for injuring another:

Lev 24:19-20 *If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, ²⁰fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him.* 

This is often understood to be expressing a principle that judicial penalties should fit the crime, rather than being an instruction to be taken literally. Moreover there are no

examples in Scripture of it being applied literally. Note that Exodus 21:23-25 gives a similar but more expansive instruction – in relation to a specific circumstance – “But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, ²⁴eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

Note: Avoid going to court

See also:

- *Note: Have any internal legal disputes judged by people of God, p. 1305*

Prov 25:8 *... do not hastily bring into court, for^v what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?* 

^v Hebrew or else

Matt 5:25-26 *Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.^w* 

^w Greek *kodrantēs*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/64 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a laborer)

1Cor 6:1-7 *When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ²Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? ⁵I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ⁶but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?* 

Verse 7a appears to refer to spiritual failure, either: in being of the unified body of Christ; or in seeking retribution rather than being meek and forgiving of each other.

Prov 29:9 *If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet.* 

This suggests that going to court or disputing with a fool may well prove to be a pointless exercise, only exacerbating the problem.



Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions

Being created by God and in the image of God, all people have the right to be treated justly and to live without poverty. As such, aiding the needy and fighting poverty are very much matters of justice, not merely charity.

Subsections

- Do not mistreat the needy
- Defend the cause of the needy
- Give to the needy . . .
- . . . Provide the needy with food and clothing
- Even sell your possessions to give to the poor
- Note: Treat foreigners the same as your native-born

Do not mistreat the needy

Jer 22:3b *And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.* 

Zec 7:10 *... do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.* 

Ex 22:22 *You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.* 

Ex 23:6 *You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit.* 

Prov 22:22 *Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, ...* 

Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and so vulnerable, unlikely to be able to adequately defend themselves in court.

Prov 23:10 *Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless, ...* 

This refers to taking over land of the fatherless by moving boundary markers of their land so as to reduce the size of their land and increase adjacent properties.

Deut 24:6, 10-13, 17-18 *No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge.*
 ... ¹⁰*“When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not go into his house to collect his pledge. ¹¹You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. ¹²And if he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in his pledge. ¹³You shall restore to him the pledge as the sun sets, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you. And it shall be righteousness for you before the LORD your God.*

 ... ¹⁷*“You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge, ¹⁸but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.* 

In addition to being clearly in view in the latter verses, presumably people who are poor – or at least needy to some degree – are primarily in view in vv. 6, 10-11. A millstone (v. 6) was critical to a man and his family’s livelihood as it was usually the means for grinding grain. Verses 10-11 appear in part at least to be aimed at protection of the dignity and privacy of the poor. Verse 18 makes the point that having been redeemed by God from their own needy predicament in Egypt, the Israelites ought to treat the needy in accordance with God’s goodness to them in their need.

Deut 24:14-15 *You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns. ¹⁵You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the LORD, and you be guilty of sin.* 

Deut 27:18-19 *‘Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’ ¹⁹“Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’ *

✦ Mistreating a poor person insults God, their Maker:

Prov 14:31 *Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.* 

Defend the cause of the needy

Ps 82:3-4 *Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. ⁴Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.* 



Prov 31:8-9 *Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.*^x *Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.* 

^x Hebrew *are sons of passing away*

Here the “mute” refers to people “who cannot speak for themselves” (GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Isa 1:17 ... learn to do good; *seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.* 

Job 29:11-17 When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved,¹²because *I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him.* ¹³The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. ¹⁴I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. ¹⁵I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. ¹⁶I was a father to the needy, and *I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know.* ¹⁷*I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth.* 

In addition to the verses which clearly speak of defending the needy (vv. 12, 16b-17), note that vv. 13-16a also speak of Job’s assistance of the needy, in more general terms. Possibly some aspects of these middle verses also have defending the needy partly in view, especially in light of v. 14.

Ps 72:4, 12-14 *May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!*  ... ¹²*For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper.* ¹³*He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.* ¹⁴*From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight.* 

Psalms 72 was composed for a Davidic king, and is understood to be messianic. Note that while those in authority may be in a better position and have a greater responsibility to defend the cause of the needy, all people are obliged to do what they can to help the needy.

Prov 29:7 *A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.* 

A righteous person is concerned about the rights of the poor.

Deut 23:15-16 *You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you.* ¹⁶*He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your towns, wherever it suits him.* You shall not wrong him. 

As noted earlier, this refers to a slave from another country seeking refuge in Israel from oppression (cf. CEV) – as is

implied by the instruction to let him live in whatever town he choose (v. 16).

✦ The plea of the Moabite refugees for shelter:

Isa 16:2-4a Like fleeing birds, like a scattered nest, so are the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon. ³*Give counsel; grant justice; make your shade like night at the height of noon; shelter the outcasts; do not reveal the fugitive;* ⁴*let the outcasts of Moab sojourn among you; be a shelter to them^y from the destroyer.* 

^y Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac; Masoretic Text *let my outcasts sojourn among you; as for Moab, be a shelter to them*

Give to the needy . . .

See also:

- *Offerings are often to help the needy – bringing thanks and glory to God*, p. 1366
- *b) Generosity*, p. 1543
- *d) Justice and the Needy (II): Insights*, p. 1593

Deut 15:7-11 If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, *you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother,* ⁸*but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.* ⁹*Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near;’ and your eye look grudgingly^z on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin.* ¹⁰*You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.* ¹¹For there will never cease to be poor in the land. *Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’* 

^z Or *be evil*; also verse 10

Verse 9 refers to the law stating that debts of a fellow Israelite were to be cancelled every seven years (cf. vv. 1-3). Thus if one lent to a needy “brother” just prior to this year, there was little time and less hope of receiving back what was loaned; hence the temptation to take the approach spoken of in v. 9.

Ps 112:9 *He [a righteous man] has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.* 



Prov 21:26 All day long he craves and craves, but *the righteous gives and does not hold back.* 📖

Giving to the needy is most likely what the writer has primarily in view.

Acts 10:1-2 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort,^{2a} a devout man who feared God with all his household, *gave alms generously to the people*, and prayed continually to God. 📖

Rom 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia *have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor* among the saints at Jerusalem. 📖

2Cor 9:12 For the ministry of this service is not only *supplying the needs of the saints* but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 📖

The "service" referred to was contributing to the collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem (cf. **Rom 15:26** ↑; **Gal 2:10** ↓).

Gal 2:10 *Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.* 📖

Eph 4:28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may *have something to share with anyone in need.* 📖

... Provide the needy with food and clothing

Luke 3:11 And he answered them, "*Whoever has two tunics^a is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.*" 📖

^a Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

Prov 22:9 Whoever has a bountiful^b eye will be blessed, for *he shares his bread with the poor.* 📖

^b Hebrew *good*

Prov 31:20 She [a wife of noble character] *opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.* 📖

With the references to cloth and clothing in the surrounding verses (vv. 19, 21-22), providing the needy with clothing may well be primarily in view here.

Isa 21:14 *To the thirsty bring water; meet the fugitive with bread, O inhabitants of the land of Tema.* 📖

Ezek 18:7 ... does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, *gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, ...* 📖

Acts 9:36, 39 Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas.^c *She was full of good works and acts of charity.* 📖 ...³⁹So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. *All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics^d and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.* 📖

^c The Aramaic name *Tabitha* and the Greek name *Dorcas* both mean *gazelle*

^d Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

Job 31:16-23 *If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,¹⁷ or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it¹⁸ (for from my youth the fatherless^e grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother's womb I guided the widow^f),¹⁹ if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering,²⁰ if his body has not blessed me,^g and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep,²¹ if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate,²² then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket.²³ For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty.* 📖

^e Hebrew *he*

^f Hebrew *her*

^g Hebrew *if his loins have not blessed me*

As reflected in the subsequent verses, v. 16 appears to encompass basic needs such as food and clothing.

Titus 3:14 And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to *help cases of urgent need*, and not be unfruitful. 📖

The phrase "urgent need" (v. 14) is most likely referring to daily necessities needed by the poor, i.e. food and clothing.

✦ **As well as food and clothing, provide the poor with shelter:**

Isa 58:7 *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?* 📖



Even sell your possessions to give to the poor

Luke 12:33 *Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.* 📖

Mark 10:21 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: *go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.*” 📖

Those who would be quick to point out that Jesus only said this to the rich man because his great wealth (v. 22) had come between himself and God, should be careful to assess if they have a similar problem, as well as to “drink in” the other verses in this and the surrounding subsections.

Acts 2:44-45 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And *they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.* 📖

Acts 4:34-37 There was not a needy person among them, for *as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold* ³⁵*and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.* ³⁶Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷*sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.* 📖

1Jn 3:17 *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?* 📖

We must use our material possessions to provide for the needy – such as by selling them and using the proceeds for providing for the poor, or giving the possessions themselves to the poor (cf. [Luke 19:8](#) ↓).

Luke 19:8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, *the half of my goods I give to the poor.* And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” 📖

Note that the latter part of the verse indicates that giving half of his goods to the poor was in addition to any compensation Zacchaeus made for any swindling he had done.

✦ **Giving one's possessions to the poor must be done with love:**

1Cor 13:3 *If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,^h but have not love, I gain nothing.* 📖

^h Some manuscripts *deliver up my body [to death] that I may boast*

This principle applies to all giving and all charitable acts – in fact to all one does for God's kingdom.

Note: Treat foreigners the same as your native-born

See also:

- *Have the same laws for foreigners as for the native-born,* p. 1587

Along with such groups as orphans and widows who were usually poor, foreigners (or aliens) were acknowledged as being vulnerable and so needy. Moreover, presumably they were also often poor. As such, specific mention of them is often made in general directives concerning treatment of the needy (cf. *Do not mistreat the needy*), as well as in matters concerning them in particular (as per the following verses).

Lev 19:34 *You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.* 📖

Having been aliens themselves, knowing the difficulties that aliens face and no doubt themselves having desired and prayed to God for equality when in Egypt, the Israelites were accordingly to treat aliens fairly, i.e. the same as their own people.

Deut 1:16 And I charged your judges at that time, ‘*Hear the cases between your brothers, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the alien who is with him.*’ 📖

Judge righteously, whether a case is between two native-born citizens or one of them and a foreigner.

Ezek 47:21-22 So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. ²²*You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the sojourners who reside among you and have had children among you. They shall be to you as native-born children of Israel. With you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) Justice and the Needy (II): Insights

Subsections

- Defending and providing for the needy are a vital part of true religion
- Defending and providing for the needy are associated with righteousness
- Defending and providing for the needy bring one blessing . . .
- . . . but giving to the needy must be done in an appropriate manner
- Blessings include one's own needs being met . . .
- . . . There will also be reward in the afterlife
- God will punish those who mistreat the needy
- God will punish those who ignore the needy

Defending and providing for the needy are a vital part of true religion

Note that a number of the following references have been included here as they correlate defending or providing for the needy with particular aspects of what can be called "true religion" (e.g. honoring God, godly fasting, knowing God, giving offerings to God and having the love of God). The following subsection likewise makes such a correlation, in regard to righteousness.

James 1:27 *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.* 

Here "visit" would be appear to include the intention to care for the needs of (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Prov 14:31 *Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.* 

Isa 58:5-7 *Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD? ⁶"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressedⁱ go free, and to break every yoke?" ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"* 

ⁱ Or bruised

Here fasting is used somewhat figuratively to signify worship generally. True worship should be reflected in and involve action on behalf of the needy. Note that in the last clause, "not to hide yourself from" speaks of not turning away from.

Jer 22:16 *He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the LORD.* 

Acts 10:4 *And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God."* 

Cornelius's prayers and alms are portrayed as being akin to sacrifices offered up ("have ascended") to God. As such it portrays his alms (i.e. giving money or food to the poor) "as a sacrifice" (AMP; cf. NIV) or offering to God – i.e. as an act of worship or true religion.

1Tim 5:4 *But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.* 

James 2:14-17 *What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.* 

ⁱ Or benefit

This passage is quite possibly just drawing a parallel between the uselessness of faith without deeds and mere words without actively providing for the poor – rather than directly correlating not providing for the poor with not having true faith. The possibility that the latter is also true is the reason for this passage being included here.

1Jn 3:17 *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?* 

✦ **Giving to the poor is equated with lending to God:**

Prov 19:17 *Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.* 



Defending and providing for the needy are associated with righteousness

See also:

- James 1:27 [↑](#)

Ps 112:9 *He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.* [📖](#)

Note that vv. 1-5 mention other godly attributes and actions that are also important for one to be considered righteous.

Isa 58:8 *Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.* [📖](#)

The reference is to defending and providing for the needy (cf. [vv. 5-7](#) [↑](#)). In v. 8, “your righteousness” may well mean “your rightness, your justice, and your right relationship with God” (AMP; cf. CEV, NLT). Alternatively God and his righteousness may be in view (cf. GNT, NCV, NIRV).

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: *break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed*, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity. [📖](#)

Showing mercy to the oppressed is presented here in association with “practicing righteousness” as an important part of repentance and getting rid of sin, which are themselves fundamental aspects of righteousness. Note that being a king, Nebuchadnezzar’s wickedness was most likely largely expressed in oppressing many of his subjects – and Daniel may well have had this in view.

Matt 19:21 Jesus said to him, “*If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor*, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” [📖](#)

Jesus is not saying that selling possessions and giving to the poor is all one has to do to be perfect, but the rich young ruler had rigorously kept the commandments that Jesus had mentioned (cf. vv. 18-19) and Jesus recognized that this was the key thing he still needed to do to be perfect or righteous.

Matt 25:37-40 Then *the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’* ³⁸*And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’* ³⁹*And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’* ⁴⁰*And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,^k you did it to me.’* [📖](#)

^k Or *brothers and sisters*

Meeting the needs of “these my brothers” (v. 40) is correlated here with being identified as “righteous” (vv. 37, 46). Note that “these my brothers” probably refers primarily to Christians, here obviously ones who had been in need.

✚ Jesus linked salvation with Zacchaeus’ generosity:

Luke 19:8-9 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, *the half of my goods I give to the poor*. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” ⁹And Jesus said to him, “*Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.*” [📖](#)

Jesus’ statement (v. 9) appears to have been in response to Zacchaeus’ promised actions (v. 8). Jesus may have meant that salvation came because of Zacchaeus’ repentance (shown by his promised actions) and his positive response to Jesus (v. 6) – which showed him to be a son of Abraham in a spiritual sense. Alternatively Jesus’ point may have been that Zacchaeus’ promised actions were a sign that salvation had come to him.

Defending and providing for the needy bring one blessing . . .

See also:

- Ps 112:9 [↑](#)

Prov 14:21 Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but *blessed is he who is generous to the poor.* [📖](#)

Prov 19:17 *Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.* [📖](#)

Prov 22:9 *Whoever has a bountiful^l eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.* [📖](#)

^l Hebrew *good*

The term “bountiful eye” here denotes a generous person (cf. GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

Jer 22:16 *He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the LORD.* [📖](#)

Luke 6:38 *... give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.* [📖](#)

Jesus quite possibly has giving to the poor primarily in view. This teaching is at least applicable to it.



Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' 

2Cor 9:6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully^m will also reap bountifully. 

^mGreek with blessings; twice in this verse

Note that this is from a passage (cf. chs 8-9) where Paul is speaking of the Corinthians contributing to the needs of the poor in Jerusalem (cf. v. 14 ↓).

2Cor 9:13-14 By their approval of this service, theyⁿ will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 

ⁿ Or you

Those who give to needy Christians will be blessed by their prayers.

Deut 24:19 When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 

Deut 14:28-29 At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. ²⁹And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. 

Particularly in light of v. 19 above, the blessing spoken of in v. 29b appears to be reward for providing for the needy (v. 29a), in conjunction with tithing (v. 28).

... but giving to the needy must be done in an appropriate manner

Deut 15:10 You shall give to him [a poor man] freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. 

Matt 6:1-4 Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have

no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ²Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 

In v. 3 Jesus figuratively emphasizes the requirement to give to the needy inconspicuously.

1Cor 13:3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,^o but have not love, I gain nothing. 

^o Some manuscripts deliver up my body [to death] that I may boast

To give to the needy without love suggests doing so grudgingly and unwillingly. As with all giving to God, it is important that we give to the needy in an appropriate manner (cf. *Give in a way that is acceptable to God*, p. 1373; *Give willingly*, p. 1374).

Blessings include one's own needs being met . . .

See also:

- *By giving to God, we ourselves will be blessed*, p. 1366

Prov 28:27 Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse. 

Ps 41:1-3 Blessed is the one who considers the poor!^p In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; ²the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land; you do not give him up to the will of his enemies. ³The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.^q 

^p Or weak

^q Hebrew you turn all his bed

Isa 58:8-11 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. ¹¹And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be



like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. 📖

In vv. 8 and 10, “light” signifies well-being or salvation. The latter half of v. 8 speaks of being protected “on every side” (GNT). The “glory of the LORD” (v. 8) most likely alludes to the pillar of cloud and fire that symbolized God’s presence with the Israelites in their journey through the desert.

2Cor 9:7-8 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency^r in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 📖

^r Or *all contentment*

Those who give to the needy will be blessed by God with all that they need – both for themselves and for “every good work”, such as further giving to others.

2Cor 8:14 ...*your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.* 📖

This points to the equality that should exist in the church body through whoever having plenty at a particular time supplying the needs of those who do not. As such, if those who give to the needy amongst the church body later themselves become needy, their needs will or should in turn be met by others in the body.

... There will also be reward in the afterlife

Luke 12:33 *Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.* 📖

Luke 18:22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. *Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.*” 📖

1Tim 6:18-19 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. 📖

Generosity towards the poor – and sharing with them – is probably what Paul is referring to in v. 18b. In v. 19, “that which is truly life” probably has the future eternal life primarily in view, though it may encompass the abundant spiritual life that Christians have now.

Luke 14:12-14 He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers^s or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³But *when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,* ¹⁴*and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”* 📖

^s Or *your brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*

Matt 25:31-40, 46 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, *as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,^t you did it to me.*’ 📖 ... ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but *the righteous into eternal life.*” 📖

^t Or *brothers and sisters*

Luke 16:1-9 He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. ²And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ ³And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ ⁵So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶He said, ‘A hundred measures^u of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ ⁷Then he said to



another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures^v of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'⁸The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For *the sons of this world^w are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.* ⁹*And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth,^x so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.*

^u About 875 gallons

^v Between 1,000 and 1,200 bushels

^w Greek *age*

^x Greek *mammon*, a Semitic word for money or possessions; also verse 11; rendered *money* in verse 13

In v. 8a the manager is commended for his shrewdness, not his dishonesty. In v. 8b Jesus remarks that the people of this world are (often at least) more shrewd "in handling their affairs" (GNT; cf. CEV) than believers. Jesus' main point is that Christians should likewise shrewdly prepare for the future, using money to benefit the needy in order to be welcomed into heaven (v. 9). (Note that v. 9a has also being interpreted to refer to using money to promote the spread of the gospel. In that case "friends" would refer to those who have accepted the gospel, rather than to the needy.)

✦ God remembers one's gifts to the poor:

Acts 10:4, 31 And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and *your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.* ... ³¹and said, 'Cornelius, *your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.*

God will punish those who mistreat the needy

Ex 22:22-24 *You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child.* ²³*If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry,* ²⁴*and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.*

Deut 27:19 'Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

Job 34:26-28 *He strikes them for their wickedness in a place for all to see,* ²⁷*because they turned aside from following him and had no regard for any of his ways,* ²⁸*so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to him, and he heard the cry of the afflicted—*

Prov 22:22-23 *Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate,* ²³*for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them.*

Prov 23:10-11 *Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless,* ¹¹*for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.*

Isa 3:14-15 *The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured^y the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses.* ¹⁵*What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" declares the Lord GOD of hosts.*

^y Or *grazed over*; compare Exodus 22:5

Isa 10:1-4 *Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression,* ²*to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!* ³*What will you do on the day of punishment, in the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth?* ⁴*Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.*

Ezek 22:29, 31 The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. *They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.* ... ³¹*Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord GOD.*

Amos 2:6-7 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals— ⁷*those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted;* a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; ...

"For three transgressions of Israel, and for four" is a poetic device emphasizing the multiple crimes of Israel (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Amos 4:1-2 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, *who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink!'* ²*The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness that, behold,*



the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks. 

Verse 2 speaks of being taken away into exile.

Amos 8:4-10 Hear this, *you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end,* ⁵saying, “When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel^z great and deal deceitfully with false balances, ⁶that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the chaff of the wheat?” ⁷The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. ⁸Shall not the land tremble on this account, and everyone mourn who dwells in it, and all of it rise like the Nile, and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?” ⁹“And on that day,” declares the Lord God, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. ¹⁰I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.” 

^z An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters; a *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

Note that “baldness on every head” (v. 10) is a reference to people shaving their heads in sorrow.

Mark 12:38-40 And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces ³⁹and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁰who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. *They will receive the greater condemnation.*” 

God will punish those who ignore the needy

Prov 24:11-12 Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. ¹²*If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?* 

The rhetorical questions imply that the excuse preceding them was either a lie and/or indicative of ignoring signs of injustice.

Isa 1:23-25 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. *They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow’s cause does not come to them.* ²⁴Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of

hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes. ²⁵I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.” 

Verse 23b appears to speak of authorities ignoring the plight of poor people who have been mistreated, possibly because the poor did not have the money to offer bribes (v. 23a).

Jer 5:27-29 Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich; ²⁸they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; *they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.* ²⁹*Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?* 

Ezek 16:49-50 Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: *she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.* ⁵⁰They were haughty and did an abomination before me. *So I removed them, when I saw it.* 

Presumably “when I saw it” is inclusive of the sin mentioned in v. 49 as well as that in v. 50a.

Matt 25:41-46 “Then he [Jesus Christ] will say to those on his left, *‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’* ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, *as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’* ⁴⁶*And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*” 

Luke 16:19-26 *There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side.^a *The rich man also died and was buried, ²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember**



that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' 

^a Greek *bosom*; also verse 23

The rich man went to hell not just simply because he had received good things, while Lazarus had received bad things (v. 25), but primarily because he did not help Lazarus.

✦ **Those who ignore the needy will themselves be ignored:**

Prov 21:13 *Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) OT Structured Provisions for the Needy

Although some of the OT structured provisions for the needy may not be readily applicable in modern societies, they nevertheless provide principles and concepts that are relevant to all societies.

Subsections

- The providing of produce for the needy
- The prohibiting of taking interest or profit from the poor
- The canceling of fellow Israelites' debts every seven years
- The release of Israelite servants every seven years
- The year of jubilee
- The right of redemption for Israelite servants and of ancestral land

The providing of produce for the needy

Lev 19:9-10 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God. 

The "gleanings" (v. 9b) were the parts of the grain that had fallen to the ground and been left behind during the harvest.

Deut 26:12-13 *When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled, ¹³then you shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover, I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.* 

Ex 23:10-11 For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, ¹¹but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. *You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.* 

Every seventh year was to be a Sabbath year, for the benefit of the poor and the wild animals – and of the land itself (cf. [Lev 25:1-5](#) ↓).

✦ **The Sabbath year would allow the land to rest:**

Lev 25:1-5 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, *the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD.* ³For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, ⁴but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. *You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.* ⁵*You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land.* 

This provision allowed the land to rejuvenate itself.

The prohibiting of taking interest or profit from the poor

Ex 22:25 *If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him.* 

Lev 25:35-37 *If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. ³⁶Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God,*



that your brother may live beside you. ³⁷You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit. 

Prov 28:8 Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit^b gathers it for him who is generous to the poor. 

^b That is, profit that comes from charging interest to the poor

The text notes in this and the following two verses from Ezekiel indicate that taking interest or profit from the poor in particular is in view, as per the context here.

Ezek 18:17 ... withholds his hand from iniquity,^c takes no interest or profit, obeys my rules, and walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live. 

^c Septuagint; Hebrew *from the poor*

Ezek 22:12 In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit^d and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD. 

^d That is, profit that comes from charging interest to the poor (compare Leviticus 25:36)

Psa 15:5 ... who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved. 

Private loans to people in need may be primarily in view, as opposed to business loans.

✚ **The Israelites were not to charge fellow Israelites any interest:**

Deut 23:19-20 You shall not charge interest on loans to your brother, interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything that is lent for interest. ²⁰You may charge a foreigner interest, but you may not charge your brother interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. 

Note that Nehemiah condemned the practice of charging fellow Jews interest for profit: "You are exacting interest, each from his brother. ... The thing that you are doing is not good. ... Let us abandon this exacting of interest." (cf. Neh 5:7-11)

The canceling of fellow Israelites' debts every seven years

Deut 15:1-3 At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. ²And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not

exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD's release has been proclaimed. ³Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release. 

The provision for canceling debts of a fellow Israelite was one way for the well-off Israelites to assist needy fellow Israelites.

Deut 15:9 Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near,' and your eye look grudgingly^e on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin. 

^e Or *be evil*; also verse 10

Deut 31:10 And Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, ... 

As with 15:9 immediately above, "the year of release" refers to release from debts (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV).

Neh 10:31 And if the peoples of the land bring in goods or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a holy day. And we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt. 

The release of Israelite servants every seven years

See also:

- [Lev 25:39-41, 54-55](#) ↴

Ex 21:2-6 When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. ³If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone. ⁵But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' ⁶then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever. 

Deut 15:12-15, 18 If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold^f to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. ¹³And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. ¹⁴You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. ¹⁵You shall



remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. ^f ... ¹⁸It shall not seem hard to you when you let him go free from you, for at half the cost of a hired servant he has served you six years. So the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do. ^g

^f Or *sells himself*

The Israelites were to set free servants who were fellow Hebrews partly at least because of and in recognition of what God had done for them (v. 15).

Jer 34:13-14a “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: *I myself made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, ‘At the end of seven years each of you must set free the fellow Hebrew who has been sold to you and has served you six years; you must set him free from your service.’* ^g

† Protection for Israelite slaves:

Lev 25:39-40, 42-43, 47, 53 *If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: ⁴⁰he shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. ^g ... ⁴²For they are my servants,^g whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. ⁴³You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God. ^g ... ⁴⁷“If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger’s clan, ^g ... ⁵³He shall treat him as a servant hired year by year. He shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight. ^g*

^g Hebrew slaves

The year of jubilee

See also:

- [Lev 25:50-52](#) ↕; [Lev 25:23-28](#) ↕; [Lev 25:29-34](#) ↕

The year of jubilee occurred every fifty years. It was a year of liberty ([Lev 25:10](#) ↓) – “the year of liberty” (cf. [Ezek 46:17](#) ↓). In it, any Hebrew in bondage was to be set free (cf. [Lev 25:39-41, 54-55](#) ↓). Additionally, any property that a poor person had sold and that had not been bought back was to be returned ([Lev 25:28](#) ↓; [Lev 25:31, 33](#) ↕). As such, all were free to and even obliged to return to their family property (cf. [Lev 25:10](#) ↓; [Lev 25:13, 28](#) ↓; v. 41).

Lev 25:8-12 *You shall count seven weeks^h of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall*

give you forty-nine years. ⁹Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. ¹⁰And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. ¹¹That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. ¹²For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field.ⁱ ^g

^h Or *Sabbaths*

ⁱ Or *countryside*

Note that the last statement appears to speak of eating “only what grows on its own” (CEV; cf. GNT, NIV, NLT) – presumably in addition to what had been harvested prior to the commencement of the year of jubilee.

Lev 25:13-16, 28 *In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property. ¹⁴And if you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another. ¹⁵You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the number of years for crops. ¹⁶If the years are many, you shall increase the price, and if the years are few, you shall reduce the price, for it is the number of the crops that he is selling to you. ^g ... ²⁸But if he has not sufficient means to recover it [property sold], then *what he sold shall remain in the hand of the buyer until the year of jubilee. In the jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his property.* ^g*

Verses 14-16 speak of property transactions in between years of jubilee. Verse 15b speaks of selling property based on the number of years left for harvesting crops before the next year of jubilee.

Lev 25:39-41, 54-55 *If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: ⁴⁰he shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. ⁴¹Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers. ^g ... ⁵⁴And if he is not redeemed by these means, then *he and his children with him shall be released in the year of jubilee. ⁵⁵For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants.^j They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. ^g**

^j Or *slaves*

Note that it is not clear how these instructions correlated with the directive to release Hebrew servants every seven years (as per the previous subsection).



Ezek 46:16-17 Thus says the Lord GOD: If the prince makes a gift to any of his sons as his inheritance, it shall belong to his sons. It is their property by inheritance. ¹⁷But *if he makes a gift out of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year of liberty. Then it shall revert to the prince; surely it is his inheritance—it shall belong to his sons.* 

The term “the year of liberty” refers to the year of jubilee.

✦ **An allusion to the year of jubilee in the Messiah’s mission:**

Isa 61:1-2 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;^k he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, *to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*¹ *to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ...* 

^k Or *afflicted*

¹ Or *the opening [of the eyes] to those who are blind; Septuagint and recovery of sight to the blind*

In applying this passage to himself (cf. Luke 4:18-19), Jesus Christ spoke of spiritual release.

The right of redemption for Israelite servants and of ancestral land

Lev 25:47-52 If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and *your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger’s clan,* ⁴⁸*then after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him,* ⁴⁹*or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him, or a close relative from his clan may redeem him. Or if he grows rich he may redeem himself.* ⁵⁰*He shall calculate with his buyer from the year when he sold himself to him until the year of jubilee, and the price of his sale shall vary with the number of years. The time he was with his owner shall be rated as the time of a hired servant.* ⁵¹*If there are still many years left, he shall pay proportionately for his redemption some of his sale price.* ⁵²*If there remain but a few years until the year of jubilee, he shall calculate and pay for his redemption in proportion to his years of service.* 

Lev 25:23-28 The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me. ²⁴*And in all the country you possess, you shall allow a redemption of the land.* ²⁵*If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold.* ²⁶*If a man has no one to redeem it and then himself becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it,* ²⁷*let him calculate the years*

since he sold it and pay back the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and then return to his property. ²⁸But if he has not sufficient means to recover it, then what he sold shall remain in the hand of the buyer until the year of jubilee. In the jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his property. 

In working out the price for redeeming the land one was to calculate the value for the years since it was sold (v. 27), presumably based largely on the value of the harvests for those years. One was then to subtract this from the original price and pay the balance to the person to whom it was sold (v. 27). Note that the original price would have been based on the number of years and harvests before the next Year of Jubilee (cf. v. 15 ).

Lev 25:29-34 *If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, he may redeem it within a year of its sale. For a full year he shall have the right of redemption.* ³⁰If it is not redeemed within a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong in perpetuity to the buyer, throughout his generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. ³¹*But the houses of the villages that have no wall around them shall be classified with the fields of the land. They may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee.* ³²*As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites may redeem at any time the houses in the cities they possess.* ³³*And if one of the Levites exercises his right of redemption, then the house that was sold in a city they possess shall be released in the jubilee. For the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel.* ³⁴But the fields of pastureland belonging to their cities may not be sold, for that is their possession forever. 

The Hebrew in v. 33 is somewhat difficult. The thrust of the verse appears to be that any houses redeemable by the Levites will revert back to them in the jubilee.

✦ **Boaz’s act as a redeemer in redeeming his relative Naomi’s land – taking her daughter-in-law Ruth as his wife:**

Ruth 4:3-6, 9-10 *Then he [Boaz] said to the redeemer, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.* ⁴*So I thought I would tell you of it and say, ‘Buy it in the presence of those sitting here and in the presence of the elders of my people.’ If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if you^m will not, tell me, that I may know, for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I come after you.” And he said, “I will redeem it.” ⁵Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you also acquire Ruthⁿ the Moabite, the widow of the dead, in order to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance.” ⁶Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for*



myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.  ...⁹Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. ¹⁰Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.” 

^m Hebrew *he*

ⁿ Masoretic Text *you also buy it from Ruth*

Verse 3 says that Naomi, Ruth’s mother-in-law, was selling the family land. This presumably was because she had

become so poor. A redeemer (v. 6) had a responsibility to care for any needy amongst their extended family. The closest male relative was the primary redeemer, who also had the prime responsibility to marry a widow. Boaz qualified as a redeemer, but there was another who was more closely related to Ruth’s dead husband, Mahlon. Before buying and so redeeming Naomi’s property and marrying Ruth, Boaz was obliged to firstly give the primary redeemer the opportunity to exercise his legal right. The man chose not to, as doing so would endanger the inheritance of his own estate (v. 6).

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Being True

In order to do what is right in our relationships with others, we must be true – both faithful and truthful. It is important to remember that faithfulness and truth – with the trust that they generate – are absolutely essential for our relationships with others to work, for so many aspects of our relationships are dependent on them. Accordingly we must avoid deceitfulness and associated dishonest practices. Bear in mind that deceitfulness is arguably the prime characteristic of Satan and evil.

a) Faithfulness

See also:

- *Do not commit adultery – which brings God's judgment . . .*, p. 1698
- *a) Be Faithful to God*, p. 1782

Subsections

- Be faithful . . .
- . . . Examples of faithfulness
- Be trustworthy and reliable
- Stand by others . . .
- . . . Do not desert others
- Do not betray others
- Results of faithfulness
- Consequences of unfaithfulness
- Note: Insights on friendship . . .
- . . . Jonathan and David's close friendship

Be faithful . . .

Prov 3:3 *Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.* 

Prov 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are his delight. 

In light of the first clause, the second one seems to primarily have in view keeping one's word/promises (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Matt 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected *the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done*, without neglecting the others. 

Gal 5:22 But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ...* 

The Holy Spirit engenders faithfulness in believers. As such faithfulness is something that we should strive for. Note that like most of the other "fruit" listed, faithfulness here seems to primarily concern faithfulness to other people.

1Tim 3:11 Their wives likewise must^a be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, *faithful in all things.* 

^a Or *Wives, likewise, must, or Women, likewise, must*

Titus 2:9-10 Slaves^b are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰*not pilfering, but showing all good faith*, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. 

^b Or *servants; Greek bondservants*

Mal 2:10, 13-16 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? *Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?*  ... ¹³And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. ¹⁴But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and *the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.* ¹⁵Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?^c And what was the one God^d seeking?^e Godly offspring. So guard yourselves^f in your spirit, and *let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.* ¹⁶"For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her,^g says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers^h his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and *do not be faithless.*" 

^c Hebrew *in it*

^d Hebrew *the one*

^e Or *And not one has done this who has a portion of the Spirit. And what was that one seeking?*

^f Or *So take care*; also verse 16

^g Hebrew *who hates and divorces*



^h Probable meaning (compare Septuagint and Deuteronomy 24:1-4); or “*The LORD, the God of Israel, says that he hates divorce, and him who covers*”

Verse 10 speaks generally of the people’s faithless and treacherous dealing with each other, whereas 14-16 speak of breaking faith with one’s wife. (For comment on v. 15, see 1699 – under *Avoid divorce – it is contrary to God’s purposes*, p. 1699.)

Prov 20:6 *Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?* 📖

Despite many people’s claims to be faithful or “loyal” (GNT, NCV, NLT), truly faithful people are not so common.

Luke 16:10 *One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.* 📖

... Examples of faithfulness

Josh 2:14 And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land *we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.*” 📖

In Genesis 47:29, similarly Jacob asks Joseph to “deal kindly and truly with me”.

Neh 7:2 I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the governor of the castle charge over Jerusalem, for *he was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many.* 📖

Dan 6:4 Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because *he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.* 📖

1Pet 5:12 *By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.* 📖

3Jn 1:5 *Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ...* 📖

The phrase “a faithful thing” may be referring to faithfulness to the “brothers”, but it may well primarily be speaking of faithfulness to the Lord by helping fellow disciples, his people. Alternatively, John may in fact not be differentiating between the two. The same could be said of “faithful” above in 1 Peter 5:12. Regarding faithfulness to God, see *a) Be Faithful to God*, p. 1782.

Be trustworthy and reliable

See also:

- *Be honest*, p. 1611
- *Servants should be faithful*, p. 1727

Ex 18:21 Moreover, look for able men from all the people, *men who fear God, who are trustworthy* and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 📖

1Cor 4:2 Moreover, *it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.* 📖

1Cor 7:25 Now concerningⁱ the betrothed,^j I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as *one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy.* 📖

ⁱ The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians’ letter; see 7:1

^j Greek *virgins*

Paul recognized that his trustworthiness ultimately was due to the Lord. He may have in view Jesus Christ’s intervention in his life on the road to Damascus.

2Tim 2:2 ... and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses *entrust to faithful men* who will be able to teach others also. 📖

This indicates that faithful people are worthy of trust – i.e. they are trustworthy.

Prov 11:13 Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but *he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.* 📖

Neh 13:13 And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan the son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, for *they were considered reliable*, and their duty was to distribute to their brothers. 📖

Isa 8:2 And I will get *reliable witnesses*, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me. 📖

God is actually the speaker here. This points to the need to be reliable or trustworthy in things such as giving a proper account of something when required, on behalf of God or others.

‡ **Keep your promises:**

Neh 5:12-13 Then they said, “We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say.” And I called the priests and made them swear *to do as they had*



promised. ¹³I also shook out the fold^k of my garment and said, “So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said “Amen” and praised the LORD. *And the people did as they had promised.*

^k Hebrew *bosom*

Stand by others . . .

See also:

▪ [2Sam 20:2](#)

[Luke 22:28](#) *You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ...*

[1Ki 2:7](#) But deal loyally with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for with such loyalty^l they met me when I fled from Absalom your brother.

^l Or *steadfast love*

[Ruth 1:15-17](#) And she said, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”

Ruth’s promise to stand by her bereaved mother-in-law is a superlative expression of loyalty and commitment – and often referred to as an example of such.

[2Sam 15:19-21](#) Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why do you also go with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your home. ²⁰You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, since I go I know not where? Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the LORD show^m steadfast love and faithfulness to you.” ²¹But Ittai answered the king, “As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be.”

^mSeptuagint; Hebrew lacks *may the LORD show*

[2Ki 2:1-6](#) Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ²And Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the

LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. ³And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he said, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.” ⁴Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. ⁵The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know it; keep quiet.” ⁶Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on.

It is debatable as to exactly what moved Elisha to stay with Elijah till he was taken by God (cf. v. 11), but quite possibly his love of and faithfulness to Elijah – whom he served (cf. 1Ki 19:21) – were at least part of the reason (cf. v. 12).

. . . Do not desert others

[Prov 27:10](#) Do not forsake your friend and your father’s friend, and do not go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away.

Do not “desert” (CEV, NIV) – “abandon” (NLT) – or renounce a friend.

[Josh 22:3](#) You have not forsaken your brothers these many days, down to this day, but have been careful to keep the charge of the LORD your God.

[2Sam 20:2](#) So all the men of Israel withdrew from David and followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

This and the following passages contain examples of people sadly deserting others in need.

[Matt 26:31-34, 56](#) Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ ³²But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” ³³Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” ³⁴Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” ... ⁵⁶But all this has taken place that the



Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” *Then all the disciples left him and fled.* 

2Tim 1:15 *You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.* 

On a number of occasions Paul suffered the discouraging experience of being deserted. As well this and the occurrences referred to below in 4:10, 16, he was deserted by: John Mark (cf. Acts 15:38); and some members of the church in Galatia (cf. Gal 1:6).

2Tim 4:10, 16 *For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia,ⁿ Titus to Dalmatia.*  ... ¹⁶*At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!* 

ⁿ Some manuscripts *Gaul*

✦ The men of Jabesh-gilead’s loyalty to their dead king:

2Sam 2:4-6 *And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. When they told David, “It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul,”* ⁵*David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, “May you be blessed by the LORD, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him.”* ⁶*Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing.* 

Do not betray others

1Chr 12:17 *David went out to meet them and said to them, “If you have come to me in friendship to help me, my heart will be joined to you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, although there is no wrong in my hands, then may the God of our fathers see and rebuke you.”* 

Job 17:5 *He who informs against his friends to get a share of their property— the eyes of his children will fail.* 

If one betrays his friend for reward, such will be the consequences that even his children will “suffer for it” (GNT, NIRV).

Isa 24:16b *Woe is me! For the traitors have betrayed, with betrayal the traitors have betrayed.* 

Matt 26:24, 47-50 *The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”*  ... ⁴⁷*While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs,*

from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸*Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.”* ⁴⁹*And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him.* ⁵⁰*Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.”* ^o*Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.* 

^o Or *Friend, why are you here?*

Matt 27:3-4 *Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus^p was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.”* 

^p Greek *he*

Ps 41:9 *Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.* 

Ps 55:12-14, 20-21 *For it is not an enemy who taunts me— then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me— then I could hide from him.* ¹³*But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend.* ¹⁴*We used to take sweet counsel together; within God’s house we walked in the throng.*  ... ²⁰*My companion^q stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant.* ²¹*His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.* 

^q Hebrew *He*

Verses 12-14 reflect the heartache and great disappointment one must endure when betrayed by a close friend (cf. **Ps 41:9** ↑; **Lam 1:2** ↓).

Ps 59:5 *You, LORD God of hosts, are God of Israel. Rouse yourself to punish all the nations; spare none of those who treacherously plot evil.* Selah 

Lam 1:2 *She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.* 

Matt 10:21 *Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ...* 

Believers may face betrayal, even by members of their own families.

Matt 24:10 *And then many will fall away^r and betray one another and hate one another.* 

^r Or *stumble*



The period of the end times is in view.

‡ **Do not betray another person's confidence:**

Prov 25:9-10 Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and *do not reveal another's secret*, ¹⁰*lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end.* 📖

Results of faithfulness

Prov 3:3-4 *Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.* ⁴*So you will find favor and good success^s in the sight of God and man.* 📖

^s Or *repute*

The coupling of "love" and "faithfulness" is common in the OT, often used in speaking of God's character. In a person, they form a basis for a proper relationship both with God and with people, as reflected in v. 4.

Prov 28:20 *A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.* 📖

Psa 101:6 *I will look with favor on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me.* 📖

Note that David is speaking, as king. This points to the value of faithful people to others, and that being faithful is also beneficial to oneself (cf. **Prov 28:20** †).

Prov 13:17 *A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful envoy brings healing.* 📖

A faithful envoy brings "healing" in that they are likely to bring peace (cf. GNT) between the two parties involved, healing any rifts.

Prov 25:13 *Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the soul of his masters.* 📖

Consequences of unfaithfulness

Note that unfaithfulness to God, as opposed to people, may be primarily in view in a number of the following references.

Prov 11:3, 6 The integrity of the upright guides them, but *the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.* 📖 ... ⁶The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but *the treacherous are taken captive by their lust.* 📖

Prov 13:15 Good sense wins favor, but *the way of the treacherous is their ruin.*^t 📖

^t Probable reading (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate); Hebrew *is rugged, or is an enduring rut*

Prov 21:18 *The wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the traitor for the upright.* 📖

This appears to be a somewhat metaphorical generalization of contrasting outcomes of wickedness – as is exhibited by traitors – and righteousness.

Prov 22:12 The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge, but *he overthrows the words of the traitor.* 📖

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, *the faithless*, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, *their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.* 📖

The "faithless" may mean the "untrustworthy" (NASB text note), hence the verse's inclusion here. Alternatively it may be speaking of the "unbelieving" (NASB).

‡ **The treacherous are detrimental to those who rely upon them:**

Prov 25:19 *Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.* 📖

Note: Insights on friendship . . .

Prov 17:17 *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* 📖

Here "friend" and "brother" are paralleled. A friend faithfully always shows love, even in testing times.

Prov 18:24 *A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.* 📖

Having many companions or so-called "friends" is not necessarily a good thing. If they are of bad character or unreliable they can lead one to ruin. In contrast a real friend will stick closer than a brother, even in difficult times.

Prov 27:6, 9 *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.* 📖 ... ⁹Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and *the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.*^u 📖

^u Or *and so does the sweetness of a friend that comes from his earnest counsel*

Verse 6 is saying that reproaches from a friend are faithful as they are intended for one's own good – in contrast to an enemy's supposedly friendly advances. The Hebrew in the



second part of v. 9 is not clear (cf. CEV text note, GNT text note). Here the ESV rendering commends the sincere advice that a friend gives.

Eccl 4:9-12 *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. ¹⁰For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! ¹¹Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? ¹²And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.* 

This is readily applicable to friendship, and may even have it primarily in view. Verse 9 appears to be making the point that two can work more effectively than one (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT). The final clause (v. 12b) appears to imply that three friends or companions “are even better” (NLT) than two, forming a grouping of quite some strength.

John 15:13 *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* 

Job 2:11, 13 *Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.  ... ¹³And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.* 

This illustrates that one should sympathize with and comfort friends (v. 11b), when they are facing adversity. Moreover v. 13 appears to exemplify that we should empathize with them.

Job 6:14 *He who withholds^v kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.* 

^v Syriac, Vulgate (compare Targum); the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

This and the following verses from Acts reflect that one ought to address a friend’s needs.

Acts 24:23 *Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.* 

Acts 27:3 *The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.* 

... Jonathan and David’s close friendship

1Sam 18:1, 3-4 *As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.  ... ³Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.* 

Jonathan’s covenant with David was one of loyalty and friendship – as illustrated in the following passages. Jonathan’s actions in v. 4 may have been simply a ratifying of this covenant, but some commentators interpret them to also signify the passing of the royal line from his own family to David’s.

1Sam 20:4 *Then Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you say, I will do for you.”* 

Jonathan made this promise to David in regard to saving his life (cf. vv. 1-3).

1Sam 20:13-17 [Jonathan:] *But should it please my father to do you harm, the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also if I do not disclose it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. May the LORD be with you, as he has been with my father. ¹⁴If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the LORD, that I may not die; ¹⁵and do not cut off^w your steadfast love from my house forever, when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” ¹⁶And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May^x the LORD take vengeance on David’s enemies.” ¹⁷And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.* 

^w Or but if I die, do not cut off

^x Septuagint earth, 16let not the name of Jonathan be cut off from the house of David. And may

Jonathan’s statement in v. 16 reaffirmed his commitment to David, even in the face of his own father’s hostility towards David (v. 13).

1Sam 20:41-42 *And as soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap^y and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most. ⁴²Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, “The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.”” And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.^z* 

^y Septuagint; Hebrew from beside the south



^z This sentence is 21:1 in Hebrew

The two friends wept knowing that they would see little of each other for at least the near future, due to the hostility of King Saul (Jonathan's father) towards David. In v. 42, "The LORD shall be between me and you ..." speaks of God watching as a witness to their covenant, to ensure that it is kept.

1Sam 23:16, 18 And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. ...¹⁸And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

The covenant (v. 18) may have been a renewal of the earlier one (cf. **1Sam 18:3** ↑) – as appears to be the case in 20:16-17 above – or simply a new one. If it was a new one, presumably it likewise reflected their friendship and commitment to each other.

2Sam 1:26 [David:] *I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women.*

2Sam 9:7-8 And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always."⁸And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"

Mephibosheth was clearly taken aback (v. 8) at the extent of David's kindness, resulting from David's loyalty to Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Truthfulness

Subsections

- Be truthful . . .
- . . . Speak the truth
- Be honest
- Be sincere
- Have integrity . . .
- . . . Integrity brings security and other blessings



Be truthful . . .

Ps 51:6 Behold, *you delight in truth in the inward being*, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Jer 4:1-2 "If you return, O Israel, declares the LORD, to me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver, ²and *if you swear, 'As the LORD lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness*, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory."

Jer 5:1-3a Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, *one who does justice and seeks truth*, that I may pardon her. ²Though they say, "As the LORD lives," yet they swear falsely. ³*O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth?*

Zec 8:19 Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore *love truth* and peace.

1Cor 13:6 ... *it [love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.*

Being truthful is acting in accordance with love.

Eph 5:8b-9 Walk as children of light ⁹(*for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true*), ...

Living as children of light produces what is "good and right and true". The term "true" is inclusive of "truth" (GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV; cf. CEV).

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, *having fastened on the belt of truth*, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ...

Truth is a key element in standing firm against evil, without which one will succumb. (Note that "truth" does refer here to truthfulness rather than in particular to God's word or the gospel.)

. . . Speak the truth

See also:

- [Prov 12:17](#) ↓; [Prov 24:26](#) ↓

Rom 9:1 *I am speaking the truth in Christ*—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

Eph 4:15, 25 Rather, *speaking the truth in love*, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,  ... ²⁵*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor*, for we are members one of another. 

Note that in v. 15, “speaking the truth” may simply mean “speak truthfully”, but “truth” could more specifically be referring to the gospel, in contrast to heretical teaching (cf. v. 14).

Zec 8:16 These are the things that you shall do: *Speak the truth to one another*; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; ... 

Prov 8:7 ... *for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips*. 

Ps 15:1-2 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? ²He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and *speaks truth in his heart*; ... 

The last clause appears to be referring to speaking the truth from one’s heart (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

Mark 5:30, 33 And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?”  ... ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and *told him the whole truth*. 

2Cor 7:14b But *just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true*. 

2Cor 6:11 *We have spoken freely to you*,^a Corinthians; our heart is wide open. 

^a Greek *Our mouth is open to you*

Paul not only spoke truthfully but also frankly to the Corinthians.

John 1:19-20 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰*He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”* 

Prov 12:19 *Truthful lips endure forever*, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. 

Verse 19 possibly means that those who speak the truth will endure, in contrast to those who lie. However it is usually interpreted to mean that truth itself will endure forever, but a lie is soon found out (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

✦ **Speak what is right:**

Prov 16:13 *Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right*. 

Be honest

Note that the other subsections in this section also pertain to this theme of being honest.

Luke 8:15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, *hold it fast in an honest and good heart*, and bear fruit with patience. 

Eph 4:28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, *doing honest work with his own hands*, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 

Gen 42:11 We are all sons of one man. *We are honest men*. Your servants have never been spies. 

1Sam 29:6 Then Achish called David and said to him, “As the LORD lives, *you have been honest*, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the campaign. For I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless, the lords do not approve of you. 

2Ki 12:15 And they did not ask an accounting from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to pay out to the workmen, for *they dealt honestly*. 

2Ki 22:7 But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for *they deal honestly*. 

Prov 12:17 *Whoever speaks^b the truth gives honest evidence*, but a false witness utters deceit. 

^b Hebrew *breathes out*

Prov 24:26 *Whoever gives an honest answer kisses the lips*. 

An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips for such reasons as: it is “pleasing” (NCV™); respectful (cf. NLT); and “a sign of true friendship” (CEV, GNT).



Be sincere

See also:

- *Do not use flattery*, p. 1616
- *Avoid hypocrisy: Not acting in accordance with what you say; . . .*, p. 1617
- *. . . and false external practices – doing things for show*, p. 1618

Josh 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD and *serve him in sincerity* and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

Job 33:3 My words declare the uprightness of my heart, and *what my lips know they speak sincerely*.

1Cor 5:8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with *the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*.

The “festival” quite possibly is a reference to celebrating the sacrifice of “Christ, our Passover lamb” (v. 7), alluding to the OT festival of the Feast of Unleavened Bread with which the offering of a Passover lamb is linked. Alternatively or additionally it may be a reference to the Christian life being a joyful life or “festival” in the light of Christ’s sacrifice and its implications. One should participate in such things with “sincerity and truth.”

2Cor 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that *we behaved in the world with simplicity^c and godly sincerity*, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.

^c Some manuscripts *holiness*

2Cor 2:17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but *as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ*.

Paul’s awareness of his need to speak with sincerity was heightened by: the fact that he was commissioned by God; his consciousness of God’s witness (as per his reference to speaking “in the sight of God”); and his being “in Christ”.

2Cor 11:3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from *a sincere and pure devotion to Christ*.

Eph 6:5 Slaves,^d obey your earthly masters^e with fear and trembling, *with a sincere heart*, as you would Christ, ...

^d Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

^e Or *your masters according to the flesh*

Phil 1:17 The former *proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely* but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

Col 3:22 Slaves,^f obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,^g not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but *with sincerity of heart*, fearing the Lord.

^f Or *Servants*; Greek *Bondservants*

^g Or *your masters according to the flesh*

2Tim 1:5 I am reminded of *your sincere faith*, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

1Pet 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for *a sincere brotherly love*, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

2Pet 3:1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up *your sincere mind* by way of reminder, ...

James 3:17 But *the wisdom from above* is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial *and sincere*.

Have integrity . . .

Integrity involves consistently holding to strong moral principles, including acting honestly and justly.

1Ki 9:4 And as for you, if you will *walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness*, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, ...

Ps 101:2b *I will walk with integrity of heart within my house*; ...

Job 2:3-10 And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered *my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.*”⁴ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.”⁶ And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.”⁷ So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself



while he sat in the ashes. ⁹*Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die."* ¹⁰*But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"* ^h*In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*

^h Or *disaster*; also verse 11

Just as he had done earlier (v. 3b; cf. 1:20-22) Job maintained his integrity by remaining true to God (v. 10), despite the temptation to do otherwise amidst great hardship (vv. 7-9).

Job 31:6 (Let me be weighed in a just balance, and *let God know my integrity!*)

Ps 7:8 The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to *the integrity that is in me.*

David appeals to God to judge and deal with him in accordance with his righteousness and integrity (cf. **Ps 26:1, 11** ↓), and so to repay him by delivering him from wicked enemies. Note the association here of integrity with righteousness.

Ps 26:1, 11 Vindicate me, O LORD, for *I have walked in my integrity*, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. ... ¹¹*But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity*; redeem me, and be gracious to me.

Titus 2:7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and *in your teaching show integrity*, dignity, ...

1Sam 12:3-4 Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and before his anointed. *Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against meⁱ and I will restore it to you.* ⁴*They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand."*

ⁱ Septuagint; Hebrew lacks *Testify against me*

Although "integrity" is not specifically mentioned in this and the following two references (2Sam 18:12; 2Ki 5:15-16), they are excellent examples of it.

2Sam 18:12 But the man said to Joab, *"Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not reach out my hand against the king's son, for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, 'For my sake protect the young man Absalom.'*"

2Ki 5:15-16 Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in

Israel; so *accept now a present from your servant.*" ¹⁶*But he said, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none."* And he urged him to take it, but he refused.

Elisha refused to accept remuneration for performing his work as a prophet of God, administering God's power. To have done so would not have been dishonest, but to have profited financially from God's power would have called his integrity into question. Elisha's action of great integrity would have spoken volumes to a foreigner such as Naaman, who was not familiar with God's ways.

Matt 22:16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, *"Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances."*

^j Greek *for you do not look at people's faces*

Despite their motivation, these men correctly attest to aspects of Jesus' integrity.

... Integrity brings security and other blessings

Ps 25:21 *May integrity and uprightness preserve me*, for I wait for you.

David effectively asks God to protect him through his integrity and uprightness.

Ps 41:12 *But you have upheld me because of my integrity*, and set me in your presence forever.

Prov 2:7 ... he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *he is a shield to those who walk in integrity*, ...

Prov 2:21 For the upright will inhabit the land, and *those with integrity will remain in it*, ...

Prov 10:9 *Whoever walks in integrity walks securely*, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.

Prov 11:3 *The integrity of the upright guides them*, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.

Prov 20:7 *The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!*

Prov 28:18 *Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered*, but he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall.

Job 4:6 *Is not your fear of God^k your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?*

^k Hebrew lacks *of God*



Gen 20:1-7 From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. ²And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.” ⁴Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent people? ⁵Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ *In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.*” ⁶Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now then, return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”

Abimelech had acted with integrity and so could claim innocence (v. 5). At least in part because he had done so, God kept him from unwittingly doing any wrong (v. 6) – enabling him to avoid God’s judgment (v. 7).

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Deceitfulness

See also:

- *Do not defraud*, p. 1622
- *Do not accept bribes*, p. 1623

Subsections

- Do not deceive
- Do not lie
- Do not give false testimony
- Do not use flattery
- Do not plot evil schemes
- Avoid hypocrisy: Not acting in accordance with what you say; . . .
- . . . and false external practices – doing things for show

- Deceptive practices bring oneself harm
- Deceptive practices ultimately bring God’s judgment

Do not deceive

1Pet 2:1 *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*

Ps 34:13 *Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.*

Prov 24:28 Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause, and *do not deceive with your lips.*

Job 27:4 *... my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit.*

Ps 5:6 You destroy those who speak lies; *the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*

Ps 32:2 *Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

Ps 101:7 *No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes.*

Here David is speaking, as king.

2Cor 4:2 *But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.*

1Thes 2:5 For we never came with words of flattery,¹ as you know, *nor with a pretext for greed*—God is witness.

¹ Or *with a flattering speech*

Paul did not deceitfully try to cover up greed.

1Pet 2:21-22 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, *neither was deceit found in his mouth.*

Verse 2 appears to be given as part of Christ’s example in suffering, which we are to follow (v. 21).

1Pet 3:10 For “*Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ...*”



Prov 15:4 A gentle^m tongue is a tree of life, but *perverseness* in it breaks the spirit.

^mOr *healing*

The second clause may well have deceit primarily in view (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT). The reference to “the spirit” appears to refer to other people’s spirits, primarily those who are victims of such perverseness.

✦ **Righteous people hate anything that is false:**

Prov 13:5 *The righteous hates falsehood*, but the wicked brings shameⁿ and disgrace.

ⁿ Or *stench*

Do not lie

See also:

- [Ps 5:6](#) ; [Ps 101:7](#)
- [Prov 6:16-19](#)
- [The practice of swearing oaths, in God’s name – not to be done falsely](#), p. 1626

Note that in addition to the verses actually cross-referenced above, lying appears to be primarily in view in a number of the verses in the previous subsection.

Lev 19:11 You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; *you shall not lie to one another*.

Col 3:9-10 *Do not lie to one another*, seeing that you have put off the old self^o with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

^o Greek *man*; also as supplied in verse 10

Prov 30:8 *Remove far from me falsehood and lying*; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ...

The first clause appears to primarily be a request for God to keep him (Agur) from lying and practicing any falsehood (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Mal 2:6 True instruction^p was in his mouth, and *no wrong was found on his lips*. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity.

^p Or *law*; also verses 7, 8, 9

Gal 1:20 *(In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)*

1Tim 2:7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (*I am telling the truth, I am not lying*), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Prov 26:28 *A lying tongue hates its victims*, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

To lie to someone, particularly for an objective that is to the other person’s detriment, reflects an element of hatred or disdain for them.

Prov 12:22 *Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD*, but those who act faithfully are his delight.

Isa 59:12-15 For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: ¹³transgressing, and denying the LORD, and turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, *conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words*. ¹⁴Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for *truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter*. ¹⁵*Truth is lacking*, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him^q that there was no justice.

^q Hebrew *and it was evil in his eyes*

Here Isaiah laments the people’s rebellion against God, in particular the prevalence of lies and the corresponding lack of truth.

1Tim 3:8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, *not double-tongued*,^r not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.

^r Or *devious in speech*

Being “double-tongued” or “devious in speech” (text note) is suggestive of lying (cf. CEV, NCV).

Do not give false testimony

See also:

- [Do not slander](#), p. 1572

Ex 20:16 *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*.

Ex 23:1-2 *You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness*. ²You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, *nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice*, ...



Prov 24:28 *Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips.*

Luke 3:14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “*Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.*”

Prov 6:16-19 *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ^{18a}a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ^{19a}a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

Prov 14:5, 25 *A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies. ... ²⁵A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful.*

Prov 25:18 *A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.*

✦ We should testify when appropriate:

Lev 5:1 *If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity; ...*

Do not use flattery

Flattery is deceitful (cf. **Ps 12:2-3** ↓; **Rom 16:18** ↓) and insincere. It is generally used to mislead others for one’s own advantage.

1Thes 2:5 *For we never came with words of flattery,^s as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.*

^s Or with a flattering speech

Ps 12:2-3 *Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. ³May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, ...*

Rom 16:18 *For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites,^t and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

^t Greek *their own belly*

Prov 26:28 *A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.*

The “ruin” could be that of the person doing the flattering (cf. **Prov 29:5** ↓) or of those who are the objects of the flattering. The context suggests that the latter is more likely (cf. CEV, NCV).

Prov 29:5 *A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.*

Prov 28:23 *Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.*

Do not plot evil schemes

Zec 7:10 *... do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.*

Zec 8:17 *... do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD.*

Prov 6:16-18 *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ^{18a}a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ...*

Mic 2:1 *Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand.*

The reference is to plotting evil.

Ps 38:12 *Those who seek my life lay their snares; those who seek my hurt speak of ruin and meditate treachery all day long.*

Ps 52:2 *Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit.*

Plotting evil schemes is characterized by deception (cf. **Prov 12:20** ↓).

Prov 6:12-15 *A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, ¹³winks with his eyes, signals^u with his feet, points with his finger, ¹⁴with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord; ¹⁵therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing.*

^u Hebrew *scrapes*

Note that the actions in v. 13 are deceptive ones, performed in conjunction with plotting evil (v. 14a).



Prov 12:20 *Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy.* 📖

Isa 32:7 *As for the scoundrel—his devices are evil; he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right.* 📖

✦ **Look to God rather than worry when wicked schemes are committed:**

Ps 37:7 *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!* 📖

Avoid hypocrisy: Not acting in accordance with what you say; . . .

See also:

- [Gal 2:12-14](#) ↕
- . . . *It is no good expressing commitment to God and Jesus Christ without obeying them*, p. 1167

When done intentionally, this form of hypocrisy is clearly deceitful. When it is not done intentionally (which is often the case) it is still a kind of falseness and therefore wrong.

Matt 7:3-5 *Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.* 📖

Self-righteously pointing out a small fault in someone else and proposing to fix it, while overlooking a worse fault in oneself – particularly a similar fault – is rank hypocrisy.

Matt 23:2-3 *The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³so practice and observe whatever they tell you—but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice.* 📖

The phrase “sit on Moses’ seat” (v. 2) refers to the Pharisees’ authority to preach the law.

Matt 23:13, 15 *But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.^v . . . ¹⁵Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell^w as yourselves.* 📖

^v Some manuscripts add here (or after verse 12) verse 14: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you*

devour widows' houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation

^w Greek *Gehenna*; also verse 33

The hypocrisy of the teachers of the law and Pharisees in v. 13 is that as religious leaders they professed to show others the way to God's truth, but their active opposition to Jesus hindered others from entering God's kingdom. Similarly v. 15 points out that they went to great lengths to supposedly win a person to their Judaism, but in doing so they in fact turned them further from God's way, presumably largely through their regulations and their opposition to Jesus.

Matt 23:29-30, 34 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' . . . ³⁴Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, . . .* 📖

In v. 34 Jesus prophesies that the Jewish religious leaders would kill and persecute messengers of God's kingdom (following Jesus' ascension) – magnifying the hypocrisy of their acts spoken of in vv. 29-30.

Luke 13:13-16 *And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"* 📖

Acts 23:3 *Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?"* 📖

The term “whitewashed wall” alludes to hypocrisy, spoken of in the subsequent rhetorical question.

Rom 2:19-24 . . . and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹*you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?* ²²*You who say that one must*



*not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?*²³*You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.* ²⁴*For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."* ☞

In v. 24 Paul affirms that many of his fellow Jews did in fact hypocritically act in ways that were inconsistent with what they preached. Regarding the phrase "rob temples" (v. 22), Paul may have in mind Jewish leaders making use for themselves of things that had been consecrated to God (cf. AMP). Some think Paul is speaking of actually robbing pagan temples (cf. CEV, NLT).

Eccl 7:21-22 *Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.* ²²*Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.* ☞

We should not pay too much attention to or be overly concerned about people speaking against us, for it would be hypocritical to get agitated as we would have done the same thing ourselves.

... and false external practices – doing things for show

See also:

- [Matt 23:29](#) ↑

Matt 6:2, 5, 16 Thus, *when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.* Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ☞ ...⁵*And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.* Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ☞ ...¹⁶*And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.* Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ☞

The Greek word translated "hypocrite" was used of a stage actor. Here it is applied to those who falsely portrayed themselves as religious. Doing for show what are otherwise godly things, in order to be honored and gain prestige, is in fact ungodly – the opposite of the impression one has sought to portray. As such, doing so is hypocritical.

Matt 23:5-7 *They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long,* ⁶*and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues* ⁷*and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi* by others.* ☞

* *Rabbi* means *my teacher*, or *my master*; also verse 8

Wide phylacteries (boxes containing Scripture verses, worn on the forehead) and long tassels would have been conspicuous signs of supposed piety, keeping with the teachers of the law and the Pharisees' hypocritical aspirations of being recognized as such (vv. 6-7).

Matt 23:23-28 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.* ²⁴*You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!* ²⁵*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.* ²⁶*You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.* ²⁷*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.* ²⁸*So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.* ☞

In v. 23 Jesus is speaking against the hypocritical practice of supposedly abiding by the law in strictly adhering to external, peripheral regulations of the law, while ignoring the more important matters central to the spirit of the law. In v. 24 Jesus figuratively emphasizes that the religious leaders were missing or ignoring the important points of the law. Note that Jesus was not necessarily saying that they were doing such things for show, but this probably was the case with him subsequently condemning them (vv. 25-28) for hypocritically giving the outward appearance of being pious, while inwardly being full of wickedness.

Mark 12:40 ... [The teachers of the law] *who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.* ☞

In addition to here and the occurrences of "Woe" in Matthew 23 (cf. [Matt 23:23-28](#) ↑; [Matt 23:13, 15](#) ↑; [Matt 23:29](#) ↑), punishment of the hypocrites is also referred to in Matthew 24:51, which says the hypocrites will be where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Luke 12:1-2 In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."* ²*Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.* ☞

In v. 1b, Jesus is warning his disciples to guard against being fooled by and/or following the hypocritical ways of the Pharisees. In this context v. 2 appears to be saying that



everything concealed by hypocritical practices will be made known.

2Cor 5:12 We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer *those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.* 

The second half of this verse may be implying that Paul's opponents focused on making themselves appear to be virtuous, rather than actually trying to be so – a hypocritical practice. Alternatively it may be referring to their attitude to their ministry, taking pride in external credentials such as “a spectacular ministry” (NLT). If the latter is correct, then it is debatable as to whether this verse is applicable to this subsection.

Gal 2:12-14 For *before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.* ¹³*And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.* ¹⁴*But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”* 

Peter hypocritically changed his behavior for the sake of appearances in front of the newly arrived Jews (v. 12). In addition, what he did was not consistent with the gospel that he preached (v. 14) – so he was also guilty of not practicing what he preached and thus acted hypocritically in a second respect (as per the previous subsection). Note that what he did was particularly serious as it implied that living as a Gentile was not good enough for a believer, and so pressured Gentiles to follow Jewish customs (v. 14).

✦ Outward signs are useless by themselves:

Rom 2:28-29 For *no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.* ²⁹*But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.* His praise is not from man but from God. 

What Paul says regarding being a Jew is applicable also to truly being one of God's people. Outward signs or appearances do not make a person one of God's people. What is critical is one's inward condition, having a heart that has been transformed by the Holy Spirit, not by the “letter” (the law) which cannot transform a person inwardly as the Spirit can.

Deceptive practices bring oneself harm

See also:

▪ *Ill-gotten gain has ill consequences*, p. 1624

Ps 36:3 *The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good.* 

This speaks of the wicked (cf. v. 1). It suggests that, along with wickedness in general, deceit robs one of wisdom.

Prov 14:17, 22 A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.  ... ²²*Do they not go astray who devise evil? Those who devise good meet^y steadfast love and faithfulness.* 

^y Or show

The “man of evil devices” (v. 17) is one of “wicked plots and plans” (AMP) – a “schemer” (NRSV; cf. NLT). In v. 22, to “go astray” means to either make a “mistake” (CEV, GNT; NRSV) or to be “ruined” (NCV™; cf. NLT).

Prov 17:20 A man of crooked heart does not discover good, and one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity. 

Prov 19:5, 9, 22 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape.  ... ⁹*A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will perish.*  ... ²²*What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar.* 

The final clause is saying that “poor people are better off than liars” (cf. GNT; CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Prov 21:28 A false witness will perish, but the word of a man who hears will endure. 

Prov 26:18-19 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death ¹⁹*is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, “I am only joking!”* 

This may be referring to someone acting in jest, rather than to someone wickedly deceiving another and then trying to excuse their actions by falsely claiming to have been joking. In either case, one is playing with fire.

Prov 29:5 A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. 

Isa 5:18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, ... 

The expression “draw iniquity with cords of falsehood” may well be meaning that deceit fosters and supports sin (cf. CEV). “Woe” speaks of ill consequences.



Isa 59:4, 9 *No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.* ... ⁹*Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.*

Deut 19:18-19 The judges shall inquire diligently, and *if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely,* ¹⁹*then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother.* So you shall purge the evil^z from your midst.

^z Or evil person

Est 9:24-25 For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of all the Jews, *had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them.* ²⁵*But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.*^a

^a Or suspended on a stake

This is an example of evil scheming leading to the harm of the one/s doing the plotting (cf. [Prov 14:17, 22](#) ↑).

Deceptive practices ultimately bring God's judgment

See also:

- [Isa 5:18](#) ↑

Job 32:21-22 *I will not show partiality to any man or use flattery toward any person.* ²²*For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away.*

Ps 5:6 *You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*

Ps 119:118 *You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain.*

Notably this makes the point that particularly in light of God's rejection, deceitfully scheming is ultimately futile.

Ps 52:3-5 *You [a wicked man] love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking what is right.* Selah ⁴*You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.* ⁵*But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living.* Selah

Deceit is evil (v. 3) and harmful to others (v. 4) – hence God's judgment (v. 5).

Isa 28:15, 17 Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for *we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter*"; ... ¹⁷*And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter.*"

God's justice will sweep away whatever protection one may have hoped to secure by lying and falsehood.

Isa 29:20-21 For the ruthless shall come to nothing and the scoffer cease, and *all who watch to do evil shall be cut off,* ²¹*who by a word make a man out to be an offender, and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and with an empty plea turn aside him who is in the right.*

Verse 21 has largely in view false testimony in court.

Jer 9:6-9 *Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit,* they refuse to know me, declares the LORD. ⁷*Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do, because of my people?"* ⁸*Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully; with his mouth each speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart he plans an ambush for him.* ⁹*Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?*

Mic 6:12-13 Your^b rich men are full of violence; *your inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.* ¹³*Therefore I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins.*

^b Hebrew whose

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and *all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.*

Rev 21:27 But *nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false,* but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

People who practice falsehood will not enter the new Jerusalem of the afterlife (cf. [Rev 22:15](#) ↓). Instead they will face eternal damnation.

Rev 22:15 *Outside are the dogs* and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and *everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*



‡ God will judge those who hypocritically judge others:

Rom 2:1-3 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ²We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Dishonest Gain

Note that because much of what can be described as “dishonest gain” involves deceitfulness, a good portion of this section is also relevant to the previous section, *Deceitfulness*.

Subsections

- Do not pursue dishonest gain
- Do not steal
- Do not defraud
- Do not practice extortion
- Do not accept bribes
- Ill-gotten gain does not last
- Ill-gotten gain has ill consequences

Do not pursue dishonest gain

1Tim 3:8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued,^c not addicted to much wine, *not greedy for dishonest gain*.

^c Or *devious in speech*

Prov 10:2 *Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit*, but righteousness delivers from death.

Ill-gotten gain will ultimately prove to be of no value.

Prov 16:8 *Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice*.

It is better to have a little that has been earned honestly than to have “a large income gained dishonestly” (GNT).

Prov 28:16 A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor, but *he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days*.

1Sam 8:3 Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but *turned aside after gain*. They took bribes and perverted justice.

Ezek 28:18 By the multitude of your iniquities, *in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries*; so I brought fire out from your midst; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you.

This is from a lament concerning the king of Tyre; as such the reference to “sanctuaries” does not include God’s sanctuary. But the verse still reflects that dishonest trade is dishonoring to those who do it and that which is associated with them – and so should not be done.

‡ Pay people what you owe them:

Rom 13:7-8 *Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed*, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. ⁸*Owe no one anything*, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Do not steal

See also:

- [Lev 19:11](#) ↓; [Mark 10:19](#) ↓

Ex 20:15 *You shall not steal*.

Isa 61:8 For I the LORD love justice; *I hate robbery and wrong*;^d I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

^d Or *robbery with a burnt offering*

Ezek 18:7 ... [A righteous man] does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, *commits no robbery*, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, ...

Eph 4:28 *Let the thief no longer steal*, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.



Titus 2:9-10 Slaves^e are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰*not pilfering, but showing all good faith*, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

^e Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

Deut 23:24-25 If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but *you shall not put any in your bag*. ²⁵If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but *you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain*.

The Israelites were allowed to eat food from a neighbor's property to satisfy their hunger, but taking any away was not permitted, presumably considered stealing. Note that the latter part of v. 25 appears to be speaking of harvesting grain so as to take it away (cf. CEV).

Prov 6:30-31 *People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry*, ³¹*but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house*.

Even stealing out of desperation (as opposed to greed) is wrong and has a price.

Prov 29:24 *The partner of a thief hates his own life; he hears the curse, but discloses nothing*.

This is speaking of a thief's accomplice either: himself being under oath in court to tell the truth and implicating himself by saying nothing; or not speaking up on hearing a public charge for anyone knowing about an incident to testify, for which he would be held responsible (cf. Lev 5:1).

‡ If God's people were to steal, it would profane God:

Prov 30:8-9 Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ⁹lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and *steal and profane the name of my God*.

Do not defraud

Lev 19:11 You shall not steal; *you shall not deal falsely*; you shall not lie to one another.

Mark 10:19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, *Do not defraud*, Honor your father and mother.'

Lev 25:14 *And if you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another*.

The last clause speaks of cheating (cf. CEV, NCV, NRSV).

Lev 19:35-36 *You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity*. ³⁶*You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin*:^f I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

^f An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters; a *hin* was about 4 quarts or 3.5 liters

Deut 25:13-16 *You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small*. ¹⁴*You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, a large and a small*. ¹⁵*A full and fair^g weight you shall have, a full and fair measure you shall have*, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁶*For all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are an abomination to the LORD your God*.

^g Or *just, or righteous*; twice in this verse

Deut 19:14 *You shall not move your neighbor's landmark*, which the men of old have set, in the inheritance that you will hold in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

This is speaking of fraudulently increasing the size of one's land.

Ps 37:21 *The wicked borrows but does not pay back*, but the righteous is generous and gives; ...

To borrow without intending to repay is to attempt to defraud.

Prov 16:11 *A just balance and scales are the LORD's; all the weights in the bag are his work*.

Honest measures in business transactions reflect God's righteousness; in a sense they are of him.

Amos 8:5-6 ... saying, "When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, *that we may make the ephah small and the shekel^h great and deal deceitfully with false balances*, ⁶that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and *sell the chaff of the wheat*?"

^h An *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters; a *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

The last clause refers to the spoiled and worthless parts of the wheat being underhandedly sold as part of the good wheat.

1Cor 6:8-10 *But you yourselves wrong and defraud*—even your own brothers!ⁱ ⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous^j will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor



adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^k ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, *nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* 

ⁱ Or *brothers and sisters*

^j Or *wrongdoers*

^k The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

✦ Making restitution for dishonestly obtaining property:

Lev 6:2-5 *If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor ³or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby— ⁴if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found ⁵or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.* 

Do not practice extortion

Regarding the inclusion of this topic in *Dishonest Gain*, although extortion is not necessarily dishonest in the sense of being deceitful, it is unscrupulous and so can be described as “dishonest” in a general sense.

Ps 62:10 *Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them.* 

Ezek 18:18 *As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity.* 

Ezek 22:12, 29-31 *In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit¹ and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord GOD.  ... ²⁹The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice. ³⁰And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. ³¹Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord GOD.* 

¹ That is, profit that comes from charging interest to the poor (compare Leviticus 25:36)

Luke 3:12-14 Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” ¹³And he said to them, “*Collect no more than you are authorized to do.*” ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “*Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.*” 

In v. 13 John the Baptist censures a common practice of tax collectors that was for their own gain – a practice which was effectively extortion.

Luke 18:11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^m thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, *extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.*’ 

^m Or *standing, prayed to himself*

The fact that the Pharisee – even though self-righteous – lists extortioners first of those he would condemn, underlines its sinfulness.

Isa 33:15-16 *He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil, ¹⁶he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure.* 

Do not accept bribes

See also:

- [Isa 33:15](#) 
- [Judge justly](#), p. 1585

Ex 18:21 *Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.* 

Ex 23:8 *And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.* 

Deut 16:19 *You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.* 

Ps 15:5 *... who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.* 



Prov 15:27 Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but *he who hates bribes will live.*

Prov 29:4 By justice a king builds up the land, but *he who exacts giftsⁿ tears it down.*

ⁿ Or *who taxes heavily*

Ecc 7:7 Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and *a bribe corrupts the heart.*

Isa 1:23-24 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. *Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.* They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them. ²⁴*Therefore the Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: "Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.*

✦ **Bribes are accepted in secret by the wicked to pervert justice:**

Prov 17:23 *The wicked accepts a bribe in secret^o to pervert the ways of justice.*

^o Hebrew *a bribe from the bosom*

Ill-gotten gain does not last

In its wisdom literature (e.g. Job and Proverbs) the Bible contains many statements that are wise insights or observations about life. Such statements are general truths, rather than necessarily always being the case without any exceptions. The following verses contain examples of such statements, as do many other verses in this chapter.

Prov 13:11 *Wealth gained hastily^p will dwindle,* but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.

^p Or *by fraud*

As per the alternative rendering in the text note, ill-gotten gain may be in view (cf. CEV, NASB, NIV, NKJV).

Prov 15:6 In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, but *trouble befalls the income of the wicked.*

This appears to mean that trouble comes to the income itself, i.e. it will be lost (cf. CEV, GNT). However it could instead mean that the income of the wicked brings them trouble (cf. AMP, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT), as per the theme of the following subsection.

Prov 21:6 *The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.*^q

^q Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Latin; most Hebrew manuscripts *vapor for those who seek death*

Prov 22:16 *Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.*

Prov 28:8 *Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit^r gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.*

^r That is, profit that comes from charging interest to the poor

Jer 17:11 Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch, so is *he who gets riches but not by justice; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool.*

Job 20:15, 17-21, 26 *He swallows down riches and vomits them up again; God casts them out of his belly.* ... ¹⁷*He will not look upon the rivers, the streams flowing with honey and curds.* ¹⁸*He will give back the fruit of his toil and will not swallow it down; from the profit of his trading he will get no enjoyment.* ¹⁹*For he has crushed and abandoned the poor; he has seized a house that he did not build.* ²⁰*"Because he knew no contentment in his belly, he will not let anything in which he delights escape him.* ²¹*There was nothing left after he had eaten; therefore his prosperity will not endure.* ... ²⁶*Utter darkness is laid up for his treasures; a fire not fanned will devour him; what is left in his tent will be consumed.*

Job 27:16-17, 19 *Though he heap up silver like dust, and pile up clothing like clay,* ¹⁷*he may pile it up, but the righteous will wear it, and the innocent will divide the silver.* ... ¹⁹*He goes to bed rich, but will do so no more; he opens his eyes, and his wealth is gone.*

Ill-gotten gain has ill consequences

See also:

- [Prov 15:6](#) ↑; [Prov 21:6](#) ↑
- [Zec 5:3-4](#) ↓

Note that the earlier subsections in this section on, *Dishonest Gain*, include other verses which also speak of ill consequences of unjust gain.

Prov 1:18-19 ... but *these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives.* ¹⁹*Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors.*

Job 15:34 For the company of the godless is barren, and *fire consumes the tents of bribery.*



Prov 20:17 *Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.* 𐀀

Isa 57:17 *Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart.* 𐀀

Jer 8:10 *Therefore I will give their wives to others and their fields to conquerors, because from the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for unjust gain; from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.* 𐀀

Jer 22:17-19 *But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.”¹⁸Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: “They shall not lament for him, saying, ‘Ah, my brother!’ or ‘Ah, sister!’ They shall not lament for him, saying, ‘Ah, lord!’ or ‘Ah, his majesty!’¹⁹With the burial of a donkey he shall be buried, dragged and dumped beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”* 𐀀

Note that all this is spoken of in regard to Jehoiakim (v. 18).

Ezek 18:10-13 *If he fathers a son who is violent, a shedder of blood, who does any of these things¹¹(though he himself did none of these things), who even eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor’s wife,¹²oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination,¹³lends at interest, and takes profit; shall he then live? He shall not live. He has done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.* 𐀀

Ezek 28:18 *By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries; so I brought fire out from your midst; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you.* 𐀀

Mic 2:2-3 *They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.³Therefore thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster;^s from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster.* 𐀀

^s The same Hebrew word can mean *evil* or *disaster*, depending on the context

Mic 6:10-11, 13 *Can I forget any longer the treasures^t of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accused?¹¹Shall I acquit the man with wicked scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? 𐀀 ...¹³Therefore I strike*

you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins. 𐀀

^t Or *Are there still treasures*

Hab 2:6-7, 9 *Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, “Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own—for how long?— and loads himself with pledges!”⁷Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them. 𐀀 ...⁹“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm!”* 𐀀

In v. 6, while “pledges” could be taken as a guarantee of repayment, this was not to be done calculatingly and unmercifully. In v. 7 “debtors” may be referring to those who had been among the victims of plundering Babylon, in view here.

1Cor 6:10 *... nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* 𐀀

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Addendum: Oaths

The swearing of an oath has two main usages: to affirm the truthfulness of a statement; and to confirm the sincerity and binding nature of a pledge or agreement. The OT law stipulated that it was to be done in God’s name – as opposed to that of a false god – appealing to or invoking God as a witness to the integrity of what was said. It cannot be done falsely – or lightly (cf. Lev 5:4) – and cannot be broken (cf. Num 30:2; Josh 9:3-21).

Subsections

- The practice of swearing oaths, in God’s name – not to be done falsely
- Swearing oaths to assert the truthfulness of a statement
- Swearing an oath to confirm a pledge . . .
- . . . Such oaths are barred by NT teaching
- Note: References to God’s or Jesus Christ’s presence and approval regarding a matter



The practice of swearing oaths, in God's name – not to be done falsely

See also:

- *Note: The practice of making of vows to God, which have to be kept*, p. 1378

Deut 6:13 It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and *by his name you shall swear*.

Jer 12:16 And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to *swear by my name*, 'As the LORD lives,' even as they taught my people to swear by Baal, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people.

Lev 19:12 *You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.*

Zec 5:1-4 Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a flying scroll! ²And he said to me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits."³ Then he said to me, "This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land. For everyone who steals shall be cleaned out according to what is on one side, and *everyone who swears falsely^v shall be cleaned out* according to what is on the other side. ⁴I will send it out, declares the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and *the house of him who swears falsely by my name. And it shall remain in his house and consume it, both timber and stones.*"

^u A cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

^v Hebrew lacks *falsely* (supplied from verse 4)

A number of commentators consider that the references to stealing and swearing falsely may be symbolic of the whole law. In support of this, the "curse" may allude to the curse or curses for breaking the first covenant (cf. Deut 27:15-26; 28:15-19), which was based on the law. The phrase "cleaned out" (v. 3) refers to being banished from the people of God.

Ps 24:3-4 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and *does not swear deceitfully*.

‡ **Oaths should be kept even when it is costly to do so:**

Ps 15:4-5 ... in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; *who swears to his own hurt and does not change*; ⁵who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

Swearing oaths to assert the truthfulness of a statement

See also:

- Heb 6:16
- *Note: References to God's or Jesus Christ's presence and approval regarding a matter*, p. 1628

Ex 22:10-11 If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, ¹¹*an oath by the LORD shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath*, and he shall not make restitution.

1Ki 8:31-32 *If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath and comes and swears his oath before your altar in this house*, ³²then hear in heaven and act and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct on his own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding him according to his righteousness.

"If a man sins against his neighbor" (v. 31) probably has in view the situation where a person is "accused of wronging another" (GNT; cf. CEV). If an accused person claimed to be innocent, they were to swear an oath attesting to their innocence (cf. Ex 2:10-11). If they were in fact guilty they would then face God's judgment (v. 32).

Matt 26:63-64a But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "*I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.*" ⁶⁴*Jesus said to him, "You have said so.*"

Here the high priest invokes a legally imposed oath, which by law Jesus had to answer.

Rom 9:1 *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—*

Paul is asserting his truthfulness by what is in effect an oath. He aligns the integrity of what he says with his relationship with Christ and with the Holy Spirit, associating both of them with the truthfulness of what he says.

2Cor 1:18 *As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No.*

By linking the truth of his words with the certainty of God being faithful, Paul to all intents and purposes swears an oath based on God's faithfulness if not his name.

2Cor 1:23 *But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth.*



This and the following four verse extracts are further examples of Paul asserting the truthfulness of what he says by what is effectively an oath. In each of these instances he in a sense invokes or declares God as a witness to the truth of his words.

2Cor 11:31 *The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.* 📖

Gal 1:20 *(In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)* 📖

Phil 1:8 *For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.* 📖

1Thes 2:5, 10 *For we never came with words of flattery,^w as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. 📖 ...¹⁰You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.* 📖

^w Or with a flattering speech

Rev 10:5-6 *And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven ⁶and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, ...* 📖

The angel swears either to assert the truthfulness of his statement (as per the theme of this subsection) or to confirm what he says as a promise or pledge (as per the theme of the following subsection).

✦ Peter's dishonest swearing in denying Jesus:

Matt 26:73-74 *After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." ⁷⁴Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed.* 📖

Swearing an oath to confirm a pledge . . .

Num 30:2-5 *If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. ³If a woman vows a vow to the LORD and binds herself by a pledge, while within her father's house in her youth, ⁴and her father hears of her vow and of her pledge by which she has bound herself and says nothing to her, then all her vows shall stand, and every pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. ⁵But if her father opposes her on the day that he hears of it, no vow of hers, no pledge by which she has bound herself shall*

stand. And the LORD will forgive her, because her father opposed her. 📖

Note that the subsequent verses (cf. vv. 6-15) give regulations regarding vows made by a wife.

Lev 5:4 *... or if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that people swear, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and he realizes his guilt in any of these; ...* 📖

Here Moses indicates that thoughtlessly swearing an oath to do something is wrong (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). Doing so is dishonoring to God in whose name the oath is made, for it is using his name thoughtlessly and the oath is also more likely to be an oath one is unable to keep.

Gen 24:3, 9 *... that I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, 📖 ... ⁹So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter.* 📖

Gen 26:28-31 *They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you. So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, ²⁹that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD." ³⁰So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. ³¹In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths. And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace.* 📖

Josh 9:15-21 *And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them. ¹⁶At the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, they heard that they were their neighbors and that they lived among them. ¹⁷And the people of Israel set out and reached their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. ¹⁸But the people of Israel did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. Then all the congregation murmured against the leaders. ¹⁹But all the leaders said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them. ²⁰This we will do to them: let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them." ²¹And the leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became cutters of wood and drawers of water for all the congregation, just as the leaders had said of them.* 📖



2Ki 11:4 But in the seventh year Jehoiada sent and brought the captains of the Carites and of the guards, and had them come to him in the house of the LORD. And *he made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD*, and he showed them the king's son. 

The oath was probably to confirm a pledge to keep the aforementioned covenant. Alternatively, possibly it was an oath pledging allegiance to the king's son who was soon to be crowned, although this appears to be less likely as these men only saw him afterwards.

Jer 38:16 Then King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah, "As the LORD lives, who made our souls, I will not put you to death or deliver you into the hand of these men who seek your life." 

Heb 6:13-18 For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham,^x having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 

^x Greek *he*

... Such oaths are barred by NT teaching

Note that the following instructions prohibiting the swearing of oaths to confirm a pledge, obviously do not apply to God (cf. [Heb 6:13-18](#) 

Matt 5:33-37 Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.'³⁴ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.^y 

^y Or *the evil one*

This and the following references appear to have in view the use of oaths for confirming the binding nature of a pledge (as per the previous subsection) – rather than that of affirming the truth of a statement, which Paul appears to use

a number of times as shown earlier in *Swearing oaths to assert the truthfulness of a statement*. A number of commentators think that the background to this teaching was the dishonorable practice of distinguishing between oaths that could be broken and those that could not, apparently depending on what one swore by in making the oath (cf. [Matt 23:16-22](#) 

As a result oaths were often made with no real commitment or even as a means to deceive. Possibly in response to this abuse of such oaths associated with pledges, Jesus taught that one should not swear them at all (v. 34a), but instead simply state one's intention (v. 37). In vv. 34-36 Jesus seems to be undermining distinctions between oaths that swear directly by God's name and those that swear by other things, his point being that such things have a connection with God and so swearing by them indirectly involves him (cf. [Matt 23:21-22](#) 

A further reason not to make such oaths is that unforeseen circumstances can prevent a person from fulfilling them, which would be dishonoring to God.

James 5:12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. 

‡ Condemnation of the practice of discounting certain types of oaths:

Matt 23:16-22 Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.'¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸And you say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.'¹⁹ You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. ²²And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. 

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were not only wrong to discount certain types of oaths, but their reasoning as to which were less binding was irrational. For the ones they considered less binding should if in anything have been the more binding.

Note: References to God's or Jesus Christ's presence and approval regarding a matter

1Sam 23:18 And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home. 



Doing something intentionally “before” God (cf. [2Sam 5:3 ↓](#)) in effect is a claim to have and/or points to God’s endorsement of what is being done.

2Sam 5:3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and *King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD*, and they anointed David king over Israel. 

2Cor 2:10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, *what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ...* 

In conjunction with Christ’s witness, Paul appears to imply that he had acted “with the approval” (AMP) of Christ, even “with Christ’s authority” (NLT). Similar comment can be made regarding the following verses in this subsection.

1Tim 5:21 *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.* 

2Tim 4:1-2 *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



Wisdom

I. Being Wise

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I. Being Wise

Wisdom is one of the attributes most highly valued in the Bible. Thankfully the Bible says much about how we can gain wisdom. The Bible also contains very astute advice on other topics associated with wisdom, notably speaking – a key medium that we use in relating to others.

a) Prologue: The Precedence of Godly Wisdom

Note that the term “godly wisdom” is used in this section to denote the wisdom which the Bible advocates, wisdom which is based on the Bible’s teachings.

Subsections

- Godly wisdom is superior to anything else
- Worldly wisdom is flawed and inferior to the wisdom of God
- Worldly wisdom and knowledge are ultimately futile, even detrimental
- So get godly wisdom and be wise . . .
- . . . Seek out wisdom and knowledge

Godly wisdom is superior to anything else

Job 28:15-19 *It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price. ¹⁶It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. ¹⁷Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. ¹⁸No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. ¹⁹The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold.* 📖

Prov 3:13-15 *Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, ¹⁴for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. ¹⁵She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.* 📖

Prov 8:10-11 [Wisdom:] *Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, ¹¹for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.* 📖

The speaker is wisdom personified.

Prov 16:16 *How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.* 📖

Ecc 2:13 *Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness.* 📖

Ecc 9:16, 18 *But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man’s wisdom is despised and his words are not heard. 📖 ... ¹⁸Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.* 📖

Prov 8:22-31 [Wisdom:] *“The LORD possessed^a me at the beginning of his work,^b the first of his acts of old. ²³Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. ²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, ²⁶before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. ²⁷When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸when he made firm the skies above, when he established^c the fountains of the deep, ²⁹when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his^d delight, rejoicing before him always, ³¹rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.* 📖

^a Or fathered; Septuagint created

^b Hebrew way

^c The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

^d Or daily filled with

Wisdom’s primacy is shown by it being the first of God’s works, playing a role in the creation of everything else. The portrayal of Wisdom’s role in creation is highlighted by it being described as “like a master workman” at God’s side (v. 30) – rejoicing and delighting in all that was created (vv. 30b-31).

⚡ People do not know wisdom’s worth:

Job 28:13 *Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living.* 📖



Worldly wisdom is flawed and inferior to the wisdom of God

See also:

- *Note: God can frustrate and take away worldly wisdom – and bring down the wise*, p. 45
- *Note: Human judgment is typically superficial and inadequate*, p. 1553
- *The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power*, p. 1770

Worldly wisdom is flawed and inferior to the wisdom of God – to both the wisdom of God himself and the wisdom that God gives to his people.

Ecc 7:23-24 *All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. ²⁴That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out?* 

The phrase "it was far from me" (v. 23) refers either to the writer's vain attempt to fathom the matters discussed in the preceding verses or to his desire to be wise; v. 24 suggests the former is the case. The thrust of these verses appears to be that there is much that worldly wisdom cannot understand.

Jer 8:9 *The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD, so what wisdom is in them?* 

Worldly wisdom which rejects God's law is not good or true wisdom. It is an inferior "wisdom", if indeed it can be called that.

1Cor 1:20-21, 25 *Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.  ... ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* 

The first three rhetorical questions in v. 20 allude to the worldly wisdom of such people floundering due to God in his wisdom making worldly wisdom actually foolish (v. 20b) and being useless as a means of knowing God or being saved (v. 21). Such limited and flawed worldly wisdom contrasts with the effectiveness of what appears to it to be the foolishness of God (vv. 21b, 25a) – which is in fact a product of his superior wisdom.

1Cor 2:6-8 *Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷But we impart a secret*

and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.



Verse 6 associates godly wisdom with spiritual maturity and contrasts it to the wisdom of the world, implying the latter to be inferior and doomed to come to nothing. God's "secret wisdom" (v. 7) is primarily the gospel; verse 8 implies that the wisdom of this age has failed to understand it, illustrating that worldly wisdom is flawed and inferior.

1Cor 2:12-16 *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.^e ¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.* 

^e Or *interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual*

This contrasts the spiritual wisdom that the Holy Spirit brings with inferior worldly wisdom. In contrast to the spiritual understanding of those who have the Holy Spirit (vv. 12-13), without the Spirit of God one with worldly wisdom is not able to understand and accept the things that come from the Spirit (v. 14). Neither is such a person qualified to make judgments about spiritual things, such as judgments about those who have the Spirit (vv. 15-16). Note that the quotation at the beginning of v. 16 serves to highlight the inability of those who do not know the mind of God to ascertain spiritual truths. In contrast, believers have the mind of Christ (v. 16b), having the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 12).

1Cor 3:18-20 *Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." *

In saying that one should become a "fool" (v. 18), Paul means that one needs to forgo aspiring to the flawed wisdom of this world and recognize the shortcomings of one's understanding – in effect see oneself as a "fool" – in order to be open to true, godly wisdom.



Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive by *philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^f of the world, and not according to Christ.*



^f Or *elementary principles*; also verse 20

Paul likely has false teaching in view here, in particular one based on some supposed “philosophy”. As such he is unlikely here to be equating philosophy in general with worldly wisdom. However the “philosophy” he speaks of here is an example of worldly wisdom, it being based on “human tradition” and “the elemental spirits of the world”. The fact that it is flawed is underlined by it being associated with “empty deceit”. All of this makes it inferior to Christ, and the message of him.

† Act by God’s grace rather than by worldly wisdom:

2Cor 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity[‡] and godly sincerity, *not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God*, and supremely so toward you.

[‡] Some manuscripts *holiness*

The fact that Paul acted according to God’s grace rather than worldly wisdom reflects that the latter is flawed or at least limited – and that it is inferior to that which is of God.

Worldly wisdom and knowledge are ultimately futile, even detrimental

See also:

- [1Cor 2:6](#) ↑

1Cor 3:20 ... and again, *“The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”*

The quotation is from Psalms 94:11 – “... the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.”

Eccl 1:16-18 I said in my heart, “I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.” ¹⁷*And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.* ¹⁸*For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.*

The expression “striving after wind” (v. 17) here refers to the meaninglessness of wisdom (cf. v. 14; [Eccl 2:15](#) ↓; [Eccl 2:21](#) ↓). Verse 18 may well be speaking of greater worldly wisdom and knowledge bringing a greater awareness of problems, and this in turn leading to exasperation and sorrow. Some commentators think it is instead pointing to

the frustration, on gaining substantial knowledge, of realizing how much one does not know.

Eccl 2:14-16 The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And *yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them.* ¹⁵*Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?” And I said in my heart that this also is vanity.* ¹⁶*For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool!*

Eccl 2:20-21 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, ²¹*because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.*

Eccl 7:16 Be not overly righteous, and *do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself?*

Here “too wise” may be referring to a preoccupation with wisdom, with an over-reliance on it. Alternatively, pretentiously aspiring to be wise, or acting as if one is wise, may be in view (cf. AMP, CEV, NIV). Such things are destructive.

Eccl 12:11-12 The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. ¹²*My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.*

Godly wisdom is spoken of in v. 11. Verse 12 appears to be a warning against seeking wisdom which is additional to that given by God, the “Shepherd” (v. 11). Pursuing such worldly wisdom and knowledge through the limitless number of books is a wearisome exercise.

Isa 47:10-11 You felt secure in your wickedness, you said, “No one sees me”; *your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, “I am, and there is no one besides me.”* ¹¹*But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing.*

Despite their wisdom and knowledge (v. 10), a disaster would come upon them that they would “not know” how to repel, one which they “know nothing” about (v. 11).

Rom 1:21-23 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but *they became*



futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
²²*Claiming to be wise, they became fools,* ²³*and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

The claim to be wise (v. 22) may have had some substance, but clearly this was a wisdom apart from God (vv. 21, 23) – i.e. worldly wisdom. As such it produced futile thinking and foolishness (v. 21b-22), manifested in foolish actions (v. 23) that would prove very detrimental (cf. vv. 24-32).

1Cor 8:1-2 Now concerning^h food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” *This “knowledge” puffs up,* but love builds up. ²*If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.*

^h The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians’ letter; see 7:1

✦ The price paid for the knowledge of good and evil:

Gen 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷*but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eatⁱ of it you shall surely die.”*

ⁱ Or *when you eat*

A number of commentators understand the reason for this prohibition (v. 17a) was that the acquisition of such knowledge would lead to independence from God, with people trusting in their own limited knowledge and wisdom of what is and is not good. This could not have been more detrimental (v. 17b). As such God would not allow people to live forever (cf. 3:22-24).

So get godly wisdom and be wise . . .

Prov 4:5, 7 *Get wisdom; get insight;* do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. *...⁷The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*

Verse 7 may be emphasizing the need to get wisdom. The first phrase has also been interpreted as speaking of the primacy of wisdom (cf. GNT, NASB text note, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT); hence the need to get it.

Prov 7:4 *Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” and call insight your intimate friend, ...*

This is an exhortation to make wisdom an intimate part of oneself.

Prov 17:24 *The discerning sets his face toward wisdom,* but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.

Prov 19:8 *Whoever gets sense loves his own soul;* he who keeps understanding will discover good.

To obtain sense/wisdom is a favor (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) or an act of love (cf. NLT, NRSV) towards oneself.

Prov 23:23 *Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.*

The use of “buy” is not literal; it suggests that we should do what we can to get wisdom and truth. Note that this verse implies that truth is an important aspect of wisdom.

Dan 10:12 Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you *set your heart to understand* and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

Prov 27:11 *Be wise,* my son, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me.

Matt 10:16 Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so *be wise as serpents* and innocent as doves.

Eph 5:15 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ...*

Col 4:5 *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders,* making the best use of the time.

Paul exhorts his readers to be wise in the way they act towards non-Christians.

. . . Seek out wisdom and knowledge

Prov 2:3-5 *... yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding,* ⁴*if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures,* ⁵*then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

Verse 3 expresses the great fervor with which one should seek wisdom, a fervor likened in v. 4 to that with which one seeks treasure.

Prov 8:17 [Wisdom:] I love those who love me, and *those who seek me diligently find me.*

Prov 8:34 [Wisdom:] *Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.*

The terms “watching” and “waiting” reflect a readiness to seek wisdom out, to learn from her.



Prov 15:14 *The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.* 

Prov 18:15 *An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.* 

✦ **Wisdom is pleasure to one who has understanding:**

Prov 10:23 *Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Wisdom through God

See also:

- *Repentance leads to spiritual enlightenment*, p. 1037

Subsections

- *Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom*
- *Ask God for wisdom . . .*
- *. . . For it is God who gives wisdom*
- *Obeying God's commands brings wisdom . . .*
- *. . . Those who have wisdom and understanding keep God's law*
- *Note: Wisdom involves doing what is right – and shunning evil*

Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom

Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom as it leads one to base one's thinking and life on God and his teachings or commands – the source of true wisdom for life. For fear of God moves one to obey God's commands and do what is right, thus manifesting wisdom (cf. *Obeying God's commands brings wisdom . . .*, p. 1638 and *. . . Those who have wisdom and understanding keep God's law*, p. 1639.)

Ps 111:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!* 

Prov 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.* 

Note that in conjunction with fear of God leading to wisdom, knowledge of God brings insight.

Prov 1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.* 

Prov 15:33 *The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.* 

Prov 31:26, 30 *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*  *... ³⁰Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.* 

A woman who fears the LORD (v. 30) speaks with wisdom (v. 26).

Isa 33:5-6 *The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness, ⁶and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure.* 

ⁱ Hebrew *his*

The meaning of the Hebrew of the last phrase is unclear. However, the thrust of the latter part of the verse may well be that the fear of the LORD is essential for access to the "abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge" that he provides (cf. NIV, NLT).

Job 28:28 *And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'* 

Ps 2:10-11 *Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* 

This associates serving God with fear (v. 11) with being wise (v. 10).

Ps 25:12 *Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.* 

The one who fears God will be enabled to wisely choose the best paths or options in life.

Prov 2:5 *... then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.* 

This links coming to fear God with finding "the knowledge of God" – likely the knowledge that comes from God (cf. v. 6).



Mic 6:9 The voice of the LORD cries to the city— and *it is sound wisdom to fear your name*: “Hear of the rod and of him who appointed it!”^k 

^k The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom and (as shown in this verse) the converse is also true: it is wise to fear God.

✦ **The wise are mindful of God – heeding the things he has done and considering his steadfast love:**

Ps 107:43 *Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.* 

Ask God for wisdom . . .

James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.* 

2Chr 1:10-12 *Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?”* ¹¹God answered Solomon, “Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked long life, but *have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I have made you king,* ¹²*wisdom and knowledge are granted to you.* I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like.” 

Ps 119:34, 66, 144 *Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.*  ... ⁶⁶*Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.*  ... ¹⁴⁴Your testimonies are righteous forever; *give me understanding that I may live.* 

Ps 90:12 *So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.* 

Understanding how short our lives are, leads to wisdom – compelling us to wisely use our limited time.

Prov 2:3 ... yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, ... 

The writer may be speaking metaphorically here, but even so the verse is still applicable to asking God for wisdom.

Eph 1:16-17 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ...* 

Here and in Colossians 1:9 below the request is for wisdom for others rather than for oneself, though still indicative of the fact that one can and should ask God for wisdom.

Col 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, *asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ...* 

. . . For it is God who gives wisdom

See also:

- [2Chr 1:10-12](#) 
- [Wisdom](#) [blessings of God’s word], p. 317
- [d\) God’s Knowledge and Wisdom](#), p. 40
- [God gives his people wisdom](#), p. 894
- [God gives his people knowledge](#), p. 895

Job 38:36 *Who has put wisdom in the inward parts^l or given understanding to the mind?^m* 

^l Or in the ibis

^m Or rooster

Prov 2:6 *For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; ...* 

Ecc 12:11 *The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.* 

This indicates that the wisdom of the wise is given them by God, the “Shepherd”.

Dan 2:20-23 Daniel answered and said: “*Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.* ²¹*He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ²²he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.* ²³*To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king’s matter.”* 



1Ki 4:29-30 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore,³⁰so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. 

1Cor 7:25 Now concerningⁿ the betrothed,^o I have no command from the Lord, but *I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.* 

ⁿ The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1

^o Greek *virgins*

Paul is probably implying that Jesus Christ had given him "wisdom that can be trusted" (NLT).

Job 11:5-6 But *oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you, and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding.*^p Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves. 

^p The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

Note that there is irony here as although he makes a valid point, the speaker Zophar shows in the passage from which these verses are taken that he himself also needed God's enlightenment.

Job 32:8-9 But *it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand.*^q It is not the old^q who are wise, nor the aged who understand what is right. 

^q Hebrew *many* [in years]

Verse 8 may be saying that it is a person's spirit – which is breathed into them by God – that gives them understanding. Alternatively "spirit" may be referring to the Holy Spirit (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT), indicating that understanding comes through the Holy Spirit. In either case the verse points to God as ultimately being the source of understanding.

Job 35:10-11 But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night,¹¹who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?' 

Note that in the subsequent chapter Elihu asks concerning God: "... who is a teacher like him?" (36:22b)

✦ The way to wisdom is known only by God:

Job 28:12-14, 20-27 But *where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?*¹³*Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living.*¹⁴*The deep says, 'It is not in me,' and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'*  ...²⁰*"From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?"*²¹*It is hidden from the eyes of all*

*living and concealed from the birds of the air.*²²*Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'*²³*"God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.*²⁴*For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.*²⁵*When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure,*²⁶*when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder,*²⁷*then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out.* 

"Man does not know its worth" (v. 13) can also be translated, "Mortals do not know the way to it" (NRSV; cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). Verse 27 may well be implying that God knows the way to wisdom because he was the one who established it.

Obeying God's commands brings wisdom . . .

See also:

- *Wisdom* [blessings of God's word], p. 317

Deut 4:5-6 See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. *Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'* 

Ps 119:98-100, 104 *Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.*⁹⁹*I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.*¹⁰⁰*I understand more than the aged,^r for I keep your precepts.*  ... ¹⁰⁴*Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.* 

^r Or *the elders*

Ps 37:30-31 *The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice.*³¹*The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.* 

The righteous are those who hold to God's law (v. 31), and they are wise (v. 30) as the following subsection implies. Thus this associates obeying God's law and having wisdom.

Matt 7:24 [Jesus:] *"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.* 



... Those who have wisdom and understanding keep God's law

1Chr 22:12 Only, may the LORD grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD your God.

Neh 10:28-29 The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, ²⁹join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his rules and his statutes.

Ps 119:34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

Prov 28:7 The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.

Here "law" most likely refers to God's OT law.

Col 1:9-10 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

In conjunction with keeping God's law, those have wisdom and understanding please Jesus Christ and do good works. Verse 9 teaches that spiritual wisdom and understanding brings knowledge of God's will. Verse 10 then implies that having such wisdom and understanding leads to a life of doing what is good and pleasing to the Lord, in which one grows further "in the knowledge of God".

Note: Wisdom involves doing what is right – and shunning evil

See also:

- *The righteous speak wisely* . . . , p. 1647
- *Righteousness and justice* [blessings of wisdom], p. 1682

Ps 37:30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice.

Prov 1:1-3 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: ²To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, ³to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; ...

This associates gaining wisdom and understanding (v. 2) with living in accordance with "righteousness, justice, and equity" (v. 3b).

Prov 2:7 ... he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ...

Prov 4:11 I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.

This correlates wisdom with uprightness.

Prov 15:21 Folly is a joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight ahead.

To walk "straight ahead" is to do what is right (cf. GNT, NCV).

Prov 23:15-16, 19 My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. ¹⁶My inmost being^s will exult when your lips speak what is right. ... ¹⁹Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.

^s Hebrew *My kidneys*

In v. 19, "the way" is "the way [of the Lord]" (AMP). Being wise involves both speaking (v. 16) and doing (v. 19) what is right.

Eccl 10:2 A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left.

The wise are naturally inclined to do what is right – in contrast to fools who tend towards doing what is wrong or evil (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NlrV, NLT).

Luke 1:17 ... and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

James 3:13-17 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

True wisdom – that which comes from God (v. 17a) – is demonstrated by a life of doing what is good (v. 13). As such



it is characterized by humility (v. 13b) and the righteous traits listed in v. 17, all of which pertain to doing good towards others. In contrast earthly “wisdom” is typified by unspiritual qualities (vv. 14-15) which manifest themselves in evil deeds (v. 16); such things are shunned by true wisdom.

Job 28:28 And he said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and *to turn away from evil is understanding.*’



Prov 14:16 *One who is wise is cautious^t and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.*

^t Or *fears* [the LORD]

Prov 8:12-13 *I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. ¹³The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.*

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Wisdom through Others

Note that the verses in this section speak – largely at least – of wisdom being acquired through godly people. Such wisdom is ultimately from God.

Subsections

- Pay attention to instruction . . .
- . . . Wise people listen to and learn from instruction
- Listen to advice – which is important for making plans
- Accept reproof
- Additional insights on accepting reproof and discipline
- Outcomes of ignoring reproof and discipline
- Further advice and insights on gaining wisdom

Pay attention to instruction . . .

See also:

- *The speech of the wise imparts wisdom and knowledge,* p. 1648
- *Children should heed their parents' teaching – which brings great benefits,* p. 1712

Prov 1:1-6 *The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: ²To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, ³to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; ⁴to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth— ⁵Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, ⁶to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.*

Solomon is traditionally understood to be the main source for the material making up the book of Proverbs. These opening verses of Proverbs indicate that paying attention to the proverbs or teachings of wise people such as him, leads to wisdom.

Prov 2:1-2, 9-10 *My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ²making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; ... ⁹Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; ¹⁰for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ...*

Note that the final clause (v. 10b) speaks of one finding knowledge pleasing.

Prov 4:1-2 *Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain^u insight, ²for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.*

^u Hebrew *know*

Prov 5:1-2 *My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, ²that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge.*

The last clause speaks of keeping or having knowledge, with which to speak.

Prov 8:33 *Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.*

Prov 19:20 *Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.*

Prov 22:17-21 *Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, ¹⁸for it will be pleasant*



if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. ¹⁹That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you. ²⁰*Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge,* ²¹*to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?*

The speaker implies that his teaching will impart wisdom and knowledge. Verses 18b and 21 speak of the usefulness of wisdom and knowledge.

Prov 23:12, 19 *Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.* ... ¹⁹*Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.*

“Hear” and “be wise” (v. 19) probably are together an exhortation to listen carefully to instruction – the “words of the wise” (**Prov 22:17 ↑**) – and so become wise (cf. **Prov 8:33 ↑**).

Job 33:33 *If not, listen to me; be silent, and I will teach you wisdom.*

Job 8:8-10 *For inquire, please, of bygone ages, and consider what the fathers have searched out.* ⁹For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, for our days on earth are a shadow. ¹⁰*Will they not teach you and tell you and utter words out of their understanding?*

One can infer from this that such instruction – the teachings of godly learned people from the past – will give one wisdom and knowledge.

Prov 15:5, 32 *A fool despises his father’s instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.* ... ³²*Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.*

Prov 19:27 *Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.*

... Wise people listen to and learn from instruction

See also:

- **Prov 1:5 ↑**
- **Prov 12:15 ↓**

Prov 13:1 *A wise son hears his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.*

Prov 9:9 *Give instruction^v to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.*

^v Hebrew lacks *instruction*

Prov 21:11 *When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.*

✦ **Keep hold of instruction for she is your life:**

Prov 4:13 *Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.*

Listen to advice – which is important for making plans

Prov 19:20 *Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.*

Prov 13:10 *By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom.*

Prov 12:15 *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.*

Eccl 4:13 *Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice.*

This implies that it is wise to be prepared to accept advice.

Prov 11:14 *Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.*

When planning any strategy, having and listening to sound advisors is critical to success – as the following verses also indicate. As such these verses demonstrate that listening to advice is important for acting wisely.

Prov 15:22 *Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.*

Prov 20:18 *Plans are established by counsel; by wise guidance wage war.*

Accept reproof

See also:

- *Parents should discipline their children*, p. 1707

Note that “reproof” involves criticism and even blame and/or discipline. It is akin to “rebuke” (cf. **Prov 17:10 ↓**).

Prov 1:23 [Wisdom:] *If you turn at my reproof,^w behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you.*

^w Or *Will you turn away at my reproof?*



One receives wisdom by responding to Wisdom's reproof – i.e. changing one's attitudes or behavior in response to wise reproof or exhortations. The reference is most readily applicable to warnings from Scripture that one should take to heart, but is also applicable to reproof from wise people or any source of wisdom.

Prov 9:8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; *reprove a wise man, and he will love you.* 

This implies that wise people value reproof – which is partly at least because reproof enhances one's wisdom.

Prov 12:1 *Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.* 

Prov 15:5, 31-32 *A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.*  ... ³¹*The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.* ³²*Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.* 

Heeding reproof brings wisdom (vv. 31-32b) and, as such, in itself shows wisdom (v. 5b). Note that "life-giving" (v. 31) means "beneficial to life", rather than necessarily saving from imminent death (cf. ZBC).

Prov 19:25 Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; *reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge.* 

Prov 29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom,* but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. 

Prov 17:10 *A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.* 

Although not specifically saying that accepting rebuke leads to wisdom, this does at least associate accepting rebuke with wisdom.

Additional insights on accepting reproof and discipline

See also:

- [Prov 10:17](#) ↓
- *Note: Instructions and insights on giving rebuke*, p. 1646

Ps 141:5a *Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it.* 

Rebuke or discipline from a righteous person is motivated by kindness, for the betterment of the receiver. The expression

"it is oil for my head" speaks of rebuke as a blessing (cf. [Prov 25:12](#) ↓), possibly meaning that rebuke is refreshing (cf. CEV, NLT).

Prov 25:12 *Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.* 

Prov 27:6 *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.* 

Emotional wounds resulting from a friend's rebuke can be trusted to have been inflicted with one's benefit in view.

Ecc 7:5 *It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.* 

The "song of fools" possibly refers to praise from fools (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Prov 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and *the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, ...* 

This and the verses below speak of specific blessing of accepting reproof and discipline.

Prov 13:18 Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but *whoever heeds reproof is honored.* 

Prov 20:30 *Blows that wound cleanse away evil; strokes make clean the innermost parts.* 

Discipline cleanses one of evil. Such cleansing is associated with and vital for wisdom.

Heb 12:11 *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* 

Outcomes of ignoring reproof and discipline

Prov 1:24-26, 29-31 [Wisdom:] Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, ²⁵because you have ignored all my counsel and *would have none of my reproof,* ²⁶*I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you,*  ... ²⁹Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, ³⁰would have none of my counsel and *despised all my reproof,* ³¹*therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.* 

Prov 5:11-14 ... and *at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed,* ¹²*and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof!"* ¹³*I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors.*



¹⁴*I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.* 

Prov 5:23 *He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.* 

Prov 10:17 *Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.* 

Prov 15:10 *There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.* 

Prov 29:1 *He who is often reproofed, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.* 

✦ **Ignoring instruction leads to poverty and disgrace:**

Prov 13:18 *Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored.* 

Further advice and insights on gaining wisdom

Prov 11:2 *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.* 

This implies that “with humility comes wisdom” (NIV®, NLT).

Prov 13:20 *Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.* 

Prov 14:29 *Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.* 

Understanding leads to such self-control. Conversely, it can be argued, learning self-control increases ones understanding/wisdom.

Prov 27:17 *Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*^x 

^x Hebrew *sharpens the face of another*

As one piece of iron can be used to sharpen another, so through discussion and debate with another, one can sharpen one’s mind.

Prov 6:6 *Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.* 

A lazy person can learn much from the diligent ways of an ant – and so grow in wisdom.

Prov 10:14 *The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.* 

The first clause probably means that wise people accumulate knowledge, which suggests that doing so helps enable one

to become wise or wiser. However, particularly in light of the remainder of the verse, note that some interpret it as meaning the wise “don’t tell everything they know” (NCV™).

Prov 14:7 *Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge.* 

✦ **One grows wiser with age and experience:**

Job 12:12 *Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Wise Speech (I): Instructions

See also:

- *c) Adverse Speech*, p. 1570
- *b) Truthfulness*, p. 1610

Subsections

- Be quick to listen and slow to speak
- Be careful when speaking
- Use few words – in contrast to fools
- Speak gently
- Speak graciously
- Do not sin in what you say
- Note: Instructions and insights on giving rebuke

Be quick to listen and slow to speak

James 1:19 *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ...* 

Prov 18:13 *If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.* 

Job 32:11-12 *Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your wise sayings, while you searched out what to say. ¹²I gave you my attention, and, behold, there was none among you who refuted Job or who answered his words.* 



Prov 29:20 *Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.* 

Prov 18:2 *A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.* 

Instead of spending time improving their understanding by listening to others, fools would much rather give their own opinions on a matter. Note that the second part of the verse suggests that listening to others is probably in view in the first part.

Prov 12:23 *A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.* 

This contrasts a wise person who avoids making a show of his or her knowledge (cf. NLT), with a fool who “blurts out” (NIV®) foolish things, making a show of his or her lack of knowledge. It illustrates that one should take care in choosing when to speak, as a wise person does.

Ecl 3:1, 7 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  ... ⁷a time to tear, and a time to sew; *a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; ...* 

Sometimes one should be silent, while other times the right thing is to speak. In view of this, rather than hastily speaking out, one should first discern if it is appropriate.

‡ Do not be quick to speak before God:

Ecl 5:2 [‡] *Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.* 

[‡] Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

Note that the reference here appears to be primarily to making rash vows.

Be careful when speaking

Prov 13:3 *Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.* 

The phrase “guards his mouth” (cf. **Prov 21:23** ↓) is referring to being careful in what one says (cf. GNT, NCV), or having control over one’s tongue (cf. NLT). The phrase “opens wide his lips” appears to refer to speaking a lot and carelessly.

Prov 21:23 *Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.* 

This speaks of guarding or watching over one’s words (cf. AMP, CEV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NRSV), being careful about what one says (cf. GNT, NCV).

Prov 15:28 *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.* 

Prov 16:23 *The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.* 

A wise person’s “mind” (NLT; cf. NCV) enables their speech to be well-judged and calculated. It reflects that wise people “think before they speak” (GNT).

Prov 12:18 *There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.* 

Careless words can greatly harm others – as well as ourselves (cf. **Prov 13:3** †; **Prov 21:23** †).

James 1:26 *If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.* 

One should keep control over when, what and how one speaks.

James 2:12 *So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.* 

The “law of liberty” may be referring specifically to the law of love (cf. 1:25). In any case, the “law” Christians are under gives freedom from both rigorous regulations and sin. As such they are freer to please God, and so judgment by it will demand a higher standard of speech and actions. This points to the need to be careful when speaking.

‡ We should be able to support what we say by our actions:

2Cor 10:10-11 For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” ¹¹Let such a person understand that *what we say by letter when absent, we do when present.* 

Use few words – in contrast to fools

See also:

- **Prov 13:3** †; **Prov 15:28** †
- *Note: Do not pray for show and do not babble on*, p. 1224

Prov 10:19 *When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.* 

Prov 17:27 *Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.* 

Ecl 6:11 *The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man?* 



Ecc 5:3 For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words. 

Ecc 10:14 A fool multiplies words, though no man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him? 

Prov 15:2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. 
Fools "pour out foolish words" (NirV®).

Prov 10:8 The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin. 

✦ **Even a fool is considered wise if he keeps quiet:**

Prov 17:28 Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent. 

Speak gently

2Tim 2:24-25 And the Lord's servant^z must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,²⁵ *correcting his opponents with gentleness*. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ... 

^z Greek *bondservant*

1Pet 3:15 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet *do it with gentleness* and respect, ... 

2Cor 10:1 I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— 

Generally at least, we should exhort others in a manner reflective of "the meekness and gentleness" that characterized Jesus Christ, as Paul seeks to do here.

Prov 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. 

Prov 15:4 A gentle^a tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. 

^a Or *healing*

Prov 25:15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. 

Along with patience, "soft" or gentle speech makes one more able to persuade others.

✦ **The wise use quiet words, in contrast to fools:**

Ecc 9:17 The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. 

This suggests that the wise typically use quiet words. The implication is that it is generally more effective to speak quietly than loudly (cf. [Prov 15:1 ↑](#); [Prov 25:15 ↑](#)).

Speak graciously

Prov 16:24 Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. 

Like a honeycomb (v. 24), gracious words are enjoyable ("sweetness to the soul") and are good for one's well-being ("health to the body").

Prov 22:11 He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend. 

Ecc 10:12 The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor,^b but the lips of a fool consume him. 

^b Or *are gracious*

The alternative rendering in the text note indicates that the first clause may be teaching that the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious (cf. AMP, NASB, NIV, NKJV).

Col 4:6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. 

Note that the expression "seasoned with salt" most likely means either interesting (CEV, GNT) or pure.

Ps 45:2 You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. 

This is from a messianic psalm. As such, the Messiah is portrayed to be gracious in speech (cf. [Luke 4:22 ↓](#)) – something which his followers should aspire to emulate.

Luke 4:22 And all spoke well of him and *marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth*. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 

Eph 4:15 Rather, *speaking the truth in love*, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ... 

Speaking in love complements and encourages gracious speech.



‡ Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness:

Prov 16:21 The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness. 📖

Do not sin in what you say

See also:

- *c) Adverse Speech*, p. 1570
- *Do not lie*, p. 1615
- *Do not give false testimony*, p. 1615

Ps 17:3 You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night, you have tested me, and you will find nothing; *I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.* 📖

Ps 34:13 *Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.* 📖

Ps 39:1 I said, “*I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence.*” 📖

In enduring a time of suffering, David was determined not to say anything that might be sinful or unwise – particularly in the presence of the wicked.

Prov 4:24 *Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.* 📖

Eph 4:29 *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* 📖

Eph 5:4 *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.* 📖

Col 3:8 *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.* 📖

Ecl 5:6 *Let not your mouth lead you^c into sin, and do not say before the messenger^d that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?* 📖

^c Hebrew *your flesh*

^d Or *angel*

The “sin” spoken of here is primarily that of not keeping a vow to God. To make a vow rashly and then not be able to keep it is sinful.

‡ Ask God to help you not to sin in what you say:

Ps 141:3 *Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!* 📖

Similarly in 19:14 David asks God for help to speak what pleases God: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”

Note: Instructions and insights on giving rebuke

See also:

- *Rebuke members for their sin . . .*, p. 1491

Luke 17:3 Pay attention to yourselves! *If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ...* 📖

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* 📖

This appears to refer to Scripture having a role in the giving of rebuke (cf. [2Tim 3:16](#) ↓).

2Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ...* 📖

2Tim 4:2 ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; *reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* 📖

1Tim 5:1 *Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ...* 📖

Prov 9:7-8 *Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. ⁸Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.* 📖

Prov 26:4-5 *Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. ⁵Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.* 📖

Here the writer makes a deliberate contradiction in regard to answering a fool “according to his folly”. In v. 4, “according to his folly” means in a manner which is in accordance with his foolish ways – i.e. “stooping to his level”. In contrast, in v. 5 it would seem to mean in accordance with or in a way that is appropriate to his foolish action. Perhaps the writer is also conveying the thought that one should be wary in correcting a fool.



Prov 27:5 *Better is open rebuke than hidden love.* 

Open rebuke is better than love that is shut off. The implication here may well be that one who truly loves another will openly rebuke them (cf. CEV) if the need arises.

Prov 28:23 *Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.* 

✦ **Rather than hate someone, reason frankly with them:**

Lev 19:17 *You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.* 

The last clause may mean that if our neighbor has done something wrong and we do not take them to task about it, then we also bare some responsibility. Alternatively, in the light of the first statement in the verse, it may mean that if our neighbor has done something that induces us to be hateful, we should rebuke them rather than hate them in our hearts, which would cause us also to be guilty of sin.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Wise Speech (II): Insights

See also:

- *Note: Instructions and insights on giving rebuke*, p. 1646

Subsections

- The righteous speak wisely . . .
- . . . One's words are determined by the "heart"
- Wise speech is of great value
- The speech of the wise imparts wisdom and knowledge
- Further ways wise speech benefits others
- Other ways one's words can be beneficial
- Beware: The tongue has great power, capable of evil and destructive effects

The righteous speak wisely . . .

See also:

- [Prov 15:28](#) ↓
- *Obedying God's commands brings wisdom . . .*, p. 1638

Ps 37:30 *The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice.* 

Prov 10:31-32 *The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off. ³²The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse.* 

Prov 31:26 *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.* 

This speaks of a righteous wife, being one who is "excellent" (v. 10) and who "fears the LORD" (v. 30).

Prov 10:11, 21 *The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.  ... ²¹The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.* 

These and the following verses refer to the speech of the righteous bringing great blessings. This evidences the wisdom of the words of the righteous.

Prov 11:11 *By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown.* 

In contrast to the "mouth of the wicked", the "blessing of the upright" quite possibly refers to the upright praying for or verbally blessing a city (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT). Alternatively it may be speaking more generally of the blessing or benefits which upright people bring to a city (cf. AMP, CEV), which in no small part is through what they say.

Prov 12:6 *The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright delivers them.* 

. . . One's words are determined by the "heart"

In the following verses, "heart" signifies one's conscious inner-self, encompassing one's emotions, thoughts and will. Words that are wise and good come from a "heart" that is good/righteous and wise. Conversely, foolish and evil words come from a "heart" that has such characteristics.

Matt 12:34-37 *You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure*



brings forth evil. ³⁶I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. 

A person's words are determined by their hearts (vv. 34-35), and so their words reveal their hearts. As such their words are a key aspect of the evidence that will be used to acquit or condemn them on judgment day (vv. 36-37).

Matt 15:18-19 But *what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart*, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.* 

It is our hearts that determine what we say and also what we do (v. 19), which in turn can “defile” us (NLT) – making us spiritually “unclean” (v. 18). In v. 19, “evil thoughts” are listed first presumably as one’s thoughts are closely associated with one’s heart. In a sense they are the link between the heart and its manifestations – one’s deeds and words (cf. v. 19b).

Prov 12:23 A prudent man conceals knowledge, but *the heart of fools proclaims folly.* 

Prov 15:28 *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.* 

Prov 16:23 *The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.* 

Job 33:3 *My words declare the uprightness of my heart, and what my lips know they speak sincerely.* 

In the first clause Elihu may be meaning that his words evidenced the uprightness of his heart – for that is from where they came (cf. NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV).

Job 15:12-13 *Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash, ¹³that you turn your spirit against God and bring such words out of your mouth?* 

While he does make a valid point regarding one’s heart influencing one’s words, bear in mind that Eliphaz’s assessment of Job’s heart was flawed. Note that on a similar theme, in v. 5 Eliphaz says: “... your iniquity teaches your mouth ...”

‡ Good and bad cannot come from the same source:

James 3:9-12 With it [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰*From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers,^e these things ought not to be so.* ¹¹*Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a*

grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. 

^e Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

With the use of “tongue”, James is not referring ultimately to the tongue itself, but to the heart that manifests itself in the words of the tongue. Verses 11-12 are indicating that blessing of God and cursing of others, “who are made in the likeness of God” (v. 9), cannot come from the same source – with the apparent implication that if we curse others, we cannot truly bless God.

Wise speech is of great value

Prov 20:15 There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but *the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.* 

Prov 25:11 *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.* 

This may be speaking of the beauty as well as the great value of appropriately spoken words.

Prov 15:23 *To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!* 

‡ The speech of the righteous is of great value:

Prov 10:20 *The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth.* 

The speech of the wise imparts wisdom and knowledge

Ecc 12:9-10 *Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. ¹⁰The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.* 

Verse 10 further supports the earlier assertion that the wise teacher imparted knowledge, by indicating that he wrote truth.

Ps 49:1-3 Hear this, all peoples! Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, ²both low and high, rich and poor together! ³*My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.* 

The context suggests that the wise speaker will teach wisdom, with understanding for his listeners coming from his thoughts (cf. NIV, NKJV).



Prov 13:20 *Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.* 📖

The speech of the wise is obviously a major reason as to why keeping company with the wise leads to wisdom.

Prov 15:2, 7 *The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. ... ⁷The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.^f* 📖

^f *Or the hearts of fools are not steadfast*

Verse 2a appears to be saying that the wise make knowledge “attractive” (GNT) or “acceptable” (NASB).

Prov 25:12 *Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reproof to a listening ear.* 📖

Reproof from a wise person is so valuable largely because of the wisdom it imparts.

Ecc 9:17 *The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.* 📖

Presumably the writer has in mind that the words of the wise impart wisdom.

Further ways wise speech benefits others

See also:

- [Prov 15:4](#) ↴; [Prov 25:11](#) ↴; [Eph 4:29](#) ↴

Prov 12:18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but *the tongue of the wise brings healing.* 📖

This is applicable to such things as emotional healing and healing of relationships.

Prov 13:14 *The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.* 📖

Prov 18:4 The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; *the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.* 📖

The thought may be that like a bubbling brook, a wise person’s words are “refreshing” (NLT; cf. GNT).

Prov 29:8 Scoffers set a city aflame, but *the wise turn away wrath.* 📖

Presumably it is the words of the wise that are in view. The words of the wise “turn away wrath” both from themselves and others.

Ecc 12:11 *The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.* 📖

Goads are used to prod and guide cattle. As such the first simile probably means either that the words of the wise spur people to action (cf. NLT), or that the words of the wise guide people in taking sound paths. The simile likening their sayings to “nails firmly fixed”, is probably pointing to the stability and security they provide for those who act in accordance with them.

Isa 50:4a The Lord GOD has given me *the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.* 📖

1Ki 10:2-3, 8, 24 She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when *she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind.* ³*And Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her.* 📖 ... ⁸*Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!* 📖 ... ²⁴*And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.* 📖

Solomon’s wisdom enabled him to give explanations (v. 3) – of which presumably some solved problems – and brought great happiness to those who heard his wisdom, as the Queen of Sheba asserts (v. 8). Verse 24 emphatically illustrates the desire people have to hear sound wisdom, presumably largely due to its benefits.

Other ways one’s words can be beneficial

See also:

- [Prov 18:21](#) ↴; [Prov 11:11](#) ↴

Prov 12:14 *From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good, and the work of a man’s hand comes back to him.* 📖

Prov 18:20 *From the fruit of a man’s mouth his stomach is satisfied; he is satisfied by the yield of his lips.* 📖

This probably means either that one’s words bring the fulfillment of one’s needs, or that one’s words can bring fulfillment or satisfaction to one’s inner self “as food satisfies the stomach” (NLT).

Prov 15:1 *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.* 📖

Prov 15:4 *A gentle^g tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.* 📖

^g *Or healing*



Prov 25:11 *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.* 

Prov 25:15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. 

Along with patience, tactfulness increases the persuasiveness of one's speech, breaking down "strong opposition" (NLT, cf. GNT).

Eph 4:29 *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* 

Our words can build others up, benefiting those who hear.

Beware: The tongue has great power, capable of evil and destructive effects

See also:

- [Prov 15:1](#) ; [Prov 15:4](#) ; [Prov 25:15](#) 

Prov 18:21 *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.* 

The tongue has the power to enrich life (or guard it; cf. [Prov 13:3](#) ) – or to ruin it. The second part of the verse appears to caution against indulging in the use of the tongue (cf. AMP) or possibly exploiting its use for one's own interests – both of which bring one harmful repercussions.

James 3:2-8 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life,^h and set on fire by hell.ⁱ ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind,⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 

^h Or *wheel of birth*

ⁱ Greek *Gehenna*

The tongue has great influence over the whole body (vv. 2-6). If one can control it, one can keep their whole body in check (v. 2) – but it cannot actually be tamed (vv. 7-8). In

saying that the tongue is "set on fire by hell" (v. 6), James appears to allude to its evil disposition having Satanic origins – which ultimately is true of all evil.

Job 19:2 *How long will you torment me and break me in pieces with words?* 

Prov 11:9, 11 *With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.*  ... ¹¹By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown. 

Prov 12:13 *An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous escapes from trouble.* 

One's tongue can bring harm to oneself through evil words – and also by rash words (cf. [Prov 13:3](#) .

Prov 12:18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. 

A person's tongue can harm others through thoughtless or inappropriate words (v. 18a; cf. [Job 19:2](#) ) – as well as by words of evil intent (as shown elsewhere in this subsection).

Prov 13:3 *Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.* 

The second clause appears to speak of hasty speech (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT), but talking too much could instead be in view (cf. CEV).

Prov 16:27 *A worthless man plots evil, and his speech^j is like a scorching fire.* 

^j Hebrew *what is on his lips*

✦ The tongues of the wicked are like sharp swords:

Ps 57:4 *My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts— the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.* 

The tongues of the wicked are also compared to swords elsewhere in Psalms (55:21; 59:7; 64:3). Similar portrayals of the tongues of the wicked are: "Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor" (Ps 52:2); "They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's" (Ps 140:3); and "Their tongue is a deadly arrow" (Jer 9:8).

Pray for persecuted Christians



f) Wise Personal Practices

The following topics are prominent in what are known as the Bible's wisdom books, notably in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes – as well as occurring elsewhere in the Bible.

Subsections

- Be self-controlled . . .
- . . . Self-control comes from God and wisdom
- Do not act in haste
- Work hard . . .
- . . . Ensure you have adequate provisions
- Do not be idle . . .
- . . . Idleness leads to poverty and associated troubles
- Enjoy life and so be joyful

Be self-controlled . . .

See also:

- *Avoid anger*, p. 1565
- *Being quick-tempered is foolish and ungodly*, p. 1662
- *Be sober-minded*, p. 1927

Titus 2:2-6 *Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.* 📖

1Tim 2:9 ...likewise also that *women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ...* 📖

1Tim 2:15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they *continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.* 📖

1Tim 3:2 Therefore an overseer^k must *be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^l sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ...* 📖

^k Or *bishop*; Greek *episkopos*; a similar term occurs in verse 1

^l Or *a man of one woman*; also verse 12

Titus 1:8 also states that an overseer must be self-controlled.

1Pet 4:7 *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.* 📖

1Thes 4:3-4 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification:^m that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own bodyⁿ in holiness and honor, ...* 📖

^mOr *your holiness*

ⁿ Or *how to take a wife for himself*; Greek *how to possess his own vessel*

Acts 24:25 And as *he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you."* 📖

The listing of self-control in this context highlights its importance.

1Cor 9:25 *Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* 📖

Prov 16:32 *Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.* 📖

Prov 25:28 *A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.* 📖

Just as a city with broken down walls is exposed to attack, one who lack lacks self-control is exposed to trouble.

. . . Self-control comes from God and wisdom

2Tim 1:7 ... for *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* 📖

Some think "spirit" here may be referring to the Holy Spirit (cf. GNT, CEV). Often this is thought to not be the case, but even so, it is through the Holy Spirit that God gives us self-discipline or "self-control" (CEV, NCV; cf. [Gal 5:22-23](#) ↓) – along with power and love.

Titus 2:11-12 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ...* 📖



Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Prov 17:27 Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

Having "a cool spirit" refers to being even-tempered.

Prov 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

2Pet 1:4-6 ... by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,^o and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ...

^o Or *excellence*; twice in this verse

This suggests that knowledge, similar to wisdom, contributes to self-control (which in turn contributes to perseverance).

‡ Lack of discipline is associated with foolishness:

Prov 5:23 He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.

Here "lack of discipline" may refer to "lack of self-control" (CEV, NLT; cf. GNT, NCV) – i.e. lack of self-discipline – making it pertinent to this subsection. Alternatively it may refer to "lack of instruction" (NASB, NKJV). Both lead to "great folly" and its consequences. Note that foolishness is also associated with lack of self-control above in 29:11.

Do not act in haste

See also:

- *Be quick to listen and slow to speak*, p. 1643

Prov 19:2 Desire^p without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.

^p Or *A soul*

Being hasty leads one to "make mistakes" (NCV™).

Prov 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

Prov 25:8 ... do not hastily bring into court, for^q what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?

^q Hebrew or else

Prov 29:20 Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Ecc 5:2 ^r Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

^r Ch 5:1 in Hebrew

As noted earlier, the reference here appears to be primarily to making hasty vows to God.

1Tim 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

The first part of this statement is warning against hastily ordaining church elders.

‡ Act calmly:

Ecc 10:4 If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness^s will lay great offenses to rest.

^s Hebrew *healing*

This appears to say that if a superior is angry with you, you should not resign from your position. For staying calm and acting coolly can overcome great mistakes.

Work hard . . .

See also:

- **Prov 21:5**

Ecc 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might,^t for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

^t Or *finds to do with your might, do it*

We should do what we can now, as well as we can, for in the grave there will be no such opportunities.

Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Eph 4:28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

The reference to working with one's "own hands" (cf. **1Thes 4:11**) is to working oneself rather than living off others. Probably working hard is in view (cf. CEV).



1Thes 4:11-12 ... and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to *work with your hands, as we instructed you*, ¹²*so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.* 

2Thes 3:8-9 ... nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but *with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.* ⁹It was not because we do not have that right, but *to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.* 

Titus 3:14 And let our people learn to *devote themselves to good works*, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. 

Prov 31:13-19 *She [an excellent wife] seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.* ¹⁴*She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar.* ¹⁵*She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.* ¹⁶*She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.* ¹⁷*She dresses herself^u with strength and makes her arms strong.* ¹⁸*She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.* ¹⁹*She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.* 

^u Hebrew *She girds her loins*

Prov 10:4 A slack hand causes poverty, but *the hand of the diligent makes rich.* 

To be "diligent" (cf. [Prov 12:24 ↓](#); [Prov 13:4 ↓](#)) means to be industrious, or persistent in accomplishing a task.

Prov 12:24 *The hand of the diligent will rule*, while the slothful will be put to forced labor. 

Prov 13:4 The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while *the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.* 

Prov 14:23 *In all toil there is profit*, but mere talk tends only to poverty. 

... Ensure you have adequate provisions

See also:

- [Prov 31:15 ↑](#)

Prov 6:6-8 *Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.* ⁷Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, ⁸*she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.* 

The ant is a great example of producing adequate provisions. Note that similarly 30:25 says, "... the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; ..."

Prov 10:5 *He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.* 

Prov 24:27 *Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.* 

Do the essential and urgent things first – including that which is essential for producing provisions; leave till afterwards matters that can wait. Note that the first clause (like the second) is speaking of outside work, the main source of provisions in the ancient world.

Prov 28:19 *Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread*, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty. 

Prov 27:23-27 *Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds,* ²⁴*for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations?* ²⁵*When the grass is gone and the new growth appears and the vegetation of the mountains is gathered,* ²⁶*the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field.* ²⁷*There will be enough goats' milk for your food, for the food of your household and maintenance for your girls.* 

Verses 23-24 are saying that one should ensure that the things which provide basic necessities are secure (v. 23), for there is no guarantee that wealth and power will last (v. 24). Note that this speaks of ensuring adequate provisions for clothing, as well as for food.

Eccl 11:6 *In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.* 

This suggests that we should have more than one source of provision, so as "not to put all our eggs in the one basket".

Gen 41:33-36 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴*Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land^v of Egypt during the seven plentiful years.* ³⁵*And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it.* ³⁶*That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.* 

^v Or *over the land and organize the land*



‡ The value of being a skilled worker:

Prov 22:29 *Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.*

Do not be idle . . .

See also:

▪ **Ecll 11:6**

1Thes 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, *admonish the idle*,^w encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

^w Or *disorderly, or undisciplined*

2Thes 3:6-7, 10-12 Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you *keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness* and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, ... ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: *If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.* ¹¹For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. ¹²Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.^x

^x Greek *eat their own bread*

1Tim 5:13 Besides that, *they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.*

This indicates that being idle can lead to becoming a gossip and a busybody (cf. **2Thes 3:11**). In regard to being a busybody, note that 1 Peter 4:15 denounces meddling – “But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.”

Heb 6:11-12 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Here the term “sluggish” would appear to encompass laziness (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV).

Prov 31:27 She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Prov 26:13-16 *The sluggard says, “There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!”* ¹⁴As a door turns on its hinges,

so does a sluggard on his bed. ¹⁵The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth. ¹⁶The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.

This passage provides a number of insights on lazy people. Verse 13 appears to imply that such people tend to make excuses to avoid work (cf. 22:13).

. . . Idleness leads to poverty and associated troubles

Prov 10:4 *A slack hand causes poverty,* but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Prov 20:13 *Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty;* open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.

Prov 6:9-11 *How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?* ¹⁰A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, ¹¹and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

Prov 14:23 *In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.*

Ecll 4:5 *The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh.*

The expression “folds his hands” is indicative of not wanting to work (cf. NLT, NIV). The last phrase speaks of such an attitude resulting in self-destruction.

Prov 20:4 *The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.*

Prov 19:15 *Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.*

“Slothfulness” means “laziness”. The term “deep sleep” appears to portray the debilitating effects of laziness when it pervades a person’s consciousness.

Prov 13:4 *The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing,* while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.

Prov 21:25 *The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.*

Here “desire” may refer to desire for sleep (cf. NCV) or an easy life – and thus an unwillingness to work – resulting in ruin. Alternatively, the meaning may be that lazy people’s incessant desires for things will metaphorically kill them because they will not work so as to be able to satisfy or quell such desires.



Prov 12:24 The hand of the diligent will rule, while *the slothful will be put to forced labor.* 

The thought may be that not having the initiative to provide for themselves, the slothful will be forced to subject themselves to labor under someone else's authority.

Prov 15:19 *The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.* 

The path of a lazy person is beset with problems. In fact practically every aspect of his life is affected (cf. [Ecll 10:18](#) ↓).

Ecll 10:18 *Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks.* 

Prov 10:26 *Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him.* 

Lazy people not only cause problems for themselves, but they are also disdainful to their employers.

✦ Being slack in one's work is destructive:

Prov 18:9 *Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.* 

Enjoy life and so be joyful

Ecll 2:24-25 *There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment^y in his toil.* This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, ²⁵for apart from him^z who can eat or who can have enjoyment? 

^y Or *and make his soul see good*

^z Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts *apart from me*

Ecll 3:12-13, 22 *I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ¹³also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.*  ... ²²*So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot.* Who can bring him to see what will be after him? 

Due to the uncertainty and apparent meaningless of life – discussed in many parts of Ecclesiastes – the writer proposes that the best thing to do is to aspire to be joyful and enjoy life, and to do good.

Ecll 8:15 *And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.* 

The second half of the verse points to being joyful as beneficial for us amidst our toil.

Ecll 9:7-9 *Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. ⁸Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.* 

In v. 7, “for God has already approved what you do” possibly means that God approves doing the aforementioned things (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT). Alternatively it may mean that having such things is indicative that God approves of one's deeds, so therefore one should enjoy these things. A further possibility is that it has in view being alive rather than dead (cf. vv. 2-6). The main thrust of the passage is that one should enjoy life for as many days as one can, in what appears – at least at times – to be a meaningless life.

Ecll 11:8-10 *So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity. ⁹Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. ¹⁰Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain^a from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity.* 

^a Or *evil*

The “days of darkness” (v. 8) quite possibly refers to being dead (cf. GNT, NCV). Another possibility is troubled times, such as the trials associated with old age and failing health. Verse 9 advocates following “your heart's desire” (GNT; cf. CEV, NCV), but doing so governed by the consciousness of God's coming judgment. Verse 10 is usually taken to mean that we should not worry, and so forget about any physical troubles (or perhaps any perceived future physical troubles), for youth is so short lived (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB) – i.e. we should enjoy it while we can. Alternatively v. 10a may be speaking of getting rid of anything that might harm our minds or bodies.

Prov 15:13, 15 *A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.*  ... ¹⁵*All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast.* 

Prov 17:22 *A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.* 



Prov 15:30 *The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes^b the bones.* 

^b Hebrew *makes fat*

Most likely the first clause means: “The light in the eyes [of him whose heart is joyful]” (AMP) brings joy to the hearts of others (cf. CEV, GNT).

✦ **The sad lot of a man who does not enjoy what he has:**

Eccl 6:3-6 *If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life’s good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. ⁴For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. ⁵Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything,*

yet it finds rest rather than he. ⁶Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy^c no good—do not all go to the one place? 

^c Or *see*

Part of the reasoning here as to why a stillborn child is better off than such a man appears to be that it will end up in the same place (the grave) without having failed the opportunity to enjoy life’s good things nor having experienced discontentment.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

Foolishness and spiritual ignorance are the antitheses of godly wisdom and knowledge. Moreover, foolishness and spiritual ignorance are very closely related to ungodliness; for ungodliness is the prime cause of them and further ungodliness results from them. Foolishness and spiritual ignorance with their consequences, stand in stark contrast to wisdom and her blessings.

a) Foolishness

Subsections

- Fools spurn and lack both wisdom and knowledge
- Foolishness involves failure to comprehend God and his ways
- Foolishness involves failure to comprehend other spiritual truths
- Foolishness involves acting contrary to God
- Foolishness encompasses sin
- Foolishness encompasses wickedness and doing evil
- Further characteristics of fools
- Results of foolishness . . .
- . . . Ultimately, foolishness results in ruin – even death

Fools spurn and lack both wisdom and knowledge

Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. 

Prov 1:22, 29-31 [Wisdom:] “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?  ... ²⁹Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, ³⁰would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, ³¹therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. 

The speaker is Wisdom personified. Along with hating knowledge (v. 22b, 29), fools spurn Wisdom’s counsel and reproof (v. 30; **Prov 12:1** ↓).

Prov 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid. 

Fools hate and spurn reproof and instruction (cf. **Prov 15:5** ↓). Correspondingly, they have no regard for and so lack the wisdom that they bring.

Prov 15:5 A fool despises his father’s instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent. 

Prov 18:2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. 

Prov 23:9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words. 

Prov 9:13 The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive^a and knows nothing. 

^a Or full of simpleness

“Folly” here is personified. Amongst other things, it lacks knowledge.

Prov 14:7 Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge. 

Prov 15:7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.^b 

^b Or the hearts of fools are not steadfast

In contrast to the wise, fools lack knowledge.

Prov 17:16 Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense? 

The thought may be that there is little point in a fool trying to obtain wisdom when he has no sense to make use of it.

Prov 24:7 Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the gate he does not open his mouth. 

The “gate” is the city gate where a city’s people, in particular the leaders, met to conduct and so discuss business.

Foolishness involves failure to comprehend God and his ways

See also:

- *d) Spiritual Ignorance (II): Knowledge Lacked*, p. 1675

Ps 14:1a The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” 

Jer 4:22 “For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are ‘wise’—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not.” 



This points to the fact that in conjunction with not knowing God, his people did not understand him – "...they do not know *and* understand Me." (AMP)

Ps 94:6-8 They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; ⁷and they say, "*The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.*" ⁸Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise?

Jer 5:21-22 Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not. ²²Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.

The two rhetorical questions (v. 22a) indicate that the people should indeed fear and tremble before God. But in their foolishness the people failed to comprehend and/or take to heart God and his power/deeds.

Jer 5:4 Then I said, "These are only the poor; they have no sense; for they do not know the way of the LORD, the justice of their God."

Eph 5:15-17 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Foolishness involves failure to comprehend other spiritual truths

See also:

- *The ungodly do not know how God wants them to live . . .*, p. 1676
- *. . . and they do not know or understand many other spiritual truths*, p. 1677

Luke 24:25 And he said to them, "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!*"

1Cor 15:35-36 But someone will ask, "*How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?*" ³⁶You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

Note that in implying that such questions are foolish, Paul may have in view a lack of belief underlying them, rather than primarily a lack of perception.

Gal 3:1-3 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as

crucified. ²Let me ask you only this: *Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?* ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by^c the flesh?

^c Or now ending with

The foolish Galatians sought perfection through their efforts to obey the law, rather than by faith, even though they should have known better.

James 2:20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?

Ps 92:6-7 The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this: ⁷that though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever; ...

Foolishness involves acting contrary to God

See also:

- *b) Foolish and Ungodly Practices*, p. 1662

Job 2:9-10 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? *Curse God and die.*" ¹⁰But he said to her, "*You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?*"^d In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

^d Or *disaster*; also verse 11

Ps 74:18, 22 Remember this, O LORD, how the enemy scoffs, and a foolish people reviles your name. ... ²²Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how *the foolish scoff at you all the day!*

Isa 32:6 For *the fool speaks folly, and his heart is busy with iniquity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the LORD, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink.*

Deut 32:5-6 They have dealt corruptly with him; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation. ⁶Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?

1Sam 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, "*You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you.* For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.



Jer 10:8, 21 *They are both stupid and foolish; the instruction of idols is but wood!* ... ²¹For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.

Having idols (v. 8) or other gods is both foolish and acting contrary to God – as also in a sense is not inquiring of God (v. 21). Note that the precise meaning of the Hebrew in v. 8b is not clear (cf. NRSV text note), although it is definitely speaking of having idols.

Matt 7:26 *And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.*

This implies that foolishness involves acting apart from Jesus' teachings.

Rom 1:21-22 For although they knew God, *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ...

2Tim 3:8-9 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. ⁹But they will not get very far, for *their folly will be plain to all*, as was that of those two men.

Opposing the truth (v. 8) is obviously acting contrary to God, and is "folly" (v. 9).

2Chr 16:7, 9 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because *you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God*, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. ... ⁹For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. *You have done foolishly in this*, for from now on you will have wars."

Foolishness encompasses sin

Num 12:11 And Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, do not punish us^e because *we have done foolishly and have sinned.*"

^e Hebrew *do not lay sin upon us*

1Sam 26:21 Then Saul said, "*I have sinned.* Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, *I have acted foolishly*, and have made a great mistake."

1Chr 21:8 And David said to God, "*I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing.* But now, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for *I have acted very foolishly.*"

Ps 107:17 *Some were fools through their sinful ways*, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; ...

This verse illustrates that even if people are not fools to begin with, sinful ways result in them becoming fools (cf. [Ps 36:3](#) ↓; [Eccl 7:7](#) ↓; [Rom 1:21-22](#)).

Prov 5:22-23 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in *the cords of his sin*. ²³He dies for lack of discipline, and because of *his great folly* he is led astray.

Prov 14:9 *Fools mock at the guilt offering*, but the upright enjoy acceptance.^f

^f Hebrew *but among the upright is acceptance*

Just as committing sin is foolish, so is scoffing at making amends for it (cf. [Hos 13:12-13](#) ↓).

Hos 13:12-13 *The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is kept in store.* ¹³*The pangs of childbirth come for him, but he is an unwise son, for at the right time he does not present himself at the opening of the womb.*

This portrays Israel's foolishness – being "without wisdom" – in failing to repent of its sin despite grave warning signs.

‡ Devising foolishness is sin:

Prov 24:9 *The devising^g of folly is sin*, and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind.

^g Or *scheming*

Foolishness encompasses wickedness and doing evil

See also:

- [Prov 5:22-23](#) ↑
- *Spiritual ignorance is caused basically by sin and ungodliness*, p. 1668

Ps 36:3 *The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good.*

A person who acts wickedly as such – causing trouble and using deceit – has "ceased to act wisely", and so has become foolish.

Ps 73:6-7 Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. ⁷Their eyes swell out through fatness; *their hearts overflow with follies.*



The minds of the wicked overflow with foolish schemes and acts.

Prov 10:23 *Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.*

This reflects that a fool is more than happy to do wrong.

Prov 13:19 *A desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but to turn away from evil is an abomination to fools.*

Prov 19:1 *Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool.*

The second part of the verse appears to refer to dishonesty (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT), suggesting that dishonesty is foolish.

Eccl 7:7 *Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart.*

Oppressing others “turns a wise man into a fool” (NIV®).

Eccl 7:25 *I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness.*

Jer 4:22 *“For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are ‘wise’—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not.”*

Jer 17:11 *Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by justice; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool.*

Those who do such evil will prove to be fools (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NRSV).

Titus 3:3 *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.*

Possibly “foolish” heads this list as it characterizes all such wrong doing.

Eccl 5:1 ^h *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.*

^h Ch 4:17 in Hebrew

In addition to their inclination to do evil, fools typically are “too ignorant to know that they are doing evil” (AMP).

✦ Foolishness classified as evil:

Mark 7:21-23 *For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.*

As suggested by the assertion that foolishness encompasses doing evil, foolishness is evil.

Further characteristics of fools

See also:

- *Use few words – in contrast to fools*, p. 1644
- *Being quick-tempered is foolish and ungodly*, p. 1662

Job 5:2 *Surely vexation kills the fool, and jealousy slays the simple.*

“Vexation” is the state of being markedly annoyed or irritated.

Prov 1:32 *For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; ...*

Prov 9:13 *The woman Folly is loud; she is seductiveⁱ and knows nothing.*

ⁱ Or full of simpleness

Fools are typically “loud and brash” (NLT).

Prov 12:15 *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.*

Fools think they know best (cf. CEV); as such they are disinclined to take advice.

Prov 15:14, 21 *The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly. ... ²¹Folly is a joy to him who lacks sense, but a man of understanding walks straight ahead.*

Fools feed on or “are hungry for” (CEV, cf. NCV) foolishness (v. 14) – it is a joy to them (v. 21).

Prov 16:22 *Good sense is a fountain of life to him who has it, but the instruction of fools is folly.*

The last clause appears to mean that it is pointless to instruct fools. As such it shows that fools cannot or will not learn from instruction.

Prov 26:6-11 *Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence. ⁷Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools.*



⁸Like one who binds the stone in the sling is one who gives honor to a fool. ⁹Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools. ¹⁰Like an archer who wounds everyone is one who hires a passing fool or drunkard. ¹¹Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.

^j Or hires a fool or passersby

This passage illustrates that fools are: of no use, bringing harm (vv. 6, 10); dense, undermining the value of anything they might say (vv. 7, 9); unworthy of honor (v. 8); and do not learn from their mistakes (v. 11).

Prov 27:22 Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him.

Discipline does not rid a fool of his foolishness.

Ecc 7:9 Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

Anger is a notable characteristic of fools, as is reflected in *Being quick-tempered is foolish and ungodly*, cross-referenced above.

Results of foolishness . . .

Ps 38:5-6 My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, ⁶I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning.

Prov 3:35 The wise will inherit honor, but fools get^k disgrace.

^k The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Prov 11:29 Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.

Prov 14:3 By the mouth of a fool comes a rod for his back,¹ but the lips of the wise will preserve them.

¹ Or In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride

Prov 14:8, 24 The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving. ... ²⁴The crown of the wise is their wealth, but the folly of fools brings folly.

Verse 8b most likely means that fools are deceived by their folly (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT; 5:23). Verse 24b means that foolishness begets more foolishness (cf. CEV, NCV).

Prov 17:21, 25 He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy. ... ²⁵A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.

Prov 18:6 A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating.

Ecc 2:14a The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.

A fool effectively lives in darkness – unaware of what way he ought to choose and of what obstacles are in his path.

Ecc 10:1 Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

Ecc 10:15 The toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city.

The latter part of the verse may have been a saying of the time. Possibly it means that a fool cannot find his way home (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) – implying that he cannot effectively accomplish even the most basic of tasks (cf. NLT).

. . . Ultimately, foolishness results in ruin – even death

See also:

- . . . *Idleness leads to poverty and associated troubles*, p. 1654
- *Note: Living without wisdom has harmful consequences*, p. 1686

Prov 10:8, 14 The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin. ... ¹⁴The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.

Prov 18:7 A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.

Prov 19:3 When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD.

Ecc 10:12-13 The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor,^m but the lips of a fool consume him. ¹³The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness.

^mOr are gracious

The "folly" and "madness" (v. 13) of a fool's words destroy him (v. 12).

Matt 7:26-27 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.



This typifies a life of foolishness, as the simile suggests. A life lived apart from Jesus' instructions does not have the foundation to stand in troubled times. Some see this teaching as primarily looking to the ultimate storm, or test – God's judgment day.

1Tim 6:9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many *senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.*

Job 5:2-5 Surely vexation kills the fool, and jealousy slays the simple. ³*I have seen the fool taking root, but suddenly I cursed his dwelling.* ⁴*His children are far from safety; they are crushed in the gate, and there is no one to deliver them.* ⁵*The hungry eat his harvest, and he takes it even out of thorns,ⁿ and the thirsty pant^o after his^p wealth.*

ⁿ The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

^o Aquila, Symmachus, Syriac, Vulgate; Hebrew could be read as *and the snare pants*

^p Hebrew *their*

Verse 3b possibly means Eliphaz pronounced that the fool's home was cursed, rather than initiating the curse himself.

Prov 1:32 For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; ...

The phrase "turning away" likely refers to turning away from wisdom.

Prov 5:23 He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.

Prov 9:16-18 [Folly:] "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" And to him who lacks sense she says, ¹⁷"Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." ¹⁸*But he does not know that the dead^q are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*

^q Hebrew *Rephaim*

Those who respond to Folly's beckoning (v. 16) enter into death (v. 18), spiritual if not also physical.

Prov 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.

Prov 21:16 One who wanders from the way of good sense will rest in the assembly of the dead.

Ecc 7:17 Be not overly wicked, *neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time?*

✦ **A foolish woman destroys her own family:**

Prov 14:1 The wisest of women builds her house, but *folly with her own hands tears it down.*

Note that this thought is reflected in Job 5:3-5 above.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Foolish and Ungodly Practices

Subsections

- Being quick-tempered is foolish and ungodly
- Indulging in pleasure is foolish and pointless . . .
- . . . and indulging in pleasure is ungodly
- Drunkenness and gluttony are unwise, causing one trouble . . .
- . . . Drunkenness should be avoided, particularly as it leads to ungodliness
- Further ungodly practices that are notably foolish
- Further practices typical of fools
- Unwise practices comparable to foolishness
- Note: Warnings against putting up security for another's debt

Being quick-tempered is foolish and ungodly

See also:

- *Avoid anger*, p. 1565
- *Be self-controlled . . .*, p. 1651

Ecc 7:9 Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

Prov 12:16 The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult.

A fool immediately shows their anger (cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV, NRSV) or annoyance (cf. GNT, NIV) – i.e. they are "quick-tempered" (NLT).

Prov 14:17 A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.



Prov 14:29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but *he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.* 📖

Prov 29:11 *A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.* 📖

Prov 15:18 *A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.* 📖

This reflects that being quick-tempered is ungodly – as does also Titus 1:7 below.

Titus 1:7 For an overseer,^r as God's steward, must be above reproach. *He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ...* 📖

^r Or *bishop*; Greek *episkopos*

Indulging in pleasure is foolish and pointless . . .

See also:

- *b) Further Warnings about Riches*, p. 1913

Titus 3:3 *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.* 📖

This appears to associate being foolish with being enslaved to "various passions and pleasures".

Ecc 2:1-2, 10-11 I said in my heart, "Come now, *I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.*" *But behold, this also was vanity.* ²*I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"* 📖 ... ¹⁰*And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.* ¹¹*Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.* 📖

In v. 1 the writer's thought is addressed to himself. He has in view trying out pleasure or having fun (cf. CEV, NCV). The reference to "laughter" (v. 2) is probably to pursuing laughter, making it a prime goal. The latter part of v. 10 may well mean that he found pleasure in his work because he thought it would be rewarded with the pleasures he sought (cf. GNT, NCV), but instead it proved to be pointless (v. 11). Alternatively, it may simply be making the point that he did at least find pleasure in his work.

Ecc 7:2-6 *It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind,*

and the living will lay it to heart. ³*Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.* ⁴*The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.* ⁵*It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.* ⁶*For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.* 📖

The thrust of verses 2-4 is that mourning and sorrow are better than frivolity and pleasure, because we grow wiser and benefit through experiences of them – in contrast to enjoying the latter pair. In fact indulging in pleasure is typical of fools (v. 4). With the references to "mourning" in the adjacent verses, v. 3 could well be meaning that by mourning or grieving one's heart is "made better *and* gains gladness" (AMP). The clause "hear the song of fools" (v. 5) may be referring to enjoying the pleasures of fools, although in light of the first part of the verse it could instead be speaking of accepting the praise of fools. Verse 6 portrays the laughter of fools as meaningless and unfulfilling, being like thorns used in a fire which make a lot of noise but do not provide sustained heat.

Prov 21:17 *Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.* 📖

Prov 14:13 *Even in laughter the heart may ache, and the end of joy may be grief.* 📖

This appears to warn against relying on laughter or joy. More precisely the meaning could be that laughter may only be able to conceal a heavy heart, the latter still remaining once the laughter ends (cf. NLT). As such this portrays laughter to be ineffectual in itself.

. . . and indulging in pleasure is ungodly

See also:

- **Titus 3:3** ↑

The following references generally do not explicitly say that indulging in pleasure is ungodly, but they do illustrate or imply that this is the case.

Luke 6:25b *"Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.* 📖

This appears to be referring to those whose focus and goal is their own happiness, who seek after the amusements and pleasures of this life, with little or no regard for spiritual matters. The latter part of the statement appears to largely have punishment in the afterlife in view – underlining the ungodliness of the aforementioned lifestyle.



Luke 8:14 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way *they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.* 

Pleasure can choke our responsiveness to God's word (cf. v. 11) as pleasure can involve practices that either: are opposed to God's word; or crowd out God's word, leaving little or no room for it in our lives.

1Tim 5:6 ... but *she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.* 

One who is "self-indulgent" (cf. **James 5:5** ↓) effectively "lives for pleasure" (NIV®, NRSV cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NKJV, NLT). Such people are "spiritually dead" (NLT).

2Tim 3:4 ... treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ...* 

This reflects that we cannot be both lovers of pleasure and lovers of God.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to *renounce ungodliness and worldly passions*, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ... 

The "worldly passions" – associated with "ungodliness" – are largely equivalent to "sinful pleasures" (NLT).

Heb 11:24-25 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing *rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.* 

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because *you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.* 

James 5:5 *You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* 

The second sentence likens the people in question to cattle fattening themselves even on the day of their slaughter, making themselves even more suitable for slaughter. Likewise by such self-indulgence, these people "fatten" or increase their guilt in the face of impending judgment.

2Pet 2:13 ... suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. *They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.* 

^s Some manuscripts *love feasts*

Rev 18:3, 7 For all nations have drunk^t the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of *her luxurious living.*"  ... ⁷*As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning*, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.' 

^t Some manuscripts *fallen by*

Note that the reference is to "Babylon the Great" – which most likely symbolizes ungodly world authority, in general or a particular source of it (cf. *The guilt and consequent judgment of "Babylon the Great"*, p. 695).

Drunkenness and gluttony are unwise, causing one trouble . . .

Prov 20:1 *Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.* 

^u Or *will not become wise*

"Wine is a mocker" is often understood to mean that wine has a tendency to cause a person to become a mocker. But it has also been interpreted to mean that wine mocks a person – i.e. makes a fool of them, as reflected in the latter part of the verse.

Hos 4:10-11 They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the whore, but not multiply, because they have forsaken the LORD to cherish ¹¹whoredom, *wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding.* 

Prov 21:20 Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but *a foolish man devours it.* 

The last clause is suggestive of or at least encompasses gluttony – characteristic of a foolish man in contrast to a wise man.

Prov 23:19-21 *Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. ²⁰Be not among drunkards^v or among gluttonous eaters of meat, ²¹for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.* 

^v Hebrew *those who drink too much wine*

Prov 28:7 The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but *a companion of gluttons shames his father.* 

The contrast with a son "with understanding" emphasizes that gluttons are unwise.



Prov 23:29-35 *Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?* ³⁰*Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine.* ³¹*Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.* ³²*In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.* ³³*Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things.* ³⁴*You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.* ^{w 35}*"They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink."* 

^w Or of the rigging

^x Hebrew lacks you will say

Verse 34-35 portray the hung-over state of a drunkard – sick, even injured (but yet to feel plain) and wanting more drink.

Isa 5:11, 22 *Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!*  ... ²²*Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, ...* 

Prov 23:1-2 When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what^y is before you, ²and *put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite.* 

^y Or who

Verse 2 figuratively warns against gluttony, having in view consequences of indulging one's appetite in the presence of authority.

Prov 25:16 *If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.* 

Deut 21:18-21 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, ¹⁹then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, ²⁰and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; *he is a glutton and a drunkard.*' ²¹*Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones.* So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear. 

Prov 26:10 *Like an archer who wounds everyone is one who hires a passing fool or drunkard.* ^z 

^z Or hires a fool or passersby

Arguably this associates drunkenness with foolishness. It also points to the trouble that drunkenness brings not only to others but also to oneself, as it reflects that drunkards find it hard to obtain employment with employers rightly being adverse to hiring them.

... Drunkenness should be avoided, particularly as it leads to ungodliness

See also:

- [Prov 20:1](#) 
- *Be sober-minded*, p. 1927

1Tim 3:2-3, 8 Therefore an overseer^a must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^b *sober-minded*, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³*not a drunkard*, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.  ... ⁸Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued,^c *not addicted to much wine*, not greedy for dishonest gain. 

^a Or bishop; Greek *episkopos*; a similar term occurs in verse 1

^b Or a man of one woman; also verse 12

^c Or devious in speech

Church leaders should exemplify godly characteristics; as such they should not be inclined to drinking excessively. Note that being "sober-minded" (v. 2) would appear to involve being "sober" (GNT).

Titus 2:3a Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, *not slanderers or slaves to much wine.* 

Prov 31:4-5 *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink,* ⁵*lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.* 

Eph 5:18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery,* but be filled with the Spirit, ... 

Drunkenness goes "hand in hand" with debauchery.

Luke 21:34 *But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.* 

The word "dissipation" entails excessive indulgence. Such things as dissipation and drunkenness deter people from living godly lives, in preparedness for Jesus Christ's return.



Phil 3:18-19 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, *their god is their belly*, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.



The clause “their god is their belly” suggests that their stomach was their top priority. As such it would indicate that gluttony, like drunkenness, promotes ungodliness. But note that the reference may be more general, with “stomach” possibly being used as a metaphor for “their bodily desires” (GNT, cf. NCV), rather than simply referring to their appetite for food.

‡ Drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God:

1Cor 6:10 ... nor thieves, nor the greedy, *nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Further ungodly practices that are notably foolish

See also:

- *Foolishness involves acting contrary to God*, p. 1658

Luke 11:39-40 And the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?”

The Pharisees foolishly ensured that they gave the outward appearance of being pious, while inwardly being full of wickedness. Such action is obviously foolish when one considers that God also made the inner person (v. 40b) and so knows and is concerned about our inward state too.

Prov 6:32 *He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.*

Prov 10:18 The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and *whoever utters slander is a fool.*

Prov 11:12 *Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense*, but a man of understanding remains silent.

Prov 15:20 A wise son makes a glad father, but a *foolish man despises his mother.*

Prov 28:26 *Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool*, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.

Ecc 5:1, 4 ^d Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better *than to offer the sacrifice of fools*, for they do not know that they are doing evil. ... ⁴*When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools.* Pay what you vow.

^d Ch 4:17 in Hebrew

Hasty vows (v. 1) and unfulfilled vows (v. 4) – with the former tending to lead to the latter – are of fools.

Luke 12:20-21 But God said to him, ‘*Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?*’ ²¹*So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.*

‡ It is foolish to not be prepared for Jesus Christ’s return:

Matt 25:1-13 *Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps^e and went to meet the bridegroom.^f ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹²But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*

^e Or torches

^f Some manuscripts add *and the bride*

Further practices typical of fools

See also:

- *Use few words – in contrast to fools*, p. 1644

Note that the foolish practices discussed in this and the following subsections are arguably not all overtly ungodly – in contrast to the practices discussed previously.

Prov 14:15 *The simple believes everything*, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.



Prov 14:16 One who is wise is cautious^g and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless. 

^g Or fears [the LORD]

Prov 17:24 The discerning sets his face toward wisdom, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. 

This appears to be speaking of fantasizing or possibly a lack of focus.

Prov 22:3 The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it. 

Prov 26:11 Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly. 

Ecc 4:13 Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice. 

Ecc 10:3 Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool. 

This verse and Proverbs 13:16 below indicate that a fool reveals his foolishness all too easily.

Prov 13:16 In everything the prudent acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly. 

A fool displays his folly.

Unwise practices comparable to foolishness

See also:

- . . . *Seeing yourself as wise is associated with foolishness*, p. 1889

Prov 18:1 Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment. 

Prov 26:4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. 

As noted earlier, the phrase “according to his folly” means in a manner which is in accordance with his foolish ways – i.e. “stooping to his level”.

Prov 29:20 Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. 

Prov 30:32 If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth. 

Prov 26:18-19 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death ¹⁹is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, “I am only joking!” 

Ecc 7:10 Say not, “Why were the former days better than these?” For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. 

It is not wise to long for the past or idealize it in comparison to the present. Such an attitude tends to overlook past difficulties and rouse negativity, even leading to pessimism in one’s present circumstances.

2Cor 10:12 Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding. 

It is not wise to compare ourselves with others and then take pride in how we may measure up against them.

✦ Paul’s boasting “as a fool”:

2Cor 11:16-17, 21b-23 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, *accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little.* ¹⁷What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not with the Lord’s authority but as a fool.  ... ²¹ ... But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. ²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. ²³Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 

Paul felt compelled to boast – which he acknowledges is a foolish thing to do (cf. **Prov 30:32** †; **2Cor 10:12** †) – to prove his credentials as an apostle.

Note: Warnings against putting up security for another’s debt

Prov 17:18 One who lacks sense gives a pledge and puts up security in the presence of his neighbor. 

Prov 11:15 Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer harm, but he who hates striking hands in pledge is secure. 

In this context “striking hands in pledge” signifies agreeing to put up security for another.



Prov 22:26-27 *Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts. ²⁷If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you?* 

Note that this is of “the words of the wise” (cf. v. 17).

Prov 20:16 *Take a man’s garment when he has put up security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for foreigners.^h* 

^h Or *for an adulteress* (compare 27:13)

Putting up security is particularly foolish when done for someone relatively unknown. One would need to be held responsible particularly in such instances (as could be done by the taking of one’s garment).

‡ **If you have put up security for someone, plea to be released:**

Prov 6:1-5 *My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger, ²if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth, ³then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor: go, hasten,ⁱ and plead urgently with your neighbor. ⁴Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber; ⁵save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,^j like a bird from the hand of the fowler.* 

ⁱ Or *humble yourself*

^j Hebrew lacks *of the hunter*

Note that if the “neighbor” of v. 3 is the one of v. 1, then v. 3 is saying to approach the person for whom you have put up the security – as opposed to approaching the creditor.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Spiritual Ignorance (I): Causes and Results

Subsections

- Spiritual ignorance is caused basically by sin and ungodliness
- Spiritual ignorance and lack of perception is caused partly by the ungodly being closed-minded . . .
- . . . God and Jesus Christ may even judicially blind ungodly people

- Thus, the ungodly lack spiritual sense and knowledge . . .
- . . . and the ungodly are in spiritual “darkness”
- Spiritual ignorance results in further sin and ungodliness
- Spiritual ignorance and lack of spiritual perception result in unbelief
- Spiritual ignorance and lack of spiritual understanding culminate in dire consequences

Spiritual ignorance is caused basically by sin and ungodliness

See also:

- [Isa 44:8](#) ↴; [2Tim 4:3-4](#) ↴

Jer 9:6 *Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the LORD.* 

This implies that due to their sinfulness such people are unwilling to know God – they “do not know *and* understand” God (AMP).

Ezek 12:2 *Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house.* 

In their rebellion against God the people were not receptive to his spiritual truth. This would of course promote spiritual ignorance.

John 3:19-20 *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.* 

Due to people’s evil deeds, they spurn the spiritual light that is Jesus Christ and his truth. For this light exposes their deeds for what they really are – evil.

John 8:43-44, 47 *Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*  *... ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.* 

Satan is characterized by deceit (v. 44). Those who are of him (v. 44a) and so “not of God” (v. 47b) are deceived by him and cannot understand or accept the words of God (vv. 43, 47).



Rom 1:18-22 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all *ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth*. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹For although they knew God, *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened*. ²²*Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ...*

The “truth” (v. 18) is the truth about God revealed to all through the testimony of creation (vv. 19-21a). By wickedness and ungodliness, such people “suppress” the truth – or push it away (cf. NLT). Verses 21-22 further demonstrate that ungodliness, with its disregard of God, leads to spiritual darkness and foolishness.

2Pet 1:9 For *whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind*, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Not possessing the godly qualities listed earlier in vv. 5-7 is a key cause of spiritual blindness, and so spiritual ignorance. Note that this appears to refer to spiritually immature church members, people who are in danger of falling away.

Psa 73:21-22 *When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, ²²I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.*

The psalmist’s “brutish and ignorant” (v. 22) state was brought on – in part at least – by his lapsing into sinful bitterness (v. 21a).

Spiritual ignorance and lack of perception is caused partly by the ungodly being closed-minded . . .

See also:

- [Jer 9:6](#)

Job 21:14 *They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways.*

Wicked people typically choose to not know the ways in which God wants people to live.

Isa 30:9-10 For *they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; ¹⁰who say to the seers, “Do not see,” and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, ...*

In their sinfulness and unwillingness to listen to God’s messages (v. 9) – i.e. closed mindedness to God’s word – the people opted for pleasant illusions (v. 10). Rather than spiritual truth, they opted for nonsense; hence their spiritual ignorance.

Isa 42:18-20 *Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! ¹⁹Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one,^k or blind as the servant of the LORD? ²⁰He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear.*

^k Or as the one at peace with me

This passage is portraying Israel – who was supposed to be God’s servant and messenger to the nations – as being blind and deaf (vv. 18-19) to what God did and said, not willing to pay any attention (v. 20). Note that the meaning of the phrase translated here as “my dedicated one” (v. 19) is debatable, with different meanings being given in other translations (cf. NASB, NCV, NKJV, NLT).

Isa 48:8 *You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened.* For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel.

Note that as is the case here, sin and ungodliness (discussed in the previous subsection) are often associated with closed minds (cf. [Isa 30:9-10](#) ; [2Tim 4:3-4](#)). They stimulate or at least work together with closed minds (“your ear has not been opened”) to cause lack of spiritual perception and ignorance.

Jer 6:10 To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? *Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it.*

The people scorned God’s word, closing their ears to it and so cutting themselves off from it and its spiritual truth.

Matt 13:18-19 Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone *hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it*, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. *This is what was sown along the path.*

The “path” appears to depict those who are hardened against spiritual truth (cf. comment on [Mark 6:52](#)), causing them to not understand and absorb the message. This in turn allows Satan to remove any “seeds” of spiritual truth.



Mark 6:51-52 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵²for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. 

The clause “their hearts were hardened” (v. 52) means that “their minds were closed” (CEV, NCV). People of whom this is true do not understand or believe primarily because they are not open to spiritual truth; they are either not ready to or do not want to believe.

Mark 8:17-21 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? *Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?* ¹⁸*Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?* ¹⁹When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” ²⁰“And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” ²¹And he said to them, “*Do you not yet understand?*” 

2Cor 3:14-16 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶But when one¹ turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 

¹ Greek *he*

Eph 4:17-18 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, *in the futility of their minds.* ¹⁸*They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.* 

2Tim 4:3-4 For the time is coming *when people will not endure sound^m teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,* ⁴*and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.* 

^mOr *healthy*

To suit their own sinful passions, people refuse to accept sound teaching. Their passions and closed mindedness lead them to turn to “myths” and false teachings. As such they are ignorant and misinformed about spiritual things.

Luke 16:29-31 But Abraham said, *‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’* ³⁰And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹He said to him, *‘If they do not hear Moses and*

the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’ 

Verse 31 indicates that for those whose minds are closed to God’s word, not even the testimony of someone raised from the dead will convince them of spiritual realities – as Jesus Christ’s resurrection was to show.

... God and Jesus Christ may even judicially blind ungodly people

See also:

▪ [Isa 44:18](#) 

Isa 6:9-12 And he said, “*Go, and say to this people: “‘Keep on hearing,ⁿ but do not understand; keep on seeing,^o but do not perceive.’* ¹⁰*Make the heart of this people dull,^p and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”* ¹¹Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said: “Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, ¹²and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.” 

ⁿ Or *Hear indeed*

^o Or *see indeed*

^p Hebrew *fat*

Isaiah was to pronounce God’s judicial blinding and hardening of the people (vv. 9-10a), making certain the judgment God had ordained (vv. 11-12). For such had been the people’s rebellion, that God chose to ensure that the people would not seek to avoid the judgment (v. 10b).

Isa 29:9-12 Astonish yourselves^q and be astonished; *blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink!* ¹⁰*For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).* ¹¹*And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot, for it is sealed.”* ¹²*And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot read.”* 

^q Or *Linger awhile*

This appears to portray the people’s spiritual blindness (vv. 9-10) and inability to access God’s word (vv. 11-12) as a judgment from God, due to the people’s sinfulness (cf. ch. 28) – not least of which was their disdain of his word (cf. 28:12, 22).



Matt 13:10-15 Then *the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"* ¹¹*And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.* ¹²*For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.* ¹³*This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.* ¹⁴*Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.* ¹⁵*For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'* ☞

Verse 12b most likely means that whoever is not open to God's spiritual truth (v. 15a), even what little spiritual insight they have will be taken from them. Jesus achieved this in part at least through the use of parables to deny such people easy access to spiritual truth (vv. 10, 13-14). In conjunction with this, the reference to the prophecy of Isaiah (vv. 14-15; cf. [Isa 6:9-10](#) ↑) may be pointing out that by hardening their hearts against God's spiritual truth (v. 15), the people themselves lost what little spiritual sensitivity and insight they did have (v. 14).

John 9:39 Jesus said, "*For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.*" ☞

In conjunction with their pride over their knowledge of the Scriptures and their self-righteousness, the Jewish religious leaders considered themselves to be spiritually perceptive. Through this they had actually become ungodly. The clause "those who see may become blind" probably means that such people who considered themselves spiritually perceptive, would be blinded to the fuller revelation of truth that Jesus brought – including the light he shed on OT Scripture. Thus, through his mission Jesus Christ caused them to become spiritually blind – effectively as an act of judgment (v. 39a). Note that "those who do not see may see" speaks of those who acknowledge their spiritual blindness and lack of knowledge, being open to and/or being given spiritual sight.

Rom 11:7-10, 25 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but *the rest were hardened,* ⁸*as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."* ⁹*And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; ¹⁰let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."* ☞ ... ²⁵*Lest you be wise in your*

own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers:^r a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ☞

^r Or *brothers and sisters*

In vv. 7-8 Paul speaks of Israel's spiritual deafness and blindness as given them by God; he also appears to be pointing to this in v. 25. This judgment was in part at least because of their stubbornness in trying to obtain righteousness by works (v. 7; cf. 9:30-10:3) in association with their unbelief (cf. v. 20; 10:16, 21).

✦ God deludes those who refuse to accept the truth:

2Thes 2:9-11 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because *they refused to love the truth and so be saved.* ¹¹*Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ...* ☞

The end-time deception of the antichrist is primarily in view here (cf. vv. 9-10a).

Thus, the ungodly lack spiritual sense and knowledge . . .

See also:

- *Spiritual ignorance is caused basically by sin and ungodliness*, p. 1668

Jer 10:14 *Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them.* ☞

"Everyone" appears to be hyperbole, referring to the ungodly – in particular those who worship idols (cf. CEV). However note that some interpret it to be speaking of all people, who in comparison to God are "stupid and without knowledge" (cf. GNT, NLT).

Deut 32:20, 28 And he said, 'I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, For *they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.* ☞ ... ²⁸*"For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them.* ☞

Jer 5:21 Hear this, *O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not.* ☞

Jer 9:3 They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has grown strong^s in the land; for *they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, declares the LORD.* ☞



^s Septuagint; Hebrew *and not for truth they have grown strong*

Hos 7:10-11 The pride of Israel testifies to his face;^t yet *they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him, for all this.*
¹¹*Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense, calling to Egypt, going to Assyria.* 📖

^t Or *in his presence*

Isa 44:9, 18-20 All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. *Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame.* 📖 ... ¹⁸*They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand.* ¹⁹*No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?"* ²⁰*He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"* 📖

"Their witnesses" (v. 9) are those who would give witness on behalf of idols – "Those who would speak up for them" (NIV®).

Dan 12:10 Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And *none of the wicked shall understand*, but those who are wise shall understand. 📖

Matt 16:1-4 And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ²He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' ³And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' *You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.* ⁴*An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.*" So he left them and departed. 📖

^u Some manuscripts omit the following words to the end of verse 3

The Pharisees and Sadducees' request for a miracle evidenced their spiritually adulterous state (v. 4a); they were intent on testing Jesus so as to try to discredit him. Jesus pointed out that there had already been significant signs – presumably meaning signs apparent in his public ministry, including previous miracles. But these "evil and adulterous" leaders had failed to recognize the spiritual significance of these signs (v. 3b), evidencing a lack of spiritual perception. Note that Jesus' refusal to give them a miraculous sign on demand is quite possibly indicative of both his recognition

of their refusal to believe no matter what they witnessed, and his own refusal to "play their games" and submit to their demands. Regarding the phrase "the sign of Jonah" (v. 4), it is generally understood to refer to Jesus' coming death and resurrection, when he would be dead for three days (or parts thereof), emulating Jonah being inside the fish for three days and nights (cf. Jonah 1:17).

Titus 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but *to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.* 📖

Paul has in view false teachers propagating ascetic rules about food and purification. By effectively asserting that nothing was pure, these ungodly people showed their lack of spiritual sense.

... and the ungodly are in spiritual "darkness"

See also:

- ... *They have spiritual light instead of spiritual darkness,* p. 897

Ps 82:5 *They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.* 📖

Prov 4:19 *The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.* 📖

1Jn 2:9, 11 Whoever says he is in the light and *hates his brother is still in darkness.* 📖 ... ¹¹*But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.* 📖

John 12:35 So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, *lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.*" 📖

One who spurns Jesus' light "walks in the darkness" and so "does not know where he is going."

Matt 6:23 ... *but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!* 📖

If one's spiritual sight or perception is bad (as is the case with the ungodly) then one's whole person is full of or enveloped in spiritual darkness. The second sentence may be meaning that if that which a person has for their light is actually darkness, then the darkness within them is indeed great.



‡ In their natural selves, people are not spiritually perceptive:

Rom 6:18-19 ...and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹*I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations.* For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. ☞

In v. 19a Paul appears to apologize for using a less than perfect analogy in describing believers as “slaves” to righteousness (vv. 18, 19b). The need to do so was because his readers were weak in their sinful nature, lacking spiritual perception and needing a somewhat stark illustration to ensure that they grasped his point.

Spiritual ignorance results in further sin and ungodliness

See also:

- [1Tim 1:13](#) ↴
- *Note: Not knowing God leads to sin and evil*, p. 1212

While sin and ungodliness are the prime cause/s of spiritual ignorance (as discussed earlier), spiritual ignorance in turn leads to further sin and ungodliness.

Isa 45:20b *They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save.* ☞

Acts 3:15, 17 ... and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ☞ ... ¹⁷“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ☞

Eph 4:17-19 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, *that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.* ¹⁸*They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.* ¹⁹*They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.* ☞

The Gentiles’ “futility of ... mind” (v. 17), “darkened ... understanding” and “ignorance” (v. 18) was behind them being “alienated from the life of God” (v. 18) and becoming callous and indulging in sinfulness (v. 19).

1Pet 1:14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to *the passions of your former ignorance*, ... ☞

John 8:37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet *you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.* ☞

In having no room for Jesus’ word, the Jewish leaders showed their lack of spiritual perception and their spiritual ignorance. In part due to this lack of spiritual sense, they sought to get rid of Jesus as his words and claims undermined them.

Spiritual ignorance and lack of spiritual perception result in unbelief

John 8:44-46 *You are of your father the devil*, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* ⁴⁵*But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.* ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? *If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?* ☞

The Jews spoken to here belonged to the devil (cf. v. 47), who has “no truth in him” and is “the father of lies” (v. 44). As such, spiritual truth was alien to them – indicative of their ignorance. Thus they could not believe the truth that Jesus taught (vv. 45-46).

John 12:37-40 *Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,* ³⁸*so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”* ³⁹*Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,* ⁴⁰*“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”* ☞

Verses 39-40 speak of God’s judicial blinding of many of the Jews and their subsequent lack of spiritual perception as causing their unbelief (vv. 37-38).

Rom 11:20, 25 That is true. They were broken off because of *their unbelief*, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. ☞ ... ²⁵Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: ^v *a partial hardening has come upon Israel*, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ☞

‡ Or *brothers and sisters*

Arguably Israel’s “hardening” (v. 25) – and thus lack of spiritual perception – was the cause of “their unbelief” (v. 20); it at least reinforced it.



2Cor 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ☞

This may well be meaning that “unbelievers” (v. 4a) do not believe because of their spiritual blindness (cf. GNT) – the theme of this subsection. Alternatively it may be saying that those who are already “unbelievers” are then blinded by Satan – “to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel”, ensuring that they remain unbelievers. Note that Satan is spoken of here as the prime agent of this blindness, whereas John 12:39-40 above and . . . *God and Jesus Christ may even judicially blind ungodly people*, p. 1670, speak of God judicially blinding or reinforcing such blindness.

1Tim 1:13 ... though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ... ☞

This suggests that ignorance comes from unbelief, the reverse of the theme of this subsection. It reflects that ignorance and unbelief go “hand in hand”, with one exacerbating the other – much like ignorance and sin.

✦ Ignorance can lead to misconceived and ill-fated efforts to obtain righteousness:

Rom 10:2-3 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ☞

Spiritual ignorance and lack of spiritual understanding culminate in dire consequences

Hos 4:6, 14 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. ☞ ... ¹⁴I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes and sacrifice with cult prostitutes, and a people without understanding shall come to ruin. ☞

Prov 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.^w ☞

^w Hebrew ways of death

Lack of spiritual perception can leave one open to taking paths in life that lead to death. Here “death” appears to be applicable to both premature physical death and spiritual death.

Isa 5:13 Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge;^x their honored men go hungry,^y and their multitude is parched with thirst. ☞

^x Or without their knowledge

^y Or die of hunger

Isa 27:10-11 For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness; there the calf grazes; there it lies down and strips its branches. ¹¹When its boughs are dry, they are broken; women come and make a fire of them. For this is a people without discernment; therefore he who made them will not have compassion on them; he who formed them will show them no favor. ☞

Verses 10-11a portray desolation, due to God's judgment and withholding of his compassion and favor (v. 11b). These things were the result of the people being “without discernment” (v. 11b) and acting accordingly.

Rom 1:28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ☞

Even though the people in view had known God (cf. v. 21), the fact that they did not see acknowledgment of him as a fitting thing to do is indicative of spiritual ignorance. The expression “gave them up” (cf. vv. 24, 26) appears to indicate that God not only turned them over to their sinful ways, but also to the consequences that such behaviour naturally brings (cf. v. 27).

2Thes 1:7b-8 ... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ☞

✦ The spiritually blind lead others astray:

Matt 15:14 Let them alone; they are blind guides.^z And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit. ☞

^z Some manuscripts add of the blind

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) Spiritual Ignorance (II): Knowledge Lacked

The assertions contained in the subheadings in this section are typically true of ungodly people. Having said this, not all ungodly people and unbelievers are totally ignorant of all the things mentioned here. For example many are aware of aspects of the Bible's teaching about God's judgment, and some consider it to be at least a possibility.

Subsections

- The ungodly do not know God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit
- The ungodly do not comprehend God's word
- The ungodly do not know how God wants them to live . . .
- . . . and they do not know or understand many other spiritual truths
- The ungodly are ignorant of and deceived about their sin
- The ungodly are misguided about their standing with God and Jesus Christ
- The ungodly are skeptical of God knowing their deeds and of his judgment
- The ungodly are largely oblivious of God's pending punishment – which they will bear

The ungodly do not know God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit

See also:

- *Note: Not knowing God leads to sin and evil*, p. 1212
- *Foolishness involves failure to comprehend God and his ways*, p. 1657

Job 18:21 Surely such are the dwellings of *the unrighteous*, such is the place of *him who knows not God*. 📖

Jer 9:6 *Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, declares the LORD*. 📖

Isa 1:2-3 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children^a have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. ³*The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.*" 📖

^a Or Sons; also verse 4

Wayward Israel did not know God (cf. NCV) – their master, the one who cared for them.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet *the world did not know him*. 📖

When Jesus came largely people did not recognize him as the Messiah – they "did not know him".

John 8:19, 55 They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" *Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."* 📖 ... ⁵⁵*But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.* 📖

The ungodliness of the Jews was exhibited by their rejection of Jesus (cf. vv. 48, 52-53, 57, 59) and his description of them as liars (v. 55). As such, they did not know God or him.

John 14:17 ... even *the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him*. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 📖

John 17:25 O righteous Father, even though *the world does not know you*, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 📖

Acts 17:23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, '*To the unknown god.*' *What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.* 📖

In their spiritual ignorance and ungodliness, the Athenians in fact worshipped numerous gods. Here Paul uses their altar to "the unknown god" to highlight the fact that they did not know the true God.

1Cor 1:21 For since, in the wisdom of God, *the world did not know God* through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 📖

Job 21:15 *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?* 📖

In not knowing God, along with failing to serve him, people do not know critical things about him – as illustrated in the following verses (cf. [Matt 2:29](#) ↓).

Mic 4:12 But *they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan*, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor. 📖



Isa 29:16 *You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?* 

In their sinful ignorance, many of Israel's leaders very much underestimated God's sovereignty, power and understanding.

Ps 14:1 *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.* 

Further to not knowing God, sinful fools even deny that there is a God.

✦ **Not knowing God, the ungodly do not recognize God's people:**

1Jn 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. *The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.* 

Note that "not know him" could refer to Jesus Christ rather than to God.

The ungodly do not comprehend God's word

See also:

- *The gospel is the power and wisdom of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world*, p. 1770

Matt 22:29 But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because *you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.* 

Here Jesus is addressing the Sadducees, who were – to some extent at least – ignorant of the Scriptures, not understanding them (cf. NASB).

John 5:39-40 *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,* ⁴⁰*yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.* 

Although they diligently studied the Scriptures, the Jewish leaders – who had in fact become in many ways ungodly – did not comprehend that the Scriptures spoke about Jesus, the way to life.

Acts 13:27 For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, *because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.* 

The people and their rulers were oblivious to the fact that by condemning Jesus they actually fulfilled the Scriptures that were read to them every week.

2Cor 3:14-16 But *their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted*, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵*Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.* ¹⁶*But when one^b turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.* 

^b Greek *he*

When listening to the old covenant being read, the people's minds and hearts were "covered" so that they could not see the significance of the old covenant, with its transitory nature probably being one aspect that Paul had foremost in mind.

✦ **Some parts of God's word are hard to understand, which ignorant people distort:**

2Pet 3:16 ... as he [Paul] does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. *There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.* 

The ungodly do not know how God wants them to live . . .

See also:

- *Foolishness involves failure to comprehend God and his ways*, p. 1657

Ps 95:10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, *"They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways."* 

Job 21:14 They say to God, 'Depart from us! *We do not desire the knowledge of your ways.* 

Jer 8:7 Even the stork in the heavens knows her times, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane^c keep the time of their coming, but *my people know not the rules^d of the LORD.* 

^c The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

^d Or *just decrees*

Hos 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.* 

The ungodly people and priests were ignorant of God's law and hence his will for how they should live. This was in part at least due to the priests willfully rejecting such knowledge



and ignoring God's law, and thus failing to teach it to the people.

Jer 4:22b They are 'wise'—in doing evil! But *how to do good they know not.*

This and the following verses refer to aspects of how God wants people to live that the ungodly do not know nor understand.

Amos 3:10 "They do not know how to do right," declares the LORD, "those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds."

Prov 28:5 *Evil men do not understand justice*, but those who seek the LORD understand it completely.

... and they do not know or understand many other spiritual truths

See also:

- *Foolishness involves failure to comprehend God and his ways*, p. 1657
- *Foolishness involves failure to comprehend other spiritual truths*, p. 1658

Luke 19:42-44 ... saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because *you did not know the time of your visitation.*"

The time of their "visitation" (v. 44b) was the time of God's intervention, providing salvation and the opportunity for peace (v. 42).

John 10:2, 6 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ... ⁶*This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

The people did not understand the spiritual truth illustrated by Jesus Christ's allegory of the Good Shepherd (cf. vv. 1-5). Note that Jesus thus expounded this teaching (cf. vv. 7-18), but many still could not see the spiritual truth behind it (cf. vv. 19-20).

Rom 10:3 For, *being ignorant of the righteousness of God*, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

1Cor 2:7-8 But *we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God*, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸*None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

The "secret and hidden wisdom of God" (v. 7) appears to refer to God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

1Cor 2:14 *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

This is most likely speaking primarily of spiritual "truths" (NCV™, NLT).

2Tim 3:6-7 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷always learning and *never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.*

Those spoken of were keen to learn and they apparently found attractive whatever new ideas – notably heresies – that they came across. But they could not acknowledge the truth.

2Pet 3:5 For *they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ...*

This appears to be an example of ungodly people deliberately choosing to ignore spiritual truth.

✦ Failure to interpret "the signs of the times":

Matt 16:3 And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but *you cannot interpret the signs of the times.*

The "signs of the times" most likely refers to signs that marked Jesus as the Messiah and possibly also the coming of God's kingdom. Most of these were fulfillment of prophecies of which the Jews would have been quite aware as they waited for the promised Messiah.

The ungodly are ignorant of and deceived about their sin

Ps 36:1-2 Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart;^e there is no fear of God before his eyes. ²For *he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.*

^e Some Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, Jerome (compare Septuagint); most Hebrew manuscripts *in my heart*

Verse 2 may mean that the wicked flatter themselves and so do not see their sin (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT) – hence the



inclusion of these verses here. Alternatively it may mean that they flatter themselves in telling themselves that their sin will not be found out (cf. GNT) – which would mean that these verses would be better placed below in *The ungodly are skeptical of God knowing their deeds and of his judgment* . . .

Prov 30:12 *There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.* 

Prov 30:20 *This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, “I have done no wrong.”* 

Jer 2:34-35 *Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor; you did not find them breaking in. Yet in spite of all these things ³⁵you say, ‘I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me.’ Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’* 

1Jn 1:8, 10 *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.  ... ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* 

Those without the truth (v. 8b) and God’s word (v. 10b) are typically deceived about and/or unaware of their sin – or at least the extent of it.

The ungodly are misguided about their standing with God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- [Jer 2:34-35](#) 

Isa 58:2-4 *Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. ³Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,^f and oppress all your workers. ⁴Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.* 

^f Or pursue your own business

Jer 7:9-11 *Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, ¹⁰and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? ¹¹Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of*

robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD. 

Mic 3:11 *Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, “Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us.”* 

Matt 7:21-23 *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’* 

Luke 13:25-27 *When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ ²⁶Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’* 

The owner of the house depicts Jesus (cf. Matt 7:22), rejecting the ungodly at the last judgment.

John 8:39-42, 47 *They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ⁴¹You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” ⁴²Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.  ... ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”* 

Rom 2:17-21 *But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?* 



The phrase “boast in God” (v. 17) speaks of boasting of their relationship to God (cf. NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV). Like the Jews in view here, anyone who hypocritically breaks God’s law (v. 21) and yet relies on it and their heritage for a sound relationship with God (vv. 17-20) is in fact ignorant of their true standing with God.

✦ The Laodiceans’ ignorance of their poor spiritual condition:

Rev 3:17 For you say, *I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.* 

The Laodiceans boasted in their material prosperity, but were ignorant of their poor spiritual condition.

The ungodly are skeptical of God knowing their deeds and of his judgment

See also:

- [Zeph 1:12](#) 

Job 22:13-14, 17 But you say, *‘What does God know? Can he judge through the deep darkness?’* ¹⁴*Thick clouds veil him, so that he does not see, and he walks on the vault of heaven.’*  ... ¹⁷*They said to God, ‘Depart from us,’ and ‘What can the Almighty do to us?’*¹⁸ 

¹⁸ Hebrew *them*

Ps 10:6, 11, 13 He [the wicked man] says in his heart, *“I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity.”*  ... ¹¹*He says in his heart, “God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it.”*  ... ¹³*Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, “You will not call to account?”* 

Ps 94:6-7 They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; ⁷and they say, *“The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.”* 

Isa 29:15 Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, *“Who sees us? Who knows us?”* 

The Hebrew translated here as “Ah” is sometimes translated as “Woe” (AMP, NASB, NIV, NKJV). It points with a sense of alarm to coming grave trouble and misery. Here it signals the judgment that awaits the people in view.

Jer 5:12 They [false prophets] have spoken falsely of the LORD and have said, *‘He will do nothing; no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine.’* 

Hos 7:2 But they do not consider that I remember all their evil. Now their deeds surround them; they are before my face. 

2Pet 3:3-7 ... knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴They will say, *“Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”* ⁵For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶and that *by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.* ⁷But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 

In the light of vv. 5-6, Peter may be presenting the scoffing at the prophesied “coming” of Jesus Christ (vv. 3-4) as being inclusive of the subsequent judgment (v. 7) – i.e. Peter may well be speaking of people scoffing at both the teaching of Jesus Christ’s return and the day of judgment.

The ungodly are largely oblivious of God’s pending punishment – which they will bear

See also:

- [2Pet 3:7](#) 

Deut 29:18b-20 Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, ¹⁹one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, *blesse himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.’* This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. ²⁰The LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. 

Note that the last statement in v. 19 may be speaking of the rest of the people also suffering as a result of such a person.

Deut 32:28-29 For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them. ²⁹*If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end!* 

Isa 26:11a O LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. 

Amos 9:10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, *‘Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.’* 



Mic 3:11-12 Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; *yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."* ¹²Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height. 

Mic 4:11-12 Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, "Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion." ¹²But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor. 

Zeph 1:12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent,^h those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' 

^h Hebrew are thickening on the dregs [of their wine]

Zeph 2:13, 15 And he will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and he will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert.  ... ¹⁵This is the exultant city that lived securely, that said in her heart, "I am, and there is no one else." What a desolation she has become, a lair for wild beasts! Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist. 

✦ Even the significance of God's punishment can elude the ungodly:

Isa 42:25 So he poured on him the heat of his anger and the might of battle; it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand; it burned him up, but he did not take it to heart. 

The hard-hearted people did not grasp the significance and implications of God's punishment of them.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Epilogue: Blessings of Wisdom

See also:

- e) *Wise Speech (II): Insights*, p. 1647

Subsections

- Understanding and insight . . .
- . . . and discernment
- Prudence and discretion
- Knowledge – including knowing what to do
- Righteousness and justness
- Protection . . .
- . . . and life
- Strength and success
- Prosperity
- Honor
- Further blessings of wisdom
- Note: Living without wisdom has harmful consequences

Understanding and insight . . .

See also:

- Deut 32:29 

Understanding and discernment (the topic of the following subsection) are key components of wisdom. As such, having wisdom means that one possesses these characteristics, which are great blessings.

Prov 1:1-2 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: ²To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, ... 

Prov 2:9-11 Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; ¹⁰for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ¹¹discretion will watch over you, *understanding will guard you*, ... 

Prov 3:13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, ... 

Prov 8:14 [Wisdom:] I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength. 



The speaker here is Wisdom personified (cf. [Prov 9:4-6](#) ↓). Those who respond to Wisdom gain the attributes associated with her.

Prov 9:1, 4-6 *Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. ...*⁴*“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” To him who lacks sense she [Wisdom] says,*⁵*“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.* ⁶*Leave your simple ways,ⁱ and live, and walk in the way of insight.”*

ⁱ Or *Leave the company of the simple*

Note that v. 1 speaks figuratively of Wisdom providing a sound or complete structure – with “seven” symbolizing completeness – within which one can successfully live one’s life (v. 6). For therein is insight for anyone who lacks sense (v. 4).

Prov 10:13 *On the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense.*

Prov 14:33 *Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding, but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools.^j*

^j Or *Wisdom rests quietly in the heart of a man of understanding, but makes itself known in the midst of fools*

Dan 12:10 Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but *those who are wise shall understand.*

Note that the reference is to the end times (cf. vv. 1, 7), involving both purification of many of God’s people (through trials) and continuing wickedness.

Hos 14:9 *Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; whoever is discerning, let him know them; for the ways of the LORD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.*

The second part of the verse is saying that the ways of the LORD for his people to live are right; the righteous follow them, but the rebellious stumble into trouble as a result of not obeying them. The earlier phrase “these things” probably refers to the preceding teachings and prophecies, but could also refer to the second part of the verse – which is somewhat of a conclusion to the book. The wise understand such things and act accordingly.

Est 1:13 Then the king said to *the wise men who knew the times* (for this was the king’s procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, ...

These wise men “understood the times” (NASB, NIV, NKJV).

... and discernment

See also:

▪ [Hos 14:9](#) ↑

Prov 16:21 *The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.*

Prov 14:8 *The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.*

The prudent are wise in that they can discern the best way ahead, i.e. “what to do” (GNT, NCV).

Gen 41:33, 39 Now therefore let Pharaoh *select a discerning and wise man*, and set him over the land of Egypt. ...³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, *there is none so discerning and wise as you are.*

Deut 32:29 *If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end!*

1Ki 3:12b [God, to Solomon] *Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind*, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.

1Cor 1:19 For it is written, “I will destroy *the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning* I will thwart.”

Despite its negative context, this still associates wisdom with discernment.

‡ **With wisdom one can give good advice:**

Prov 8:14a *I have counsel and sound wisdom ...*

Prudence and discretion

Prov 1:1-4 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: ²*To know wisdom and instruction*, to understand words of insight, ³*to receive instruction in wise dealing*, in righteousness, justice, and equity; ⁴*to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—*

Prov 2:10-11 ... *for wisdom will come into your heart*, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ¹¹*discretion will watch over you*, understanding will guard you, ...

Prov 3:21 My son, do not lose sight of these— *keep sound wisdom and discretion*, ...



Prov 5:1-2 *My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, ²that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge.*

Prov 8:5 [Wisdom:] *O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense.*

Prov 8:12 *I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.*

2Chr 2:12 Hiram also said, “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, who has discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for the LORD and a royal palace for himself.”

Dan 2:13-14 So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. ¹⁴Then *Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon.*

Daniel, as one of the wise men, spoke with prudence and discretion.

Knowledge – including knowing what to do

See also:

▪ [Prov 1:4](#) ; [Prov 2:10](#) ; [Prov 5:1-2](#) ; [Prov 8:12](#)

Prov 14:6, 18 A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain, but *knowledge is easy for a man of understanding.* ... ¹⁸The simple inherit folly, but *the prudent are crowned with knowledge.*

Prov 15:7 *The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.*^k

^k Or *the hearts of fools are not steadfast*

Prov 21:11 When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; *when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.*

Eccl 8:5-6 Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and *the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way.* ⁶*For there is a time and a way for everything, although man’s trouble¹ lies heavy on him.*

¹ Or *evil*

A wise person knows the right time and the right way for all that is to be done. Note that the preceding verses speak of knowledge as in knowing about things, whereas this and the following verses speak of knowing or discerning the best course of action. As such these later verses are also pertinent to the preceding subsection regarding discernment.

1Ki 2:9 Now therefore do not hold him guiltless, for *you are a wise man. You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol.*

1Chr 12:32 Of Issachar, *men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.*

‡ Wise people “have eyes in their head”:

Eccl 2:14a *The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.*

The expression “has eyes in his head” suggests foresight as well as, more generally, knowledge and understanding.

Righteousness and justness

See also:

▪ [Prov 4:11](#)

Prov 1:1-3 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: ²*To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, ³to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; ...*

Prov 2:1-2, 9-12, 16, 20 *My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ²making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; ... ⁹Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; ¹⁰for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ¹¹discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, ¹²delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, ... ¹⁶So you will be delivered from the forbidden^m woman, from the adulteressⁿ with her smooth words, ... ²⁰So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous.*

^m Hebrew *strange*

ⁿ Hebrew *foreign woman*

Prov 8:6-9, 15, 20 [Wisdom:] *Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right, ⁷for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. ⁸All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. ⁹They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. ... ¹⁵By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; ... ²⁰I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, ...*

One who is wise, in accordance with Wisdom, speaks and does what is righteous and just.



Prov 15:21 Folly is a joy to him who lacks sense, but *a man of understanding walks straight ahead.*

Walking “straight ahead” means doing “what is right” (GNT, NCV).

Prov 24:23 These also are *sayings of the wise. Partiality in judging is not good.*

Those who are wise abide by such “sayings of the wise” – avoiding such unjust things as bias in judging.

1Ki 3:9, 28 Give your servant therefore *an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?*
... ²⁸And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that *the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.*

1Ki 10:8-9 Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and *hear your wisdom!* ⁹Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king, *that you may execute justice and righteousness.*

The Queen of Sheba appears to associate executing “justice and righteousness” (v. 9) with wisdom (v. 8).

Protection . . .

See also:

- [Prov 2:16](#)

Prov 1:33 [Wisdom:] ... but *whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.*

Prov 2:11 ... *discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, ...*

Prov 4:6 *Do not forsake her* [Wisdom], *and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.*

Prov 3:23-26 *Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble.* ²⁴*If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.* ²⁵*Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin^o of the wicked, when it comes,* ²⁶*for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.*

^o Hebrew *storm*

Adhering to “sound wisdom and discernment” (v. 21) leads to the blessings listed here.

Prov 11:9 With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but *by knowledge the righteous are delivered.*

Prov 14:3 By the mouth of a fool comes a rod for his back,^p but *the lips of the wise will preserve them.*

^p Or *In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride*

Prov 22:3, 12 *The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.* ... ¹²*The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge, but he overthrows the words of the traitor.*

Some interpret v. 12a as saying that God watches over those (cf. CEV) who have knowledge; as such it is pertinent to this subsection. Alternatively it may be meaning that God vindicates the truth (cf. GNT).

Prov 28:26 Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but *he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.*

Ecc 7:12 *For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.*

This appears to portray wisdom as providing more effective or more complete protection than money, probably alluding to aspects of life in which money cannot protect one.

Prov 4:11-12 *I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.* ¹²*When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.*

Living in the way of wisdom helps to make the path of one’s life relatively free of obstacles and pitfalls, with v. 12 implying that nothing will “hold you back; you will not be overwhelmed” (NCV™).

Prov 3:17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and *all her paths are peace.*

Living in accordance with wisdom brings one peace and safety (cf. GNT, NCV).

. . . and life

See also:

- [Ecc 7:12](#)

Ps 119:144 Your testimonies are righteous forever; *give me understanding that I may live.*

Prov 3:1-2 *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments,* ²*for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.*



Prov 3:16, 18, 21-22 *Long life is in her [Wisdom's] right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ...¹⁸She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed. ...²¹My son, do not lose sight of these—keep sound wisdom and discretion,²²and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.* 

Verses 16, 18 speak of Wisdom personified. The metaphor “tree of life” (v. 18) – probably alluding to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden – portrays wisdom as a source of a full and enduring life. The other references to “life” in this subsection likewise have this in view.

Prov 4:10-11, 13, 20-22 Hear, my son, and *accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.* ¹¹*I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.*  ... ¹³*Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.*  ... ²⁰*My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.* ²¹*Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.* ²²*For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their^a flesh.* 

^a Hebrew *his*

Prov 8:35-36 [Wisdom:] For *whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD,* ³⁶*but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.* 

Prov 9:11 [Wisdom:] For *by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life.* 

Prov 13:14 *The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.* 

Prov 16:22 *Good sense is a fountain of life to him who has it, but the instruction of fools is folly.* 

Prov 15:24 *The path of life leads upward for the prudent, that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.* 

The wise walk the “path of life” – a path that leads upward to life (cf. CEV, GNT), as opposed to downwards to the grave.

✦ Wisdom gives one sound hope for the future:

Prov 24:14 Know that wisdom is such to your soul; *if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.* 

Strength and success

See also:

▪ **Prov 24:3** 

Prov 8:14 [Wisdom:] I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; *I have strength.* 

Prov 24:5 *A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, ...* 

Ecc 7:19 *Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city.* 

Prov 21:22 *A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.* 

Prov 30:24-28 *Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise: ²⁵the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; ²⁶the rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs; ²⁷the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; ²⁸the lizard you can take in your hands, yet it is in kings' palaces.* 

Wisdom enables small creatures to succeed in accomplishing or doing things seemingly beyond their strength or ability. The same can be said about wise people.

Ecc 9:14-16, 18 *There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it.* ¹⁵*But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.* Yet no one remembered that poor man. ¹⁶*But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.*  ... ¹⁸*Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.* 

Wisdom is more powerful than military might (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Ecc 10:10 *If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed.* ^r 

^r Or *wisdom is an advantage for success*

Prov 16:14, 23 A king's wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it.  ... ²³*The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.* 

Prov 20:5 The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out. 



A person's purposes are like deep waters in that they are hard to fathom or discern, even to the person themselves. But a wise counselor can successfully draw them out.

Dan 2:14 Then *Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon.* 

Daniel's wise response enabled him to persuade Arioch to not immediately put him and the other wise men to death, and so allowed him the opportunity to save himself and the others – which he did with God's help (cf. vv. 17-49).

Acts 6:10 But *they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.* 

Wisdom in speech successfully counteracts one's adversaries.

Prosperity

See also:

- [Prov 3:16](#) ↓ 

Prov 8:18-21 [Wisdom:] *Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness.* ¹⁹*My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver.* ²⁰*I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice,* ²¹*granting an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries.* 

Prov 14:24 *The crown of the wise is their wealth,* but the folly of fools brings folly. 

Prov 21:20 *Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling,* but a foolish man devours it. 

Prov 24:3-4 *By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; ⁴by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.* 

The "house" may be a literal house, or it may symbolize a family or possibly an individual's life. Note that somewhat similarly 14:1 says, "The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down."

Ezek 28:4 ...*by your wisdom and your understanding you have made wealth for yourself, and have gathered gold and silver into your treasuries;* ... 

The King of Tyre is being addressed. Note that in the end his wisdom was of no use as his wealth caused him to become proud (cf. v. 5) and so led to his downfall.

Prov 17:2 *A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.* 

Honor

See also:

- [Prov 8:18](#) ↑ 

Prov 3:16 Long life is in her [Wisdom's] right hand; *in her left hand are riches and honor.* 

Prov 3:35 *The wise will inherit honor,* but fools get^s disgrace. 

^s The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Prov 4:8-9 *Prize her [Wisdom] highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.* ⁹*She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.* 

A "garland" is a wreath, signifying honor. As such v. 9 speaks of wisdom bringing those who possess her, a spiritual beauty in conjunction with honor.

Prov 12:8 *A man is commended according to his good sense,* but one of twisted mind is despised. 

‡ **The value of a good name:**

Prov 22:1 *A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.* 

Similarly Ecclesiastes 7:1a says, "A good name is better than precious ointment ..."

Further blessings of wisdom

Prov 3:17 *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* 

Living in accordance with wisdom makes life pleasant – and produces peace.

Prov 8:17, 32, 34-35 [Wisdom:] *I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.*  ... ³²*And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways.*  ... ³⁴*Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.* ³⁵*For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD, ...* 

Verse 17a implies that Wisdom embraces those who love her, bringing or bestowing all her benefits on them.



Prov 9:12 *If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.* 

The first clause suggests that wise people are rewarded by their wisdom (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Prov 13:15 *Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin.*^t 

^t Probable reading (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate); Hebrew *is rugged, or is an enduring rut*

Favor or respect (cf. GNT, NLT) from people is in view here, rather than “favor from the LORD” (**Prov 8:35** ↑).

Prov 14:35 *A servant who deals wisely has the king’s favor, but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully.* 

Prov 15:20 *A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother.* 

The assertion that children who are wise bring joy to their parents is also mentioned elsewhere in Proverbs (cf. 23:15-16, 24-25; 27:11; 29:3). See also . . . *and children can bring their parents much joy*, p. 1715.

Prov 19:8 *Whoever gets sense loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will discover good.* 

The first clause indicates that wisdom is good for one’s soul.

Prov 19:11 *Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.* 

Prov 22:17-19 *Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge,¹⁸ for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. ¹⁹That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you.* 

Further to the benefit mentioned in v. 18, it can be inferred from v. 19 that wisdom leads to trusting in God.

Prov 24:13-14 *My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. ¹⁴Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.* 

Just as honey was/is considered good for one’s body and is sweet to one’s taste (v. 13), wisdom is both good for and pleasant to one’s soul (v. 14).

Ecc 7:11 *Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun.* 

Note that “those who see the sun” refers to living people.

Ecc 8:1 *Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man’s wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.* 

The last sentence appears to indicate that wisdom brings cheerfulness and lightens an otherwise hard or dour demeanor. Note that there are variations on this interpretation.

Dan 12:3 *And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above;^u and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.* 

^u Hebrew *the expanse*; compare Genesis 1:6-8

The clause “shine like the brightness of the sky above” – as with “like the stars forever and ever” – most likely refers to the glorification of God’s people in the afterlife.

James 3:13 *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.* 

Wisdom brings meekness.

‡ **Those who are wise win souls:**

Prov 11:30 *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.* 

Note that there is doubt over the Hebrew text of the clause in question (cf. GNT, NRSV).

Note: Living without wisdom has harmful consequences

See also:

- *Results of foolishness . . .*, p. 1661
- . . . *Ultimately, foolishness results in ruin – even death*, p. 1661

Prov 1:24-27 [Wisdom:] *Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, ²⁵because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, ²⁶I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, ²⁷when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.* 

Prov 1:28-32 [Wisdom:] *Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. ²⁹Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, ³⁰would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, ³¹therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. ³²For the simple are*



killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; ... 

Prov 8:36 [Wisdom:] ... but *he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.* 

Hos 4:14 I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with prostitutes and sacrifice with cult prostitutes, and *a people without understanding shall come to ruin.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



Common Relationships

I. Family Relationships

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I. Family Relationships

The Bible contains discerning insights and directions regarding relationships with those who are closest to us. As such these teachings are among the ones which are the most often applicable to our lives.

a) Prologue: Getting Married

Subsections

- Issues in deciding whether to stay single or marry: General; . . .
- . . . Forsaking marriage for God and Jesus Christ
- Do not marry outside of God's people – particularly as it can result in being led astray
- A person should have only one spouse
- Remarriage and adultery
- Note: Finding a good wife is a great blessing – a gift from God . . .
- . . . but a quarrelsome or ungodly wife is troublesome

Issues in deciding whether to stay single or marry: General; . . .

See also:

- [Matt 19:3-12](#) ↴

1Cor 7:1-2, 8-9 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ²But *because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.*  ... ⁸*To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am.* ⁹*But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.* 

In v. 2 Paul apparently is referring to extensive sexual sin that was prevalent in Corinth at the time. He raises this immorality as a reason to have one's own spouse, to satisfy one's sexual desires (cf. vv. 3-5) and so to help avoid the immorality. In v. 8, Paul may have in mind staying single so as to be devoted to God's kingdom (cf. [v. 7](#) ↴; [vv. 32-35](#) ↴) and/or for one's own sake (cf. [vv. 26-28](#) ↴; [39-40](#) ↴). Regarding Paul's advice

in v. 9, obviously people should marry someone whom they are also compatible with, rather than simply someone for whom they "burn with passion".

1Cor 7:25-28 Now concerning^a the betrothed,^b I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶*I think that in view of the present^c distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.* ²⁷*Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.* ²⁸But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman^d marries, she has not sinned. *Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.* 

^a The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1

^b Greek *virgins*

^c Or *impending*

^d Greek *virgin*; also verse 34

The "present distress" (v. 26) may have been a time of harsh persecution or a general social upheaval – both of which could bring "troubles" (v. 28) to couples in particular. The subsequent verses (vv. 27-28) may then contain Paul's advice and comments regarding such a time, rather than teaching that is as pertinent to all situations. Alternatively, the "present distress" has been taken to refer to the continual antagonism of the world against Christians and even to allude to the end of the age (cf. vv. 29-31).

1Cor 7:36-38 *If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed,^e if his^f passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.* ³⁷*But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well.* ³⁸*So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.* 

^e Greek *virgin*; also verses 37, 38

^f Or *her*

In v. 36, "not behaving properly toward his betrothed" possibly refers to a situation where "she is getting along in years" and it may well seem unfair to not marry her. Alternatively it may be speaking of a man having trouble controlling his passions (cf. [v. 9](#) ↑), which may well be in view with the expression "having his desire under control" (v. 37).

1Cor 7:39-40 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰*Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is.* And I think that I too have the Spirit of God. 



Paul's judgment that a widow would be happier if she did not remarry appears to correlate with his opinion regarding others who are single getting married (cf. v. 8 ↑; v. 28b ↑; v. 32 ↓).

1Tim 5:11-14 But refuse to enroll younger widows, for *when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry*¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.



The phrase "their former faith" (v. 12) may well refer to a pledge (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV), most likely some pledge of dedication to Christ apparently taken by widows on being enrolled on a list (v. 11) of widows cared for by the church. To marry afterwards would render them guilty of breaking such a pledge (v. 12). Considering their sensual passions (v. 11) and the idleness that was often the lot of young widows in Paul's day (v. 13), Paul thought it best for younger widows to remarry.

... Forsaking marriage for God and Jesus Christ

Matt 19:3-12 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"⁴ He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."⁷ They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?"⁸ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."⁹ And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."¹⁰ The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry."¹¹ But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given."¹² For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and *there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.*"

⁸ Some manuscripts add *and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery*; other manuscripts *except for*

sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery

In v. 11 "this saying" refers either to Jesus' teaching in vv. 6-9 or to the disciples' statement in v. 10 (the position a good number of commentators take). If the former view is correct, then v. 11 and the final statement in v. 12 are most likely referring to accepting the teaching about marrying with the firm intention to stay as one and not to divorce (vv. 6-9). If the latter view is correct, then these statements are probably referring to accepting the teaching about not marrying (vv. 10, 12) – primarily that those who are able to forgo marriage for the sake of being wholly committed to God's kingdom should do so.

1Cor 7:7 *I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.*

Paul appears to be meaning that he wishes that all believers were unmarried like him (cf. v. 8 ↑) – for the sake of being devoted to God – with the gift to contentedly remain so. In saying this he acknowledges that believers have different gifts. Such a gift to contentedly remain unmarried is often referred to as "the gift of celibacy".

1Cor 7:32-35 *I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.³³ But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife,³⁴ and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.³⁵ I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.*

Do not marry outside of God's people – particularly as it can result in being led astray

See also:

- Deut 17:17 ↓

2Cor 6:14-15 *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial?^h Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?*

^h Greek *Beliar*

Although very applicable to marriage (as per their inclusion here), bear in mind that the context shows that these verses are not actually referring specifically to marriage. Note that "Belial" is a term for Satan.



1Cor 7:39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, *she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.*

The phrase “only in the Lord” indicates that she should only marry a Christian (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV).

Deut 7:3-4 *You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods.* Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

Such warnings to Israel regarding intermarriage with pagan nations are at least to some extent applicable to believers marrying outside of God’s people, i.e. marrying a non-believer. For in doing so one runs the risk of compromising one’s devotion to God.

Ex 34:13-16 You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim ¹⁴(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), ¹⁵lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁶and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.

Verse 16 suggests that inevitability intermarriage would lead to the Israelites worshiping the gods of such peoples, as some of the following references illustrate.

1Ki 11:1-6 Now King Solomon *loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. ³He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. ⁴For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done.*

Ezra 9:1-2 After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, “*The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the*

Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. ²*For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy raceⁱ has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost.*”

ⁱ Hebrew offspring

Ezra 10:2, 11 And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: “*We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this.*” ... ¹¹*Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.”*

Such was the need to keep the holy people (cf. [Ezra 9:2](#) ↑) pure from corruptive foreign influences, Ezra told those who had intermarried with foreigners to separate themselves from their foreigners wives. In the light of 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, such a command would appear to be not necessarily applicable to believers who have married unbelievers – at least not where the believer married prior to coming to faith.

Neh 13:26-27 *Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. ²⁷Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?*

A person should have only one spouse

See also:

- [Rom 7:2-3](#) ↓
- [A husband and wife should be as one, which involves sexual union](#), p. 1695
- [Spouses and their love belong exclusively to each other](#), p. 1701

1Cor 7:2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, *each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.*

One can deduce from this that each man and woman should have only one spouse.

1Tim 3:2, 12 Therefore an overseerⁱ must *be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^k sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,* ... ¹²*Let deacons*



each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 

^j Or *bishop*; Greek *episkopos*; a similar term occurs in verse 1

^k Or *a man of one woman*; also verse 12

It can be inferred from these direct prohibitions against polygamy for leaders (cf. [Titus 1:6 ↓](#)), that it is wrong for all believers. The verses are from passages specifying what is required of leaders, which basically contain things that are relevant to all believers, things in which leaders are to be exemplary.

Titus 1:6 ... if anyone is *above reproach, the husband of one wife*,^l and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 

^l Or *a man of one woman*

‡ The prohibition against kings taking many wives:

Deut 17:17 And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. 

This probably has primarily in view the problem of kings marrying foreign princesses, usually for political reasons, who would introduce their idols and false gods – tending to lead the king astray (as seen in the previous subsection).

Remarriage and adultery

The following verses teach that remarriage after divorce is adulterous, apart from where marital unfaithfulness is concerned (though some would debate this) and presumably also where a former spouse has died. (1 Corinthians 7:15 may indicate a further exception; see the comment on it below.) Such teaching applies to both one who divorces their spouse and one who is divorced by their spouse – and also for one who marries a divorced person (cf. [Matt 5:32 ↓](#)). Mark 10:11-12 indicates that the teaching applies to both male and females. Note that there is some debate as to what the term “sexual immorality” ([Matt 5:32 ↓](#); [Matt 19:9 ↓](#)) precisely refers in this context. It quite likely includes adultery and may encompass some other sexual sins.

Matt 5:32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. 

The assertion that a man who divorces his wife actually “makes her commit adultery”, may have in view the need and inevitability of remarriage for a woman in ancient times in order to have a means of provision.

Matt 19:9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”^m 

^mSome manuscripts add *and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery*; other manuscripts *except for sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery*

Mark 10:11-12 And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, ¹²and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” 

Rom 7:2-3 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.ⁿ ³Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. 

ⁿ Greek law concerning the husband

1Cor 7:10-13, 15 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹(but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. ¹²To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.  ... ¹⁵But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you^o to peace. 

^o Some manuscripts *us*

The phrase “not enslaved” (v. 15) may only mean that the believing spouse is not under any obligation to continue living with their unbelieving spouse. Some commentators go further saying that it means they are no longer bound to the marriage covenant, and so are free to marry again. As such, to do so would not be adultery. See also the comment on [1Cor 7:10-15](#) in [Avoid divorce – it is contrary to God’s purposes](#), p. 1699.

‡ The OT law on remarrying a former spouse who had been remarried in the meantime:

Deut 24:1-4 When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, ²and if she goes and becomes another



man's wife,³ and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife,⁴ then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the LORD. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance. 

This law may have had in view that remarrying a former spouse, who had since been remarried, would technically be adultery. It also underlined the seriousness of divorce. Note that Jesus' teaching above in Matthew 19:9 has in view a question relating to the term "some indecency" (v. 1), quite possibly correlating it with "marital unfaithfulness" (although in OT times presumably this did not include adultery, for which the consequence was death). Jesus indicates that Moses was not permitting people to freely divorce and remarry; divorce was only permissible under certain circumstances. See comments on Matthew 19:3-8 in *Avoid divorce – it is contrary to God's purposes*, p. 1699.

Note: Finding a good wife is a great blessing – a gift from God . . .

Prov 31:10-21, 25-31 ^p *An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.* ¹¹*The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.* ¹²*She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.* ¹³*She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.* ¹⁴*She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar.* ¹⁵*She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.* ¹⁶*She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.* ¹⁷*She dresses herself^a with strength and makes her arms strong.* ¹⁸*She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.* ¹⁹*She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.* ²⁰*She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.* ²¹*She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.^r*  ²⁵*Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.* ²⁶*She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.* ²⁷*She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.* ²⁸*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:* ²⁹*"Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."* ³⁰*Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.* ³¹*Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.* 

^p Verses 10-31 are an acrostic poem, each verse beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet

^q Hebrew *She girds her loins*

^r Or *in double thickness*

Note that vv. 28-31 indicate that a husband (and children) of a noble wife should praise her – one aspect of the reward she richly deserves (v. 31a).

Prov 12:4a *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband ...* 

Prov 18:22 *He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.* 

A good or noble wife is in view here. Such a wife is a "treasure" (CEV, NLT), and indicative of the LORD's "favor" – which implies that a good wife is "a gift from the LORD" (CEV).

Prov 19:14 *House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.* 

The contrast of a prudent wife with houses and wealth – as being from God in comparison to simply being inherited from parents – implies that such a wife is a great blessing like houses and wealth, but much more so.

Gen 2:18-22 Then the LORD God said, *"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for^s him."* ¹⁹Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed^t every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. *But for Adam^u there was not found a helper fit for him.* ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made^v into a woman and brought her to the man. 

^s Or *corresponding to*; also verse 20

^t Or *And out of the ground the LORD God formed*

^u Or *the man*

^v Hebrew *built*

Woman is a "helper fit for him" (vv. 18, 20) – and vice versa. This phrase is indicative of why a good spouse is a great blessing. The passage of course tells unequivocally of the first wife being from God.



... but a quarrelsome or ungodly wife is troublesome

Prov 21:9, 19 *It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.* ... ¹⁹*It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.*

Prov 27:15-16 *A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike; ¹⁶to restrain her is to restrain the wind or to grasp^w oil in one's right hand.*

^w Hebrew to meet with

Prov 12:4 *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones.*

Prov 14:1 *The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down.*

The phrase "her own hands" refers to the hands of "folly". In view of the first half of the verse, the second half alludes to a foolish woman bringing disaster on her household (cf. AMP, CEV, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).

† Urged on by his wife, Ahab committed great evil – and was punished accordingly:

1Ki 21:20-21, 25-26 *Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. ²¹Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. ... ²⁵(There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. ²⁶He acted very abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the people of Israel.)*

Ahab's ungodly wife Jezebel had encouraged him in committing evil (v. 25). Ahab's evil acts brought God's judgment on him (vv. 20-21) and on Jezebel (cf. v. 23) for her part in it.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Spouses (I): General**Subsections**

- A husband and wife should be as one, which involves sexual union
- Husbands should love their wives
- Wives should submit to their husbands
- Do not commit adultery – which brings God's judgment . . .
- . . . Warnings against being enticed by an adulteress – which leads to ruin
- Avoid divorce – it is contrary to God's purposes

A husband and wife should be as one, which involves sexual union

See also:

- Eph 5:28-29

Gen 2:22-24 *And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made^x into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."^y ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

^x Hebrew built

^y The Hebrew words for woman (*ishshah*) and man (*ish*) sound alike

Just as originally the man and the woman were of the one flesh (vv. 22-23), so a husband and wife will be united as "one flesh" (v. 24). The term "one flesh" appears to encompass a oneness in spirit, and is signified and expressed through sexual bonding. The use of the term also implies a lifelong, monogamous relationship.

Matt 19:4-6 *He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"?⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*

Jesus uses the two quotations (vv. 4-5) – from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 – to show that God created male and female to be "one" (v. 6). This oneness is seen in that the man should "hold fast to his wife" (v. 5) and by them being "one flesh" (v. 5) and "joined together" (v. 6).



Eph 5:31-32 *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*³²*This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

Particularly given the context (cf. vv. 25, 28-30, 33), one can infer from vv. 31-32 that the oneness of the union of a husband and wife should reflect the exemplary oneness of the union of Christ and his church.

Mal 2:15 *Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?^z And what was the one God^a seeking?^b Godly offspring. So guard yourselves^c in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.*

^z Hebrew *in it*

^a Hebrew *the one*

^b Or *And not one has done this who has a portion of the Spirit. And what was that one seeking?*

^c Or *So take care*; also verse 16

As reflected by the text notes, this verse is difficult to translate. Spouses from amongst God’s people are primarily in view here. The first part of the verse may imply that God has made such a couple one both in flesh and spirit (cf. NCV, GNT). As one with his wife, the final statement concludes that a husband should remain faithful to her. Note that although “Godly offspring” is usually understood to be referring to children produced by such a union of husband and wife, it may in fact refer to the union itself as being an “offspring” of God (cf. text note), he having produced this union.

1Cor 7:3-5 *The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.*⁴*For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*⁵*Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

That each spouse has authority over their spouse’s body rather than their own (v. 4) engenders oneness in the marital union. Note that the expression “come together” (v. 5b) may well allude to the oneness that sexual intercourse brings.

Husbands should love their wives

Note that Titus 2:4 in the following subsection points out that women are likewise to love their husbands.

Eph 5:25, 28-30, 33 *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ...²⁸*In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own*

*bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*²⁹*For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,*³⁰*because we are members of his body.*

...³³*However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

The directive for husbands to love their wives “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (v. 25) is both daunting and inspirational. It calls for a love that is ever persistent and is all surpassing, even to the point of sacrificing one’s life. The corresponding directive for husbands to love their wives “as their own bodies” (v. 28) is reflective of them having become one, with the wife being in a sense part of her husband’s body (and vice versa) – just as the church is part of Christ’s body, and so is cared for by him (v. 29).

Col 3:19 *Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.*

Eccl 9:9 *Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.*

Note the instruction to enjoy life with one’s wife.

Hos 3:1 *And the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.”*

During Hosea’s ministry, God uses Hosea’s relationship with his unfaithful wife to illustrate aspects of his own relationship with Israel, his unfaithful people. It is in this context that he directs Hosea to show love to his unfaithful wife again; the command is not mandatory for all such situations. However the stipulation to love his wife “even as the LORD loves the children of Israel” (cf. Eph 5:25) does give an exemplary standard for all husbands to aspire to.

Gen 24:67 *Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.*

1Sam 1:5 *But to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb.*^d

^d Syriac; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

Septuagint *And, although he loved Hannah, he would give Hannah only one portion, because the LORD had closed her womb*



‡ **Husbands should be understanding and show honor to their wives:**

1Pet 3:7 Likewise, *husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you^e of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.* 📖

^e Some manuscripts *since you are joint heirs*

Similarly Ephesians 5:33b above says, “let the wife see that she respects her husband”.

Wives should submit to their husbands

See also:

▪ [Eph 5:33](#) ↑

Eph 5:22-24 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* ²³*For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* ²⁴*Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* 📖

Such submission should be voluntary and willing. The corresponding authority of the husband is not about control and should only be practiced in a Christ-like manner and in love, which should characterize all he does in relating to his wife.

Col 3:18 *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* 📖

Titus 2:4-5 ... and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and *submissive to their own husbands*, that the word of God may not be reviled. 📖

1Pet 3:1-2, 5-6 Likewise, *wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ²when they see your respectful and pure conduct.* 📖 ... ⁵*For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.* 📖

In v. 2 “respectful” may refer to respect for God (cf. CEV, NCV, NIRV), rather than for husbands, though the latter alternative is not unsupported (cf. AMP). In v. 6 the final sentence may well be referring to wives submitting to their husbands, which would then be what is primarily in view with the phrase “do good”. As such the last clause would probably refer to wives not fearing their husbands (cf. NLT), turning from any fear that might deter them from doing good. Regarding “this is

how” (v. 5a), see the comment on [1Pet 3:3-5](#) under *Do not dress lavishly for outward appearances*, p. 1893.

Gen 3:16 To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for^f *your husband, and he shall rule over you.*” 📖

^f Or *against*

This verse contains the consequences of the original sin for the woman. Thus her husband’s rule or authority over her is the consequence of sin – and so presumably is also her corresponding required submission. The clause, “he shall rule over you,” possibly entails a degree of anguish under the husband’s rule – which is consistent with it being a consequence of sin. Note that, “Your desire shall be for your husband,” likely refers to the woman’s attraction or devotion to her husband, but some interpret it to mean a desire to usurp or breakout of the husband’s leadership (cf. NLT text note).

‡ **The authority of the man, accompanied by mutual dependence:**

1Cor 11:3, 7-12 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, *the head of a wife^g is her husband*, and the head of Christ is God. 📖 ... ⁷For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but *woman is the glory of man.* ⁸*For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.* ⁹*Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.* ¹⁰*That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.*^h ¹¹*Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman;* ¹²*for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman.* And all things are from God. 📖

^g Greek *gunē*. This term may refer to a *woman* or a *wife*, depending on the context

^h Or *messengers*, that is, people sent to observe and report

The phrase “woman is the glory of man” (v. 7) is interpreted in a variety of ways. In the light of the subsequent two verses, it may well be referring to woman originally coming “from man” (v. 8), and being created “for man” (v. 9). The “symbol of authority on her head” (v. 10) refers to a head covering worn in public worship (cf. vv. 4-7); it was to signify a woman being “under her husband’s authority” (GNT). Note that there are varying interpretations regarding the reference to “the angels” (v. 10). It may be speaking of their presence and witness to our actions as further reason to ensure that our actions are proper.



Do not commit adultery – which brings God’s judgment . . .

See also:

- *Remarriage and adultery*, p. 1693
- *Spouses and their love belong exclusively to each other*, p. 1701

Note that the instructions in this and the following subsection are also relevant to the unmarried, who should not commit adultery by having sexual relations with a married person.

Ex 20:14 *You shall not commit adultery.*

Lev 18:20 *And you shall not lie sexually with your neighbor’s wife and so make yourself unclean with her.*

Lev 20:10 *If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.*

ⁱ Hebrew repeats *if a man commits adultery with the wife of*

Jer 5:7-9 How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, *they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores.* ⁸*They were well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor’s wife.* ⁹*Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD; and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?*

Jer 29:21, 23 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying a lie to you in my name: Behold, *I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall strike them down before your eyes.* ... ²³*because they have done an outrageous thing in Israel, they have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives, and they have spoken in my name lying words that I did not command them. I am the one who knows, and I am witness, declares the LORD.*’

Mal 3:5 *Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.*

1Cor 6:9 *Or do you not know that the unrighteousⁱ will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^k ...*

ⁱ Or *wrongdoers*

^k The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

Heb 13:4 *Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

. . . Warnings against being enticed by an adulteress – which leads to ruin

The following references do not speak a lot about exactly how being enticed by an adulteress leads to one’s ruin. Such reasons would include: a husband’s revenge (cf. **Prov 6:34-35** ↓), blackmail, shame (cf. **Job 31:11** ↓; **Prov 6:33** ↓), loss of reputation, the breakdown of one’s own marriage and family relationships, and particularly punishment from God (cf. **Job 31:11-12** ↓). Any of these could directly cause or contribute to the ruin and associated unsavory results spoken of below.

Job 31:9-12 *If my heart has been enticed toward a woman, and I have lain in wait at my neighbor’s door, ¹⁰then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down on her. ¹¹For that would be a heinous crime; that would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges; ¹²for that would be a fire that consumes as far as Abaddon, and it would burn to the root all my increase.*

Particularly in view of the subsequent clause, “woman” (v. 9a) probably refers to an adulteress – the wife of a neighbor (v. 9b). “Abaddon” (v. 12) may have God’s judgment and a final destruction in view.

Prov 2:16-19 So [by wisdom] you will be delivered from the forbidden^l woman, from *the adulteress^m with her smooth words,* ¹⁷*who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God;* ¹⁸*for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed;*ⁿ ¹⁹*none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.*

^l Hebrew *strange*

^m Hebrew *foreign woman*

ⁿ Hebrew *to the Rephaim*

Prov 5:3-11 *For the lips of a forbidden^o woman drip honey, and her speech^p is smoother than oil, ⁴but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. ⁵Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to^q Sheol; ⁶she does*



not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it. ⁷And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. ⁸Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, ⁹lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, ¹⁰lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, ¹¹and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, ...

^o Hebrew *strange*; also verse 20

^p Hebrew *palate*

^q Hebrew *lay hold of*

Verse 5 may be referring to the consequences for anyone who commits adultery with the adulteress (cf. CEV, NLT), but it could also be describing her own fate (cf. NCV); it is applicable to both. Note that “death” and “Sheol” (v. 5) may well be metaphors for a ruined life or spiritual death – as is the case elsewhere in this subsection. Verse 6 shows the ignorance of an adulteress to the depravity of her ways, a concept apparent in 30:20 – “This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, “I have done no wrong.” In view of v. 10, v. 9 may be speaking of giving to others the best of what one’s strength and years have produced. Alternatively it may refer to being subject to another, such as a vengeful husband or a blackmailer.

Prov 5:20-21 *Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?^r ²¹For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders^s all his paths.*

^r Hebrew *a foreign woman*

^s Or *makes level*

Prov 6:25-29, 32-35 *Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; ²⁶for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread,^t but a married woman^u hunts down a precious life. ²⁷Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? ²⁸Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? ²⁹So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; none who touches her will go unpunished. ... ³²He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. ³³He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away. ³⁴For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge. ³⁵He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts.*

^t Or (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate) *for a prostitute leaves a man with nothing but a loaf of bread*

^u Hebrew *a man’s wife*

Prov 7:21-23, 25-27 *With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. ²²All at*

once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast^v ²³till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life. ... ²⁵Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, ²⁶for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. ²⁷Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

^v Probable reading (compare Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac); Hebrew *as an anklet for the discipline of a fool*

Verses 21-23 speak of an adulteress seducing “a young man lacking sense” (v. 7).

Prov 22:14 *The mouth of forbidden^w women is a deep pit; he with whom the LORD is angry will fall into it.*

^w Hebrew *strange*

This verse suggests either: that the seductive words of an adulteress along with the horrid results of adultery can be used by God as punishment for ungodly persons; or that one who is under God’s wrath is left vulnerable to such consequences (cf. **Ecc 7:26** ↓), with possibly an adulterer being primarily in view.

Prov 23:26-28 *My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe^x my ways. ²⁷For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress^y is a narrow well. ²⁸She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind.*

^x Or *delight in*

^y Hebrew *a foreign woman*

Ecc 7:26 *And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.*

This does not refer specifically to an adulteress, but an adulteress may well be primarily in view. What the verse says is certainly very much applicable to one.

⚡ **Lust is a form of adultery:**

Matt 5:27-28 *You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

Avoid divorce – it is contrary to God’s purposes

Mal 2:13-16 *And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. ¹⁴But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the LORD*



was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?^z And what was the one God^a seeking?^b Godly offspring. So guard yourselves^c in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. ¹⁶“For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her,^d says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers^e his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.” 

^z Hebrew in it

^a Hebrew the one

^b Or *And not one has done this who has a portion of the Spirit. And what was that one seeking?*

^c Or *So take care*; also verse 16

^d Hebrew *who hates and divorces*

^e Probable meaning (compare Septuagint and Deuteronomy 24:1-4); or *“The LORD, the God of Israel, says that he hates divorce, and him who covers*

The expression “covers his garment with violence” (v. 16) appears to figuratively emphasize the wrongfulness of divorce, equating it with defiling oneself with violence. Note that v. 14 refers the “covenant” of marriage; it may also be referred to as a covenant in Proverbs 2:17 and Ezekiel 16:8. (See also the comment on v. 15 above in *A husband and wife should be as one, which involves sexual union*, p. 1695.)

Matt 19:3-8 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that *he who created them from the beginning made them male and female*,⁵ and said, “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*”?⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”⁷ They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”⁸ He said to them, “*Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.*” 

The implication of the two OT quotations (vv. 4-5), as made clear in v. 6, is that God has purposed that husband and wife be one – which divorce is contrary to. Moses permitted divorce because of people’s “hard-hearted wickedness” (NLT), with their innate unwillingness or incapacity to embrace his teaching (cf. GNT, NCV). But the permitting of divorce was not part of God’s original purpose (cf. CEV, NLT), and as such falls well short of what is ideal.

1Cor 7:10-15 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): *the wife should not separate from her husband*¹¹ (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to

her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

¹²To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that *if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.*¹³ *If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.*¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. ¹⁵*But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you^f to peace.* 

^f Some manuscripts *us*

In v.10, “not I, but the Lord” indicates an instruction given by Jesus Christ; whereas “I, not the Lord” (v. 12) introduces an instruction of Paul’s own – which is still authoritative. In v. 11, “but if she does” indicates that separation – and perhaps divorce – is permissible, although against God’s higher purposes (vv. 10, 11b). Regarding v. 14, most commentators think it does not mean that the unbelieving spouse is purified or saved through the believing spouse – although the GNT does say that such a spouse “is made acceptable to God”. It may be teaching that because the unbeliever is one in body with a spouse who is in Christ, they are sanctified in a “positional” sense, in a union that is set apart for God. Children of such a union are likewise holy. Note that this verse should not be taken as condoning marrying non-believers; the context suggests that Paul primarily has in view the situation where the believing spouse has become a believer after having already been married.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Spouses (II): Romantic Love

The vast majority of verses in this section are taken from Song of Songs, which traditionally was considered an allegory for the relationship of Christ and his bride, the Church – or of God and Israel. Modern commentators more often interpret it as simply portraying the relationship between two lovers – possibly King Solomon and one of his wives (cf. 1:1) – which is the interpretation applied here. A number of commentators view sections of the book as encompassing: the courtship (1:2-3:5); the wedding (3:6-5:1); and the marriage (5:2-8:4). The exact meanings of many of its verses are disputed.



Subsections

- The marvel of love
- Spouses and their love belong exclusively to each other
- Further insights on love
- Examples and declarations of love
- Adoration of lover's beauty
- Desire to give oneself to one's lover
- Further desire for and enjoyment of sexual intimacy with one's lover

The marvel of love

Prov 30:18-19 *Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand:* ¹⁹the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and *the way of a man with a virgin.*

The “way of a man with a virgin” (v. 19) is the climax of this list of amazing things that were beyond the writer’s comprehension. It appears to refer to courtship and “the way a man and a woman fall in love” (NCV™; cf. CEV, GNT).

Song 4:10 *How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!*

Love is truly beautiful.

Song 8:6-7 Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for *love is strong as death, jealousy^g is fierce as the grave.^h Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD.⁷ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, heⁱ would be utterly despised.*

^g **8:6** Or *ardor*

^h **8:6** Hebrew as *Sheol*

ⁱ **8:7** Or *it*

The metaphor “the very flame of the LORD” (v. 6b) indicates that the aforementioned love between spouses and jealousy for the relationship come from God. Verse 7b indicates that love cannot be bought. It points to love’s incalculable worth and shows that it is beyond the realm of riches.

✦ A loving spouse can bring contentment:

Song 8:10 I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then *I was in his eyes as one who finds^j peace.*

^j Or *brings out*

This speaks of the peace and contentment (cf. GNT, NIV, NLT) that a loving physical relationship can bring.

Spouses and their love belong exclusively to each other

See also:

- [Song 8:6](#)
- *Do not commit adultery – which brings God’s judgment . . .*, p. 1698
- *. . . Warnings against being enticed by an adulteress – which leads to ruin*, p. 1698

Song 2:16 *My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes^k among the lilies.*

^k **2:16** Or *he pastures his flock*

Song 7:10 *I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.*

Prov 5:15-19 *Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. ¹⁶Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. ¹⁸Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, ¹⁹a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated^l always in her love.*

^l Hebrew *be led astray*; also verse 20

There are different interpretations of the imagery in verses 16-17, but it is clear that their basic thrust is that one should enjoy sexual relationships exclusively with one’s spouse. This also appears to be the main thought behind the rest of the passage.

Song 4:12 *A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.*

One’s sensual delights should be sealed exclusively for one’s spouse.

Further insights on love

Song 2:7 I adjure you,^m O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, *that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.*

^m **2:7** That is, I put you on oath; so throughout the Song

One should not try to stimulate or forcibly ignite love; such love is at best superficial and not true love. Love is spontaneous and instinctive; it comes when “it pleases” (AMP, NKJV) – when “it is ready” (CEV, NCV, NRSV).

Song 5:1a I came to my garden, *my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.*



The designation “sister” (cf. v. 2; [Song 4:12](#) ↑; [Song 4:9](#) ↓) for one’s bride or lover apparently was not uncommon in such literature. It appears to be indicative of a close, binding relationship and to express a fondness that goes beyond sexual desire. These are key aspects of spouses’ love.

Song 5:16 His mouthⁿ is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. *This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

ⁿ **5:16** Hebrew *palate*

This reflects the fact that friendship is an important aspect of romantic love.

Song 5:2-6 I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.” ³*I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?* ⁴My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. ⁵I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. ⁶*I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.*

This may be showing how love can be thwarted by selfishness (v. 3) and perhaps hesitancy – with the lover having left (v. 6), apparently after his efforts to seek his beloved (vv. 2, 4a) had seemingly been to no avail.

Examples and declarations of love

See also:

- [Song 6:5](#) ↓

Gen 29:20 *So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.*

2Chr 11:21 *Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and concubines (he took eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and fathered twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters).*

Song 2:4-5 He brought me to the banqueting house,^o and his banner over me was love. ⁵*Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love.*

^o **2:4** Hebrew *the house of wine*

The clause “his banner over me was love” (v. 4b) is commonly understood to be referring to the man unequivocally

showing his love for his beloved, even amongst others (v. 4a). Possibly it may simply be emphasizing the prominence of love in his relationship with and attitude to her. The “raisins” and “apples” (v. 5) may well be references by the beloved to the delights of her lover’s love. Note that the final phrase of v. 5 is echoed in 5:8 – “tell him I am sick with love.”

Song 3:4a Scarcely had I passed them when *I found him whom my soul loves.*

Song 4:9 *You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.*

Song 5:2a *I slept, but my heart was awake.*

Adoration of lover’s beauty

As shown in a number of the passages in this and the following subsections in particular, Song of Songs contains beautiful but also sensual poetry, but is never crude. The sensual parts are often comprised of imagery, notably imagery involving sensuous aspects of nature.

Song 1:16a *Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful.*

Song 2:2-3a *As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women. ³As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men.*

The man speaks in v. 2 and the woman in v. 3. Each speaks of their lover standing out amongst the other young women and young men (cf. [Song 5:10](#) ↓).

Song 4:13-15 *Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, ¹⁴nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all choice spices— ¹⁵a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.*

Here the husband or man poetically uses aspects of nature to describe his lover’s beauty and delights (as per the comment at the start of this subsection).

Song 5:10-16 *My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand. ¹¹His head is the finest gold; his locks are wavy, black as a raven. ¹²His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool.^p ¹³His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. ¹⁴His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory,^q bedecked with sapphires.^r ¹⁵His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of*



gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars.
¹⁶His mouth^s is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

☞

- ♯ The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain
- ¶ The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain
- Ⓡ Hebrew *lapis lazuli*
- Ⓢ Hebrew *palate*

Song 4:1-5, 7 Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. ²Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young. ³Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. ⁴Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone;^t on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. ⁵Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies. ☞ ... ⁷You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you. ☞

- Ⓣ The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Song 6:4-5a You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners. ⁵Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me— ☞

Song 6:9 My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her. The young women saw her and called her blessed; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her. ☞

The man claims that the woman's beauty is even praised by the other women.

Song 7:1-7 How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O noble daughter! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand. ²Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies. ³Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. ⁴Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus. ⁵Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses. ⁶How beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights!^u ⁷Your stature is like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. ☞

- Ⓤ **7:6** Or among delights

Desire to give oneself to one's lover

Note that the verses in this subsection are all spoken by the woman, the wife.

Song 1:2, 4a Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine; ☞ ... ⁴Draw me after you; let us run. ☞

Song 2:17 Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains.^v ☞

- Ⓥ **2:17** Or mountains of Bether

Here the woman appears to call on her lover to turn to her and her delights until daybreak (though some commentators have a quite different interpretation).

Song 4:16 Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits. ☞

Song 7:11-13 Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages;^w ¹²let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love. ¹³The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved. ☞

- Ⓦ **7:11** Or among the henna plants

Song 8:2b I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate. ☞

Further desire for and enjoyment of sexual intimacy with one's lover

Song 1:13-14 My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh that lies between my breasts. ¹⁴My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi. ☞

Song 2:3 As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. ☞

Song 2:8-14 The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. ⁹My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. ¹⁰My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, ¹¹for behold,



the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. ¹²*The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing^x has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.* ¹³*The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.* ¹⁴*O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.*

^x **2:12** Or *pruning*

Verses 11-13a describe the coming of spring – an apt time for the expression of love.

Song 3:4 Scarcely had I passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. *I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me.*

This is preceded by the woman speaking of searching for her lover (cf. vv. 1-3), apparently in a dream. The reference here to taking him back to her mother's house before letting go of him, possibly to consummate their love, is probably reflecting her concern of not being able to find him again.

Song 4:6 *Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.*

The phrases "mountain of myrrh" and "hill of incense" are quite likely metaphors for the wife with her pleasures (cf. **Song 5:1a** ↓).

Song 4:11 *Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue;* the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

Song 5:1a *I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk.*

Song 5:4 My beloved put his hand to the latch, and *my heart was thrilled within me.*

Song 6:2-3 *My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze^y in the gardens and to gather lilies.* ³I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; *he grazes among the lilies.*

^y Or *to pasture his flock*; also verse 3

Song 7:8-9a *I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit. Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breath like apples,⁹ and your mouth^z like the best wine.*

^z **7:9** Hebrew *palate*

Song 7:10 I am my beloved's, and *his desire is for me.*

↳ **Encouragement from friends for lovers to fully enjoy love:**

Song 5:1b *Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!*

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Parents' Duties to Children (I): Love and Care

Subsections

- Parents should love their children
- Parents should have compassion on their children
- Parents should care for their children
- Parents should provide for their children
- Parents should pray for their children
- Note: Points on relating to children in general

Parents should love their children

Titus 2:4 ... and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ...

Prov 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.^a

^a Or *who loves him disciplines him early*

It can be inferred from this that one ought to love one's son.

Gen 44:20b His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and *his father loves him.*

2Sam 13:37-39 But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And *David mourned for his son day after day.* ³⁸So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. ³⁹And *the spirit of the king^b longed to go out^c to Absalom*, because he was comforted about Amnon, since he was dead.

^b Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Hebrew *David*

^c Compare Vulgate *ceased to go out*



David's love for his sons is reflected by his mourning of the death of Amnon (v. 37) and his longing to see Absalom. (Absalom had earlier killed Amnon in an act of vengeance.) David would later also mourn Absalom's death – 'And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"' (18:33)

Mal 4:5-6 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ⁶And *he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.*"^d 

^d The Hebrew term rendered *decree of utter destruction* refers to things devoted (or set apart) to the Lord (or by the Lord) for destruction

This is indicative of the fact that it is God's will that parents and children should love each other. This prophecy was at least partially fulfilled in John the Baptist's ministry (cf. Luke 1:17), prior to Jesus Christ's first coming. Some think it will have a more complete fulfillment prior to Jesus Christ's return – which will indeed be a "great and awesome day of the LORD". The reconciliation or renewed love amongst families appears to be reflective of – and to occur in conjunction with – the reconciliation of the people with God in the ministry of such a prophet.

Parents should have compassion on their children

Ps 103:13 *As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.* 

Isa 49:15 *Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.* 

This implies that it is the normal and right thing for a mother to not forget her children and to have compassion on them.

Luke 15:20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, *his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.* 

1Ki 3:24-27 And the king said, "Bring me a sword." So a sword was brought before the king. ²⁵And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other." ²⁶*Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death."* But the other said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him." ²⁷Then the king answered and said, "Give

the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; *she is his mother.*" 

The phrase "heart yearned for" (v. 26a) is indicative of "compassion" (NIV®, NKJV, NRSV).

Parents should care for their children

Note that the following two subsections elaborate on this theme.

Deut 1:31 ... and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, *as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.* 

The simile speaks of a father carrying a son in need of support.

Isa 66:13 *As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.* 

1Thes 2:7 But we were gentle^e among you, *like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.* 

^e Some manuscripts *infants*

Note the reference to gentleness, which should characterize parental care.

Mark 7:26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And *she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.* 

The woman cared for her daughter by bringing her to Jesus to have him cure her.

Heb 11:23 By faith *Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.* 

Moses' parents defied the king's edict that all newborn Hebrew males must be killed, hiding Moses instead.

Prov 31:27 *She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.* 

This speaks of a mother watching over the affairs of her household (cf. NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT), taking care of them (cf. CEV, GNT).

Parents should exhort and encourage their children:

1Thes 2:11-12 For you know how, *like a father with his children, ¹²we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.* 



Parents should provide for their children

Prov 31:13-15, 21 *She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. ¹⁴She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. ¹⁵She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. ... ²¹She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.^f*

^f Or in double thickness

Verses 13-14 may well be referring to – or at least be inclusive of – such an “excellent wife” (v. 10) providing clothing and food for her family, in accordance with vv. 15, 21. The reference to being “clothed in scarlet” (v. 21) appears to refer to quality, warm clothing (cf. text note, CEV, GNT, NCV, Nlrv, NLT).

Matt 7:9-11 *Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*

This implies that parents are to “give good gifts” (v. 11a) such as food (vv. 9-10) to their children, providing for them.

2Cor 12:14 Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you. For *children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.*

1Sam 2:19 *And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.*

Job 42:15 And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job’s daughters. And *their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.*

Prov 13:22 *A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous.*

Parents should pray for their children

Gen 17:18 *And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!”*

2Sam 12:16 *David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.*

1Chr 29:19 [David:] *Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision.*

Similarly in 22:12 David blesses Solomon with what is effectively a prayer: “Only, may the LORD grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD your God.”

Mark 5:22-23 Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and *seeing him, he fell at his feet ²³and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.”*

Here and in John 4:47, 49 below the parents make requests of Jesus on behalf of their children. As such they are effectively examples of parents praying for their children.

John 4:47, 49 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and *asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ... ⁴⁹The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”*

† Job’s spiritual care of his children:

Job 1:4-5 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵And when the days of the feast had run their course, *Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed^g God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually.*

^g The Hebrew word *ble* is used euphemistically for *curse* in 1:5, 11; 2:5, 9

Note: Points on relating to children in general

Matt 18:5-6, 10 *Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,^h it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. ... ¹⁰“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.ⁱ*

^h Greek *causes . . . to stumble*; also verses 8, 9

ⁱ Some manuscripts add verse 11: *For the Son of Man came to save the lost*



A number of commentators consider that Jesus is speaking figuratively in using terms like “child” and “little ones”, referring to believers who should “become like children”, humbling themselves (vv. 3-4; cf. [Mark 10:15](#) ↓). But even so, much of this teaching is still quite applicable to young children. For further comment on v. 5, see [Note: What one does for another Christian, one does for Jesus Christ](#), p. 1339.

Mark 10:13-16 And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁵Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” ¹⁶And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. ☞

Jesus’ contrasting reaction sets an example of respect, care and acceptance of little children.

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Parents’ Duties to Children (II): Godly Training

Subsections

- Parents should raise their children to live as God wants
- Parents should discipline their children
- Parents should teach their children about God and his deeds, inspiring them to obey God’s laws . . .
- . . . Parents should promote faith in their children
- Note: Godly parents bring great blessing to their children

Parents should raise their children to live as God wants

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. ☞

Gen 18:19 For I have chosen^j him, *that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice*, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him. ☞

^j Hebrew *known*

Deut 11:18-19 You shall therefore lay up *these words of mine* in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ¹⁹*You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* ☞

Deut 32:46 ... he said to them, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may *command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.* ☞

Prov 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* ☞

Prov 31:1 The words of King Lemuel. *An oracle that his mother taught him: ...* ☞

This begins a passage of godly teaching from the king’s mother to her son (cf. vv. 2-9). It exemplifies that parents should teach their children to live as God wants.

Prov 31:26 *She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.* ☞

The children of the “excellent wife” (v. 10) are no doubt among the recipients of her instruction. The fact that she speaks with wisdom and gives “the teaching of kindness”, implies that the instruction is consistent with and inclusive of the ways of God.

Josh 24:15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But *as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.* ☞

Joshua’s determination that he and his household would serve God is indicative of him raising his children to live as God wanted – and exemplary.

Parents should discipline their children

See also:

- [Eph 6:4](#) ↑
- [God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves](#), p. 875
- [Outcomes of ignoring reproof and discipline](#), p. 1642



Prov 13:24 *Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.*^k 

^k Or *who loves him disciplines him early*

Prov 19:18 *Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.* 

Here “death” (cf. **Prov 23:14** ↓) is probably either hyperbole for a ruined life or referring to premature death – both of which result from foolishness or wickedness, which are in turn often the products of a lack of discipline. Contrastingly, discipline gives hope for a child’s future.

Prov 22:15 *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.* 

Prov 23:13-14 *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. ¹⁴If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.* 

Verse 13b means that “spanking won’t kill them.” (GNT)

Prov 29:15, 17 *The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.  ... ¹⁷Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.* 

Heb 12:7-9 *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?⁸If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?* 

Prov 3:12 *... for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.* 

1Tim 3:4, 12 *He [a church overseer] must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,  ... ¹²Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.* 

Children’s obedience and respect (v. 4), along with other aspects of managing one’s children (vv. 4, 12), require discipline.

‡ Parents must not provoke their children:

Col 3:21 *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* 

Fathers (and mothers) can provoke their children in a number of ways, but most likely Paul had in mind matters related to

excessive or unfair discipline. (A similar point is made in Ephesians 6:4, in the previous subsection.)

Parents should teach their children about God and his deeds, inspiring them to obey God’s laws . . .

Isa 38:19 *The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness.* 

Ps 44:1-3 *O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old: ²you with your own hand drove out the nations, but them you planted; you afflicted the peoples, but them you set free; ³for not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them, but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them.* 

Note that the expression “the light of your face” (v. 3b) speaks of God’s presence with and care for his people.

Ex 12:25-27 *And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. ²⁶And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ ²⁷you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.* 

Observing the Passover service/ceremony would promote the teaching to Israelite children – and their remembrance – of the awesome things that God did in delivering the people from Egypt.

Deut 4:9-14 *Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children— ¹⁰how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’ ¹¹And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. ¹²Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. ¹³And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments,¹ and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. ¹⁴And the LORD*



commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess. 

¹ Hebrew words

Presumably that which Moses wanted the Israelites to teach to their children and their children's children (v. 9) included that which he spoke of in the following verses (vv. 10-14): God's awesome revelation of himself, with his subsequent declaration of his commands for his people to obey. Probably one implication is that by parents teaching their children how awesome God is, the children would be moved to obey the commands of God taught to them (cf. [Ps 78:2-7](#) ↓).

[Ps 78:2-7](#) I will open my mouth in a parable; *I will utter dark sayings from of old,* ³*things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.* ⁴*We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.* ⁵*He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children,* ⁶*that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,* ⁷*so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; ...* 

This speaks of parents telling their children of God's deeds and power (vv. 2-4) and subsequently of his commands (vv. 5-6). Verse 7 then concludes that in light of God's wonderful deeds for them, the children would set their hope in God and obey his commands.

[Deut 6:20-25](#) *When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?'* ²¹*then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.* ²²*And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes.* ²³*And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers.* ²⁴*And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day.* ²⁵*And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.'* 

Moses' words here are very much applicable to believers today. Christian parents should explain the significance of God's commands (v. 20) and so why they should be kept. In doing so they should explain what God has done for his people in redeeming them through Jesus Christ, with the associated blessings – paralleling the Israelite's deliverance

from Egypt and the latter blessing of the promised land (vv. 21-23). In conjunction with this, parents should emphasize that having been redeemed and blessed as such by God, his people ought to do as he says (v. 24a), in part for their own good (v. 24b) and for their righteousness (v. 25). (In regard to their righteousness, Christians should obey to appropriate their righteousness rather than to try to earn it like the Israelites were to do.)

... Parents should promote faith in their children

See also:

▪ [Ps 78:7](#) ↑

Note that the previous topic – regarding teaching children about God and what he has done – is obviously an important part of promoting faith in children, as is illustrated there in Psalms 78:2-7.

[2Tim 1:5](#) I am reminded of *your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.* 

Timothy's grandmother and mother – with their strong faith – undoubtedly played a role in the development of Timothy's faith (cf. [2Tim 3:14-15](#) ↓).

[2Tim 3:14-15](#) But as for you, *continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom^m you learned it* ¹⁵*and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* 

^mThe Greek for *whom* is plural

Particularly in the light of the reference to Timothy having known the Scriptures "from childhood" (v. 15), those "from whom you learned it" (v. 14) would be inclusive of – and probably primarily speaking of – Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (cf. [2Tim 1:5](#) ↑). By likewise teaching children the Scriptures, parents work towards making them "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 15).

[Titus 1:6](#) ... if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife,ⁿ and *his children are believers* and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 

ⁿ Or *a man of one woman*

The role of the parent in the children coming to faith is implicit in this reference.



Prov 22:17-19 Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, ¹⁸for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. ¹⁹*That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you.* 

This was not necessarily spoken by a parent, but obviously is quite applicable to the role of parents in teaching their children godly wisdom so that they may trust in God.

✦ **Parents should teach their children to reverently fear God:**

Ps 34:11 *Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.* 

Most likely “children” refers to young listeners or the people generally, rather than David’s actual children – but as with Proverbs 22:19 above, the verse is very much applicable to teaching one’s own children.

Note: Godly parents bring great blessing to their children

Deut 12:28 *Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.* 

Ps 37:25-26 I have been young, and now am old, yet *I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.* ²⁶*He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.* 

Further to being blessed themselves, in being provided for (v. 25), children of godly parents themselves become a blessing (v. 26). However, note that the last clause has been translated to say that the children are blessed (cf. AMP, NIV, NKJV).

Ps 102:28 *The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you.* 

The second part of the verse may primarily be speaking of being established in a right relationship with God and/or being secure under his care (cf. GNT, NIV) in this relationship.

Ps 103:17-18 *But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children,* ¹⁸*to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.* 

Verse 17 speaks of God’s righteousness – including his “goodness” (GNT, NCV) – manifesting itself along with his love amongst future generations of those who fear and obey him.

Ps 112:2 *His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.* 

Prov 20:7 *The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him!* 

Jer 32:39 I will give them one heart and one way, *that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.* 

Prov 3:33 The LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but *he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.* 

Similarly 14:11 says, “The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.” Children are encompassed in such promises.

Prov 17:6 Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and *the glory of children is their fathers.* 

This suggests that godly parents bring glory to their children – or at least that they give their children reason to glory, exulting in and taking pride in their parents.

✦ **The sanctifying effects of a believer on their spouse and children:**

1Cor 7:14 *For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.* 

For comment on this verse, see **1Cor 7:10-15** – under *Avoid divorce – it is contrary to God’s purposes*, p. 1699.

Pray for persecuted Christians

f) Children’s Duties to Parents

Subsections

- Children are to honor and respect their parents . . .
- . . . Children should not dishonor or mistreat their parents
- Likewise, all older people should be treated with respect
- Children are to obey their parents
- Children should heed their parents’ teaching – which brings great benefits



- Children are to help their parents . . .
- . . . One should assist any relative in need
- Note: Children are a blessing to their parents from God . . .
- . . . and children can bring their parents much joy

Children are to honor and respect their parents . . .

Ex 20:12 *Honor your father and your mother*, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Lev 19:3 *Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father*, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

Eph 6:2-3 *“Honor your father and mother”* (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

1Ki 2:19 So *Bathsheba went to King Solomon* to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. *And the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat on his throne and had a seat brought for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right.*

Bathsheba was King Solomon’s mother.

Prov 31:28 *Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ...*

The reference is to an “excellent wife” (v. 10). In this context “call her blessed” implies that her children praise her.

. . . Children should not dishonor or mistreat their parents

Ex 21:15, 17 *Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.* ... ¹⁷*“Whoever curses^o his father or his mother shall be put to death.*

^o Or *dishonors*; Septuagint *reviles*

Deut 27:16 *‘Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.’* And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

Prov 23:22 Listen to your father who gave you life, and *do not despise your mother when she is old.*

Prov 15:20 A wise son makes a glad father, but *a foolish man despises his mother.*

Prov 19:26 *He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach.*

Prov 20:20 *If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness.*

The imagery refers to such a person’s life ending like a lamp going out in the dark.

Prov 30:11 *There are those^p who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers.*

^p Hebrew *There is a generation*; also verses 12, 13, 14

The context (cf. 12-14) underlines that this is wicked behavior.

Prov 30:17 *The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.*

Verse 17 figuratively speaks of the harsh outcomes of mocking and disobeying one’s parents.

Likewise, all older people should be treated with respect

Lev 19:32 *You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man*, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

This verse appears to link showing honor and respect for old people, with reverence for God (cf. NLT).

Job 32:4, 6 Now *Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he.* ... ⁶*And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said: “I am young in years, and you are aged; therefore I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you.*

1Tim 5:1-2 *Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father*, younger men as brothers, ²*older women as mothers*, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

1Pet 5:5 *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.* Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

‡ **Lament of elders not being shown respect:**

Lam 5:12 Princes are hung up by their hands; *no respect is shown to the elders.*



Job speaks of enduring such disrespect from younger men in Job 30:1a – “But now they laugh at me, men who are younger than I ...”

Children are to obey their parents

Eph 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Children are to obey their parents “in the Lord”, in their life in Jesus Christ. For this is right, being the Lord’s will for children (cf. Col 3:20 ↓).

Col 3:20 *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

Gen 28:7 ... and that *Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother* and gone to Paddan-aram.

Gen 47:30 ... but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.” *He answered, “I will do as you have said.”*

In the second part of the verse, Joseph promises his elderly father, Jacob, that he will adhere to his instructions.

Est 2:20 *Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him.*

Mordecai was actually Esther’s cousin; he had been her guardian who brought her up. As such it was appropriate for her to obey him as if he was her father.

Luke 2:51 *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.* And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

This speaks of Jesus being obedient to his parents.

1Tim 3:4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity *keeping his children submissive, ...*

Just as parents should seek to keep their children submissive, children should be submissive and so obedient.

Deut 21:18-21 *If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, ¹⁹then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, ²⁰and they shall say to the elders of his city, “This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.” ²¹Then all the men of the city shall*

stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

The NT does not advocate the death penalty, but this reference highlights the gravity of such disobedience.

Rom 1:29-30 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, *disobedient to parents, ...*

The inclusion of disobedience to parents amongst such lists of wicked deeds or characteristics (cf. 2Tim 3:2 ↓), underscores the sinfulness of it.

2Tim 3:2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, *disobedient to their parents,* ungrateful, unholy, ...

Prov 30:17 *The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.*

Children should heed their parents’ teaching – which brings great benefits

Prov 1:8-9 *Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, ⁹for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.*

A “garland” (v. 9) is a wreath worn on one’s head. Verse 9 is speaking figuratively of blessings of following a parent’s teaching – appearing to point to such things as a more agreeable character (cf. GNT) and honor (cf. NLT).

Prov 3:1-2 *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, ²for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.*

Prov 4:1-5, 10-11, 20-22 *Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain⁴ insight, ²for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. ³When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, ⁴he taught me and said to me, “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. ⁵Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. ... ¹⁰Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many. ¹¹I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. ... ²⁰My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹Let them not escape from your sight;*



keep them within your heart. ²²For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their^r flesh. 

^q Hebrew *know*

^r Hebrew *his*

The last clause in v. 22 speaks of good health.

Prov 6:20-23 *My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. ²¹Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. ²²When you walk, they^s will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. ²³For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, ...* 

^s Hebrew *it*; three times in this verse

In v. 22, "they will watch over you" speaks of the security or protection (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT) that living by such teaching provides.

Prov 13:1 *A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.* 

Prov 23:22 *Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.* 

Here "do not despise your mother" encompasses heeding what she says, in keeping with the preceding instruction.

Prov 23:26 *My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe^t my ways.* 

^t Or *delight in*

In saying "give me your heart", the father calls on the son to listen closely and receptively to his teachings and to wholeheartedly keep to his ways.

‡ Heed a parent's reproof:

Prov 15:5 *A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.* 

Note that 6:23 above refers to "the reproofs of discipline" leading to life, with the context suggesting that parental discipline is primarily in view.

Children are to help their parents . . .

See also:

▪ [1Tim 5:8](#) 

1Tim 5:3-4 Honor widows who are truly widows. ⁴But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 

John 19:25-27 ... but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. 

Even amidst his own great agony, Jesus ensured his mother would be cared for.

Gen 45:9-11 *Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.'* 

Gen 47:11-12 *Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹²And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their dependents.* 

1Sam 22:3-4 *And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay^u with you, till I know what God will do for me." ⁴And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.* 

^u Syriac, Vulgate; Hebrew *go out*

David secured refuge for his parents with the King of Moab, until he was in a position to look after them himself.

Josh 2:12-14 *Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign ¹³that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all*



who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”¹⁴ And the men said to her, “Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.”

Mark 7:9-13 And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)^v—¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother,¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

^v Or an offering

The action spoken of in v. 11 avoided – in part at least – one’s responsibility to help one’s parents. As such it violated the spirit of the laws stated in v. 10 – and so was condemned outright by Jesus.

... One should assist any relative in need

See also:

- [Gen 47:11-12](#) ↑; [Josh 2:12-14](#) ↑

1Tim 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Gen 14:12, 14-16 They also took Lot, the son of Abram’s brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way. ...¹⁴ When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.¹⁵ And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus.¹⁶ Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

Gen 44:32-33 For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.’³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.

Judah was prepared to sacrifice his own freedom to secure that of his younger brother Benjamin.

Gen 50:21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

After his father Jacob’s death, Joseph’s brothers were afraid he would take revenge on them for selling him as a slave (cf. vv. 15-20). But instead Joseph promised to provide for his brothers and their families.

Lev 25:25 If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold.

A “redeemer” (cf. [Ruth 4:13-15](#) ↓) was a close relative. They had a responsibility to care for any needy amongst their extended family. Note that here “brother” refers to a fellow Israelite, not an actual brother.

Josh 1:14-15 Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them,¹⁵ until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they also take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.

We have a responsibility to care for all people, but verses such as this arguably illustrate that we have a particular responsibility to: relatives; “brothers” and sisters amongst God’s people; and even compatriots.

Ruth 2:11-12 But Boaz answered her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before.¹² The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!”

Ruth’s decision to leave her own father and mother to help her destitute mother-in-law Naomi, may have been because Naomi was in greater need and/or possibly in the culture of the day it was understood that she had married into Naomi’s family and as such her loyalties primarily lay there.

Ruth 4:13-15 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel!¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”



The redeemer referred to here is the newly born boy (v. 13) who was related closely to Naomi through Ruth.

2Sam 13:20b *So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house.*

Absalom took in his sister Tamar after she had been devastatingly violated and dishonored (cf. vv. 1-22).

Est 2:7 *He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.*

Note: Children are a blessing to their parents from God . . .

See also:

- [Prov 27:11](#) ; [Prov 29:17](#)

Ps 127:3-5 *Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. ⁴Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children^w of one's youth. ⁵Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.^x*

^w Or sons

^x Or *They shall not be put to shame when they speak with their enemies in the gate*

In the last statement "the gate" most likely refers to the city gate, the place where court cases were held (cf. GNT, NIV, NLT). Having many sons would help ensure that one would not be treated unjustly.

Ps 128:3 *Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.*

The verse speaks of those who fear the LORD (cf. v. 1), in effect saying that they will be blessed with sons who are "vigorous and healthy" (NLT). The "olive shoots" simile probably alludes to the productivity and blessing that such sons bring to parents.

Prov 17:6 *Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.*

Grandchildren are their grandparent's "crowning glory" (NLT).

1Chr 25:5 *All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer, according to the promise of God to exalt him, for God had given Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.*

Having many children was seen as prestigious.

1Chr 26:5 *Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peullethai the eighth, for God blessed him.*

God had blessed Obed-Edom with eight sons (cf. vv. 2-4).

. . . and children can bring their parents much joy

Prov 23:15-16, 24-25 *My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad. ¹⁶My inmost being^y will exult when your lips speak what is right. ... ²⁴The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. ²⁵Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.*

^y Hebrew *My kidneys*

Prov 27:11 *Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me.*

The reasoning behind this may be that a child who is wise reflects very well on his or her parents, notably their own wisdom, making clear that any "reproach" shown towards them is quite inappropriate.

Prov 29:3, 17 *He who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth. ... ¹⁷Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.*

Luke 1:13-15, 57-58 *But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ... ⁵⁷Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.*

John 16:21 *When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.*

‡ A foolish son brings sorrow to his parents:

Prov 17:21, 25 *He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy. ... ²⁵A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.*



In the same vein, Proverbs 19:13 says, "A foolish son is his father's ruin..."

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Civil Relationships

In addition to relationships with family members, the Bible looks at other relationships which have a marked effect on our lives. In doing so, it gives wise and challenging teaching regarding relationships between citizens and governing authorities, and between employees and employers.

a) Citizens' Duties to Authorities

Subsections

- Citizens should submit to and obey the governing authorities . . .
- . . . For the authorities have been established by God and they will punish wrongdoers
- Citizens should defy any command that conflicts with God's will
- Citizens should honor authorities
- Citizens should pray for authorities

Citizens should submit to and obey the governing authorities . . .

Titus 3:1 Remind them *to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient*, to be ready for every good work, ...

As with the command "to be submissive", the command "to be obedient" is also given in regard to "rulers and authorities".

Deut 17:9-11 And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. ¹⁰Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the LORD will choose. *And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you.* ¹¹According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left.

1Chr 29:23-24 Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of David his father. And he prospered, and *all Israel obeyed him.* ²⁴*All the leaders and the mighty men, and also all the sons of King David, pledged their allegiance to King Solomon.*

2Chr 8:15 *And they did not turn aside from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites concerning any matter and concerning the treasuries.*

Prov 10:8 *The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin.*

This is probably not referring specifically to commands from governing authorities, but would be inclusive of them.

Prov 28:7 *The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.*

The phrase "the law" is probably referring primarily to God's law, but obviously the reference to keeping the law is also applicable to keeping the civil law, in obedience to governing authorities.

1Sam 24:8 Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave, and called after Saul, *"My lord the king!"* And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage.

David's actions exemplified his submission to Saul as King.

2Sam 9:11a Then Ziba said to the king, *"According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do."*

Matt 23:2-3 *The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³so practice and observe whatever they tell you—but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice.*

The clause "sit on Moses' seat" refers to the Pharisees' position in interpreting and advocating the Mosaic laws.

Rom 13:7 *Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

In conjunction with obeying governing authorities, citizens should pay their taxes (cf. **Matt 22:17-21** ↓; **Rom 13:6** ↓). Here "revenue" refers to forms of taxes such as duties on goods (cf. NLT).

Matt 22:17-21 Tell us, then, what you think. *Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?* ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius.^a ²⁰And



Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”²¹They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

^a A denarius was a day’s wage for a laborer

Acts 25:8 Paul argued in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.”

. . . For the authorities have been established by God and they will punish wrongdoers

See also:

- *God establishes all ruling authorities*, p. 285

Rom 13:1-6 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

1Pet 2:13-14 Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution,^b whether it be to the emperor^c as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

^b Or every institution ordained for people

^c Or king; also verse 17

In saying one should be subject “for the Lord’s sake” (v. 13), quite possibly Peter has in view that God is the one who has instituted the authorities and also that submitting as such to civil authority reflects honorably on the Lord. It also avoids needless opposition to Christians.

Prov 24:21-22 My son, fear the LORD and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, ²²for disaster will arise suddenly from them, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?

Ecc 8:2, 5 I say:^d Keep the king’s command, because of God’s oath to him.^e ... ⁵Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way.

^d Hebrew lacks say

^e Or because of your oath to God

“God’s oath to him” is probably an oath of loyalty made in God’s name to the king (cf. text note), as was often taken on a king’s coronation.

Citizens should defy any command that conflicts with God’s will

Ex 1:15-17 Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶“When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.”¹⁷But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

Dan 3:4-6, 16-18, 28 And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” ... ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.^f ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” ... ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside^g the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

^f Or If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king.

^g Aramaic and changed

Dan 6:5-10 Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”⁶Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement^h to the king and said to him,



“O King Darius, live forever! ⁷All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that *the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.* ⁸Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.” ⁹*Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.* ¹⁰*When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.*

^h Or *came thronging*; also verses 11, 15

Acts 4:18-20 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹*But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”*

The command in v. 18 was given by the Jewish authorities – the Jewish rulers, elders and teachers of the law (v. 5). It is a similar group involved in the following passages from Acts 5, it consisting of the high priest, his associates and the Sanhedrin, the full assembly of the elders of Israel (5:21).

Acts 5:27-29 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” ²⁹*But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.*

Acts 5:40, 42 ... and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ... ⁴²*And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

Citizens should honor authorities

1Pet 2:17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Rom 13:7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

The context shows that Paul had governing authorities primarily in view here (cf. vv. 1-6).

Ex 22:28 You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

Cursing authorities – as with insulting and speaking evil of them (cf. **Acts 23:2-5** ↓) – is doing the opposite of honoring them, and is prohibited in Scripture.

Acts 23:2-5 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. ³Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” ⁴Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?” ⁵*And Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”*

Although what Paul said in v. 3 was true enough, he effectively withdrew it on learning that he was speaking to the high priest, not wanting to speak “evil” of and so dishonor the leading authority amongst his people.

Citizens should pray for authorities

1Tim 2:1-2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Ezra 6:10 ... that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

Note that this is actually from the decree of King Darius for the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem. Here he expresses the hope that one outcome of its rebuilding would be prayer for him and his sons – a hope that is in harmony with biblical teaching.

Ps 61:6-7 Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations! ⁷May he be enthroned forever before God; appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him!

Parts of this prayer are not eminently applicable to governing authorities in general – in fact the prayer has been seen as messianic. Nevertheless these verses illustrate the concept of praying for authorities. The same applies to 72:15 below, with Psalm 72 also considered to be messianic.

Ps 72:1-2, 15 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! ²May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice! ... ¹⁵Long may he



live; may gold of Sheba be given to him! May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all the day!



Psalm 72 is not only an example of prayer for the king; it also includes a request or hope that other people pray for him (v. 15).

1Ki 1:37 *As the LORD has been with my lord the king, even so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David.*

This blessing was in effect a prayer.

✚ **In exile the Jews were to pray for the city of their captors:**

Jer 29:7 *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Authorities' Duties to Citizens (I): General

Subsections

- Governing authorities should act and rule according to God's law and ways
- Authorities should rule as servants of God
- Authorities should rule wisely . . .
- . . . Authorities need to be wise
- Note: Further traits that should characterize authorities

Governing authorities should act and rule according to God's law and ways

Governing authorities should act according to God's law and ways, both in how they conduct themselves and in their rule over their people.

Deut 17:16-20 *Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.'*¹⁷*And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire*

*for himself excessive silver and gold.*¹⁸*And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by¹ the Levitical priests.*¹⁹*And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them,*²⁰*that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.*

¹ Hebrew *from before*

Note that the prohibition in v. 16a may have in view military might leading to self-reliance rather than reliance on God.

Josh 1:6-8 *Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.*⁷*Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success¹ wherever you go.*⁸*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.* For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

¹ Or *may act wisely*

These instructions are given to Joshua, leader of Israel (v. 6).

1Ki 2:1-3 *When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying,*²*'I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man,*³*and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, ...*

2Ki 18:3 *And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.*

This is speaking of Hezekiah, as king of Judah.

2Ki 23:24 *Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.*

1Chr 22:12 *Only, may the LORD grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD your God.*



2Chr 19:8 Moreover, in Jerusalem *Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD* and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. 

Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, appointed authorities under him to make judgments according to God's law (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) amongst the people.

2Chr 30:12 The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do *what the king and the princes commanded by the word of the LORD*. 

✦ King Josiah led the people to follow God:

2Chr 34:33 And *Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel and made all who were present in Israel serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the LORD, the God of their fathers*. 

Note that 19:4 says that Jehoshaphat likewise influenced his people to follow God – "... he went out again among the people, from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers."

Authorities should rule as servants of God

See also:

- [Willingness to serve](#) [required characteristics of church leaders], p. 1477

Rom 13:3-4 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for *he is God's servant for your good*. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For *he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer*. 

Ps 2:10-11 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O *rulers of the earth*. ¹¹*Serve the LORD with fear*, and rejoice with trembling. 

2Chr 9:8 Blessed be *the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God!* Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness. 

Israel's kings were to rule on God's behalf, as implied by the reference to being placed "on his throne" as king "for" God.

This points to the fact that they were to rule as God's servants (cf. [Rom 13:4](#) ).

✦ Authorities should also rule as servants of their people:

1Ki 12:6-7 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" ⁷And they said to him, "If you will *be a servant to this people today and serve them*, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever." 

Authorities should rule wisely . . .

See also:

- [Wisdom and competence](#), p. 1476

2Chr 11:23 And *he dealt wisely* and distributed some of his sons through all the districts of Judah and Benjamin, in all the fortified cities, and he gave them abundant provisions and procured wives for them.^k 

^k Hebrew *and sought a multitude of wives*

Prov 8:15-16 [Wisdom:] *By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; ¹⁶by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly*.¹ 

¹ Most Hebrew manuscripts; many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint *govern the earth*

The speaker is Wisdom personified (cf. v. 12). Authorities should rule by wisdom.

Jer 3:15 And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, *who will feed you with knowledge and understanding*. 

The reference to "knowledge and understanding" speaks of how the "shepherds" (i.e. leaders) should "feed" (i.e. rule or care for) the people.

Ps 78:72 With upright heart he shepherded them and *guided them with his skillful hand*. 

Acts 24:2 And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since *by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation*, ... 

1Ki 3:22-28 But the other woman said, "No, the living child is mine, and the dead child is yours." The first said, "No, the dead child is yours, and the living child is mine." Thus they spoke before the king. ²³Then the king said, "The one says,



‘This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead’; and the other says, ‘No; but your son is dead, and my son is the living one.’” ²⁴And the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So a sword was brought before the king. ²⁵And the king said, “Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.” ²⁶Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king, because her heart yearned for her son, “Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death.” But the other said, “He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him.” ²⁷Then the king answered and said, “Give the living child to the first woman, and by no means put him to death; she is his mother.” ²⁸And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice. 

Prov 20:26 A wise king winnows the wicked and drives the wheel over them. 

... Authorities need to be wise

See also:

▪ [1Ki 3:28](#) 

Gen 41:33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 

Deut 1:13 Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads. 

Ex 18:21 Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 

1Ki 3:7-12 And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” ¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none

like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. 

1Chr 22:12 Only, may the LORD grant you discretion and understanding, that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD your God. 

Ps 2:10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. 

Ps 105:22 ... to bind^m his princes at his pleasure and to teach his elders wisdom. 

^mSeptuagint, Syriac, Jerome instruct

This is speaking of Joseph teaching other Egyptian authorities to be wise.

Prov 25:2-3 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out. ³As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable. 

These verses appear to point to the wisdom that rulers should have – in searching out matters (v. 2) – including those in which they are required to make a ruling – and in having hearts or minds superior to that of the general populace (v. 3; cf. CEV, GNT).

Prov 28:2 When a land transgresses, it has many rulers, but with a man of understanding and knowledge, its stability will long continue. 

The reference to “a man of understanding and knowledge” speaks of a ruler.

Eccl 4:13 Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take advice. 

↳ Bemoaning of foolish and unqualified authorities:

Eccl 10:5-7, 16-17 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: ⁶folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. ⁷I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves.  ... ¹⁶Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning! ¹⁷Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of the nobility, and your princes feast at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness! 

In v. 6 the rich are spoken of as “gifted people” (NCV™) who have proven their capability (cf. NLT). The writer bemoans them being given positions of relatively little influence, while fools are given high positions. In v. 7 the writer appears to speak of unqualified people having positions of influence –



as in v. 16a – at the expense of more qualified and suitable people.

Note: Further traits that should characterize authorities

Prov 20:28 *Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.* 

“Steadfast love and faithfulness” (cf. [Isa 16:5 ↓](#)) probably are used here as qualities that should characterize a king’s rule – qualities which keep him safe as well as benefit his subjects. But note that they could instead, or additionally, refer to God’s love and faithfulness (cf. [Isa 16:5 ↓](#)).

Isa 16:5 *... then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.* 

This speaks of the ideal king – the Messiah. The reference to love and perhaps also the reference to faithfulness may refer to God’s love and faithfulness in establishing the Messiah’s reign. However they have also been interpreted as referring to characteristics of the Messiah in his ideal reign (cf. GNT, Nlrv) – particularly the reference to faithfulness (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). As such the verse would be pertinent to the theme of this subsection.

Josh 1:6, 9 *Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.*  ... ⁹Have I not commanded you? *Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.* 

1Ki 2:1-2 When David’s time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, ²“I am about to go the way of all the earth. *Be strong, and show yourself a man, ...* 

Rom 12:8 ... the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; *the one who leads,ⁿ with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.* 

ⁿ Or *gives aid*

This verse is referring to leadership in the church. But it is very relevant to all authorities, who ought to lead with zeal.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Authorities’ Duties to Citizens (II): Justice

See also:

- *Governing authorities should act and rule according to God’s law and ways*, p. 1720

Subsections

- Authorities should rule justly
- Authorities should defend the needy
- Authorities should not rule unjustly . . .
- . . . Unjust rule brings God’s judgment
- Various insights on unjust rule

Authorities should rule justly

See also:

- [Prov 31:8-9 ↓](#); [Jer 22:3, 15 ↓](#); [Dan 4:27 ↓](#)

Deut 16:18 You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and *they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.* 

2Sam 8:15 *So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people.* 

2Chr 9:8b Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, *he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness.* 

Ps 72:1-2 *Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! ²May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!* 

Ps 78:72 *With upright heart he [David] shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.* 

Ps 101:4-8 [David:] *A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil. ⁵Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure. ⁶I will look with favor on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me. ⁷No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes. ⁸Morning by morning I will*



destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD. 

David is speaking here, as king.

Prov 16:10, 12-13 An oracle is on the lips of a king; *his mouth does not sin in judgment.*  ... ¹²*It is an abomination to kings to do evil, for the throne is established by righteousness.* ¹³*Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right.* 

Prov 29:4 *By justice a king builds up the land,* but he who exacts gifts^o tears it down. 

^o Or *who taxes heavily*

Dan 6:4 Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but *they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.* 

Daniel was at this point one of the senior authorities of the Persian kingdom.

Mic 3:1 And I said: *Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?*— 

Prov 20:26 *A wise king winnows the wicked* and drives the wheel over them. 

1Pet 2:13-14 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution,^p whether it be to the emperor^q as supreme, ¹⁴or to *governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.* 

^p Or *every institution ordained for people*

^q Or *king*; also verse 17

‡ A righteous ruler is a great blessing:

2Sam 23:3-4 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: *When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,* ⁴*he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain^r that makes grass to sprout from the earth.* 

^r Hebrew *from rain*

Authorities should defend the needy

Ps 72:4, 12-14 *May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!*  ... ¹²*For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper.* ¹³*He has pity on the weak*

and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. ¹⁴*From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight.* 

Psalm 72 is largely a prayer for a Davidic king. As noted earlier, it was seen as messianic. Extracts such as this one reflect how a king should ideally rule.

Prov 31:8-9 *Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.*^s ⁹*Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.* 

^s Hebrew *are sons of passing away*

These instructions are from an oracle taught to a King Lemuel by his mother (cf. v. 1; [vv. 4-5](#) ↓).

Jer 22:2-3, 15-16 ... and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates. ³Thus says the LORD: *Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.*  ... ¹⁵Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar? *Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him.* ¹⁶*He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well.* Is not this to know me? declares the LORD. 

Note that in conjunction with defending the needy, v. 3b points out that authorities should "do no wrong or violence" to them.

Dan 4:27 Therefore, *O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed,* that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity. 

Est 10:3 For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for *he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.* 

As aliens in exile, Jewish people were often needy. For as foreigners they were vulnerable and often faced injustice.

Prov 29:14 *If a king faithfully judges the poor, his throne will be established forever.* 

‡ Authorities should "shepherd" their people:

2Sam 5:2 In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, '*You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.*' 



Rulers should shepherd their people (cf. [Ps 78:72](#) ↑; [Ezek 34:2-4](#)) taking care of them, notably the needy.

Authorities should not rule unjustly . . .

[Deut 1:17](#) *You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. And the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.* ☞

[Ps 58:1-2](#) *Do you indeed decree what is right, you gods?^t Do you judge the children of man uprightly? ²No, in your hearts you devise wrongs; your hands deal out violence on earth.* ☞

^t Or *mighty lords* (by revocalization; Hebrew *in silence*)

As reflected in the text note, "you gods" (v. 1) is a reference to rulers, as those who have authority over their peoples.

[Ps 82:2](#) *How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah* ☞

[Prov 28:16](#) A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor, but *he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.* ☞

The first clause suggests that rulers are also in view in the second clause.

[Prov 31:4-5](#) *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, ⁵lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.* ☞

[Ezek 45:9](#) Thus says the Lord GOD: *Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and execute justice and righteousness. Cease your evictions of my people, declares the Lord GOD.* ☞

[Luke 3:12-14](#) Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." ☞

[Neh 5:15](#) *The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration^u forty shekels^v of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God.* ☞

^u Compare Vulgate; Hebrew *took from them with food and wine afterward*

^v A *shekel* was about 2/5 ounce or 11 grams

In some of their actions at least, the earlier governors had been unfair if not unjust.

. . . Unjust rule brings God's judgment

[Isa 10:1-3](#) *Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, ²to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! ³What will you do on the day of punishment, in the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth?* ☞

Verse 3 speaks ominously of God's judgment – as does the use of "Woe" (v. 1; [Jer 22:13](#) ↓).

[Jer 22:13](#) *Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages, ...* ☞

[Ezek 34:2-4, 9-10](#) Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: *Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ³You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. ⁴The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. ☞ ... ⁹therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them.* ☞

The Hebrew translated here as "Ah" is sometimes translated as "Woe" (AMP, NASB, NIV, NKJV). It points with a sense of alarm to coming grave trouble and misery. Here it signals the judgment that awaits the rulers in view. In v. 10, "I will require my sheep at their hand" speaks of God holding the shepherds accountable for the state of the sheep and their treatment of them.

[Mic 3:9-12](#) *Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, ¹⁰who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. ¹¹Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for*



money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."¹² *Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.* 

Mic 7:3-4 *Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well; the prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together. ⁴The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand.* 

"The day of your watchmen" (v. 4) refers to the day that the prophets warned them about – "the day God visits you" (NIV®) with his judgment.

Various insights on unjust rule

Prov 17:7 *Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a prince.* 

Prov 28:3 *A poor man who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food.* 

"A poor man" is often taken as referring to a ruler (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV, NRSV), possibly one that was or had previously been poor himself (cf. CEV).

Prov 28:12 *When the righteous triumph, there is great glory, but when the wicked rise, people hide themselves.* 

Prov 28:15-16 *Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people. ¹⁶A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.* 

Verse 15 illustrates the viciousness and destructiveness of a wicked ruler.

Prov 29:2 *When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.* 

Prov 29:12 *If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked.* 

If a ruler listens to falsehood – particularly if he does so knowingly – then wickedness and corruption will be encouraged and thrive.

Eccl 5:8 *If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.* 

This appears to be speaking of oppression often being aggravated by corrupt officials higher up the chain of command than the one directly in charge of a particular district suffering oppression.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Servants and Masters

A number of verses in this section refer to slaves rather than servants. Generally the teaching regarding one of them is also very much applicable to the other. Also note that some of the verses speak of relationships between servants or slaves and governing authorities, particularly kings. As such they speak of relationships between citizens and authorities, and so are also pertinent to the preceding sections.

Subsections

- Servants should obey, submit to and respect their masters
- Servants should be faithful
- Good service is rewarded
- Masters must treat servants justly
- Masters should pay servants their wages
- Note: Miscellaneous instructions and insights regarding slaves

Servants should obey, submit to and respect their masters

Eph 6:5-6 *Slaves,^w obey your earthly masters^x with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants^y of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ...* 

^w Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*; similarly verse 8

^x Or *your masters according to the flesh*

^y Or *slaves*; Greek *bondservants*

The reference to "fear and trembling" (v. 5) does not entail terror, but presumably would involve mindfulness of the consequences of disobedience and negligence. Such "fear and trembling" mirrors that which believers have for the Lord as "servants of Christ" (v. 6). The reference to doing God's will (v. 6b) has in this context obeying earthly masters primarily in view.



Col 3:22 *Slaves,^z obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,^a not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.* 

^z Or *Servants*; Greek *Bondservants*

^a Or *your masters according to the flesh*

Matt 8:9 For I too am a man under authority, *with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant,^b 'Do this,' and he does it.* 

^b Greek *bondservant*

As soldiers obey their commanders, so servants should obey their masters.

2Sam 15:15 *And the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides."* 

Gen 16:9 The angel of the LORD said to her, *"Return to your mistress and submit to her."* 

Titus 2:9 *Slaves^c are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ...* 

^c Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

1Pet 2:18-21 *Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* 

The phrase "mindful of God" (v. 19) refers to being mindful of such things his will (cf. GNT), his witness and his repentment.

1Tim 6:1-2 Let all who are under a yoke as slaves^d regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. ²Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things. 

^d Greek *bondservants*

Regard one's master as "worthy of all honor" (cf. [Mal 1:6](#) ↓) is indicative of respect (cf. v. 2) – as is reverent fear of them (cf. [Eph 6:5](#) ↑; [Mal 1:6](#) ↓)

Mal 1:6 *A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'* 

God's people, his servants, had failed to show him due respect as their master. Implicit in this verse is the requirement for servants to honor and respect their masters.

✚ **Servants should pray about their work and for their masters:**

Gen 24:12 *And he said, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham."* 

Servants should be faithful

Prov 25:13 *Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the soul of his masters.* 

Titus 2:9-10 *Slaves^e are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.* 

^e Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

1Cor 4:1-2 This is how one should regard us, as *servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.* 

Paul speaks here as a servant of Christ but in v. 2 he makes a statement that is very much pertinent to all servants or stewards: they should be trustworthy – and so "faithful" (AMP, CEV, GNT, NIV, NKJV, NLT) – in what they have been entrusted with (cf. [Matt 25:20-21](#) ↓). The following passages from Matthew likewise are speaking primarily of servants of Christ, but again they are very much pertinent to all servants.

Matt 24:45-46 *Who then is the faithful and wise servant,^f whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.* 

^f Greek *bondservant*; also verses 46, 48, 50

Matt 25:20-21 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, *'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.'* ²¹His master said to him, *'Well done, good and faithful*



servant.^g *You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.*' 

^g Greek *bondservant*; also verses 23, 26, 30

Ps 101:6 [David:] *I will look with favor on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me.* 

David appears to be saying that only the faithful and blameless would accompany and minister to him – or serve him (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT). Note that rather than accompanying him or being in his close company (cf. CEV, GNT), “dwell with me” could be referring simply to living in his land (cf. AMP, NCV).

Gen 24:33 Then food was set before him to eat. But he said, *“I will not eat until I have said what I have to say.”* He said, *“Speak on.”* 

The faithfulness of Abraham’s servant is illustrated by him insisting on putting his work for his master ahead of his own needs – i.e. insisting on carrying out Abraham’s instructions before allowing himself to eat. Note that this and the following verses contain examples of servants acting faithfully.

Gen 39:4, 6a So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and *put him in charge of all that he had.*  ... *“So he left all that he had in Joseph’s charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.”* 

Joseph was trusted with taking care of all his master owned – which he faithfully did.

1Sam 14:7 And his armor-bearer said to him, *“Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish.”*^h *Behold, I am with you heart and soul.*” 

^h Septuagint *Do all that your mind inclines to*

2Sam 15:21 But Ittai answered the king, *“As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be.”* 

2Ki 5:2-3 Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and *she worked in the service of Naaman’s wife.* ³*She said to her mistress, “Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”* 

The young servant girl showed her faithfulness in making a suggestion in her master’s best interests, doing so in spite of the fact that she had been taken captive from her homeland by her master’s army.

✦ **The complete devotion of the “three mighty men” to David:**

1Chr 11:17-19 And *David said longingly, “Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!”* ¹⁸*Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and took it and brought it to David.* But David would not drink it. He poured it out to the LORD ¹⁹and said, *“Far be it from me before my God that I should do this. Shall I drink the lifeblood of these men? For at the risk of their lives they brought it.”* Therefore he would not drink it. These things did the three mighty men. 

The “three mighty men” were totally devoted to David, their master. They risked their lives for him, which David acknowledges by not drinking the water, correlating it with their lifeblood (v. 19a), and making it an offering to God (v. 18b).

Good service is rewarded

See also:

▪ **Matt 25:20-21** 

Good service is often rewarded by earthly masters – by promotion (cf. **1Ki 1:28** ) , material reward (cf. **Prov 17:2** ) or honor (cf. **Prov 27:18** ) . All good service will be rewarded by Jesus Christ (cf. **Col 3:23-24**  ; **Matt 25:20-21** ).

1Ki 11:28 The man Jeroboam was very able, and *when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious he gave him charge over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph.* 

As well as illustrating that good service is often rewarded by masters, one can infer from this that employees should do their work as well as they can (cf. **Col 3:23** ).

Prov 14:35 *A servant who deals wisely has the king’s favor, but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully.* 

Prov 17:2 *A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.* 

Prov 27:18 *Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who guards his master will be honored.* 

The first part of the verse illustrates the truth of the second part.



Col 3:23-24 *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* 

As service to earthly masters is doing God's will (cf. Eph 6:6), such service is ultimately to God or Christ (vv. 23-24).

✦ Servants should be humble, not expecting reward:

Luke 17:7-10 *"Will any one of you who has a servantⁱ plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? ⁸Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly,^j and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? ⁹Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants;^k we have only done what was our duty.'"* 

ⁱ Greek *bondservant*; also verse 9

^j Greek *gird yourself*

^k Greek *bondservants*

As with servants of Christ, all servants should be humble and meek, not carrying out their duties in the hope of reward.

Masters must treat servants justly

Lev 25:43 *You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God.* 

Deut 24:14 *You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns.* 

Eph 6:9 *Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master^l and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.* 

^l Greek *Lord*

The command to "do the same to them" appears to refer to acting towards slaves/servants in ways consistent with God's will (cf. v. 6). It may also possibly allude to Christian masters themselves being slaves of the Lord (cf. v. 7; **Col 4:1** ↓) – and acting in a way consistent with this.

Col 4:1 *Masters, treat your slaves^m justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.* 

^mOr *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

Deut 5:14 ... but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. *On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or*

your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 

It can be inferred from this that masters have a duty to provide their servants with adequate rest – and to allow them to fulfill their obligations to God.

Job 31:13-15 *If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me, ¹⁴what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him? ¹⁵Did not he who made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?* 

Verse 15 points to the equality in God's sight of both masters and servants. Following vv. 13-14 it reinforces the concept of accountability for unjust treatment of servants.

Isa 58:3-4 *'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,ⁿ and oppress all your workers. ⁴Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. *Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.* *

ⁿ Or *pursue your own business*

Exploiting one's workers (v. 3b) seriously affects one's relationship with God (vv. 3a, 4).

Masters should pay servants their wages

Deut 24:15 *You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the LORD, and you be guilty of sin.* 

Lev 19:13b *The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning.* 

Matt 20:1-4, 8-9 For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius^o a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.'  ... ⁸And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.' ⁹And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. 



° A *denarius* was a day's wage for a laborer
Masters should pay their servants a fair wage – "whatever is right" (v. 4).

Luke 10:7a And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for *the laborer deserves his wages*. 📖

Here Jesus makes reference to laborers on the occasion of sending out seventy two of his followers to further God's kingdom. The fact that laborers deserve their wages (cf. **Rom 4:4** ↓) highlights that masters should pay servants their due wages.

Rom 4:4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 📖

Jer 22:13 Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages, ... 📖

Mal 3:5 Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. 📖

James 5:4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. 📖

Note: Miscellaneous instructions and insights regarding slaves

The Bible speaks more of how God's people should act in their relationships within the institution of slavery than it does of condemning it. However, the Bible does stipulate protections for slaves (as illustrated below) and condemns slave trading (cf. **1Tim 1:9-10** ↓; **Rev 18:10-13** ↓). Also bear in mind that under the Roman system, a "slave" or a "bondservant" (translations of the Greek word *doulos*) was much better off than what we typically think of as a slave. As well as being treated with a level of dignity akin to that of the child who was the family heir (cf. **Gal 4:1** ↓), they were usually paid and could buy their freedom.

Lev 25:42 For they are my servants,^p whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. 📖

^p Hebrew slaves

Deut 23:15 You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. 📖

Slaves escaping from foreign countries seeking refuge in Israel are probably in view here (cf. CEV; v. 16).

Jer 34:13-17 Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I myself made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, ¹⁴'At the end of seven years each of you must set free the fellow Hebrew who has been sold to you and has served you six years; you must set him free from your service.' But your fathers did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. ¹⁵You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty, each to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name, ¹⁶but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your slaves. ¹⁷'Therefore, thus says the LORD: You have not obeyed me by proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim to you liberty to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine, declares the LORD. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 📖

Verse 14 tells of an important limitation put on slavery by the OT law. By not keeping this law and, worse still, breaking the covenant they had made to do so (vv. 15-16), the people evoked God's judgment (v. 17).

1Cor 7:21-23 Were you a slave^a when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) ²²For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. ²³You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. 📖

^a Greek *bondservant*; also twice in verse 22 and once in verse 23 (plural)

Note that v. 22 is saying that slaves should not be troubled by their lack of freedom (v. 21) because as Christians they are free in a more significant sense – free from sin and Satan's bondage; by the same token, those who are free, like all believers, are slaves of Christ.

1Tim 1:9-10 ... understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers,^r liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound^s doctrine, ... 📖



^r That is, those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery

^s Or *healthy*

The condemnatory general descriptions of the ungodly in v. 9 apply to all of the subsequent particular types of sinners, including “enslavers” (v. 10a). Along with all the other sins listed, slave trading (cf. text note) is contrary to sound Christian doctrine (v. 10b).

Rev 18:10-13 *They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, “Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come.”* ¹¹*And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore,* ¹²*cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble,* ¹³*cinnamon,*

spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and *slaves, that is, human souls.*^t 

^t Or *and slaves, and human lives*

‡ In NT society, a slave had rights akin to the family heir:

Gal 4:1 I mean that *the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave,*^u *though he is the owner of everything, ...*



^u Greek *bondservant*; also verse 7

Pray for persecuted Christians



Spreading the Gospel

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I. Instructions

The theme of spreading the gospel, or message about Jesus Christ, pervades the New Testament and should be also one of the main focuses of our lives. This section largely looks at what we need to say and do, in advancing the spread of the gospel.

a) Tell People the Gospel

Subsections

- Tell people the gospel message . . .
- . . . Tell people the gospel about Jesus Christ
- Tell all people, everywhere
- Continue to tell people the gospel despite suffering for doing so
- Do not be ashamed of the gospel, even despite suffering for it
- Try to persuade people to believe and respond to the gospel

Tell people the gospel message . . .

Luke 3:18 So with many other exhortations *he preached good news to the people.* 

John the Baptist preached the good news, basically the gospel or aspects of it.

Acts 5:20 “Go and stand in the temple and *speak to the people all the words of this Life.*” 

One of the key aspects of the gospel message is the new life that God has provided, a life that is spiritual and eternal.

Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, *if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.* 

Although here Paul is talking about his own special commission to preach the gospel, it is applicable to all Christians, who are called to tell others the gospel. Note that God’s grace is a further key aspect of the gospel message – as is reconciliation with God (cf. [2Cor 5:18-19](#) ↓).

2Cor 5:18-19 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and *gave us the ministry of reconciliation*; ¹⁹*that is, in Christ God was reconciling^a the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* 

^a Or *God was in Christ, reconciling*

Phil 2:16 *... holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.* 

The Greek translated here as “holding fast” can alternatively be understood as meaning “hold out” (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV). As such Paul would be speaking of telling others the gospel message – “the word of life”.

1Pet 3:15 *... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ...* 

When asked or questioned by others about the gospel we should be ready to tell them about it, giving “a logical defense ... to account for the hope” (AMP) and belief that we have.

. . . Tell people the gospel about Jesus Christ

See also:

- [2Cor 5:18-19](#) ↑
- [Acts 5:42](#) ↓; [Rom 15:19-21](#) ↓
- *The gospel reveals God’s hidden mystery concerning Jesus Christ*, p. 1761

Mark 1:1 The beginning of *the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*^b 

^b Some manuscripts omit *the Son of God*

Acts 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture *he told him the good news about Jesus.* 

Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, *whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son*, that without ceasing I mention you ... 

Paul served God in spreading the gospel “about his Son” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Rom 16:25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to *my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ*, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ... 



Paul speaks here of proclaiming “the Good News ... about Jesus Christ” (GNT).

2Cor 1:19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes.

Gal 1:15-16 But when he who had set me apart before I was born,^c and who called me by his grace,¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to^d me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;^e ...

^c Greek *set me apart from my mother's womb*

^d Greek *in*

^e Greek *with flesh and blood*

Eph 3:8-9 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^f God who created all things, ...

^f Or *by*

In regard to the gospel being described as a “mystery” (cf. Rom 16:25 ↑; Col 4:3 ↓), see *The gospel reveals God's hidden mystery concerning Jesus Christ*, p. 1761.

Col 4:3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—

Phil 1:15-18a Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

This correlates preaching or defending the gospel (v. 16b) with preaching Christ (v. 15, 17, 18a), indicative of the fact that to tell others the gospel is to tell others about Jesus Christ. Note that in v. 18, Paul indicates that he is not unduly concerned about some people preaching Christ out of insincere motives, for the main thing is that Christ is proclaimed.

1Thes 3:2 ... and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker^g in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, ...

^g Some manuscripts *servant*

Timothy helped spread the gospel of Christ.

Rev 19:10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant^h with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

^h Greek *fellow bondservant*

The phrase “the testimony of Jesus” may be speaking of or referring to testifying about Jesus (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT), although it could more generally mean “the truth that Jesus revealed” (GNT). Note that the final sentence quite possibly means that holding to or proclaiming this testimony is the essence of prophecy (cf. AMP), for in the message about Jesus Christ are the fundamentals of God's will, in regard to both the present and the future.

John 1:31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.

Like John, we are to reveal Jesus Christ.

✚ Tell relatives and friends about Jesus:

John 1:41, 45-46 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). ... ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

Note that these are examples of “one to one” evangelism, with individuals telling a relative (v. 41) or a friend (v. 45) about Jesus.

Tell all people, everywhere

See also:

- *The gospel has spread far and wide*, p. 1776
- *The gospel will be preached to all nations before the end*, p. 1777

Mark 16:15, 20 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ... ²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.

The phrase “the whole creation” (v. 15) is used to refer to “everyone, everywhere” (NLT; cf. CEV).



Luke 24:47 ... and that *repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations*, beginning from Jerusalem.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*.

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 8:4-5, 25, 40 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the cityⁱ of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ... ²⁵Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, *preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans*. ... ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through *he preached the gospel to all the towns* until he came to Caesarea.

ⁱ Some manuscripts *a city*

Acts 11:20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who *on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^j also, preaching the Lord Jesus*.

^j Or *Greeks* (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)

Acts 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may *bring salvation to the ends of the earth*.”

Believers are to be a spiritual “light”, taking the message of God’s salvation “to the ends of the earth”.

Acts 22:15 ... for *you will be a witness for him to everyone* of what you have seen and heard.

Rom 1:14-15 *I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians,^k both to the wise and to the foolish*. ¹⁵*So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome*.

^k That is, non-Greeks

Here Paul shows his eagerness to carry out the command that Jesus Christ had given to him to testify in Rome: “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.” (Acts 23:11b)

Rom 15:19-21 ... by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that *from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ*; ²⁰*and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named*, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, ²¹*but as it is written*,

“Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”

2Cor 10:15-16 We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, ¹⁶*so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you*, without boasting of work already done in another’s area of influence.

1Thes 1:8 For *not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere*, so that we need not say anything.

The city of Thessalonica was on a key transport route and was also a busy seaport. Because of this and their vibrant proclamation of the gospel message, the Thessalonians’ faith – and presumably the message that their faith was based on – became known “everywhere”.

Matt 22:9 *Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find*.

This is from a parable of Jesus, applicable to believers being directed by God or Jesus Christ to go to all places and invite “as many as you find” into God’s kingdom.

✚ **Jesus’ command to “make disciples of all nations”:**

Matt 28:19-20 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in¹ the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*.

¹ Or *into*

Continue to tell people the gospel despite suffering for doing so

See also:

- *Spread the gospel boldly . . .*, p. 1749
- *. . . Spread the gospel boldly with God’s help*, p. 1749

Matt 10:23 *When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next*, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone *through all the towns of Israel* before the Son of Man comes.

The spreading of the gospel is largely in view – in particular in “through all the towns of Israel”. Note that there are a number of interpretations of the latter part of this verse, including ones that consider “the Son of Man comes” to refer to something other than Jesus Christ’s second coming – such as Christ coming in judgment on the Jews, possibly in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Another possibility is that



the verse has the church's mission to the world ultimately in view, rather than simply the towns of Israel.

Luke 21:12-13 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 

This illustrates that being persecuted for one's faith and spreading the gospel can actually lead to further opportunities to witness (cf. [Acts 1:19 ↓](#); [Acts 14:5-7 ↓](#)). Note that "all this" refers to signs of the end of the age (cf. vv. 8-11).

Acts 5:18-21a ... they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰"Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." ²¹And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. 

Acts 5:40-42 ... and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. 

Acts 11:19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. 

Note that the Jews were the first to be given the opportunity to respond to the gospel.

Acts 14:5-7 When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, ⁶they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, ⁷and there they continued to preach the gospel. 

Acts 20:22-24 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by^m the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 

^mOr bound in

1Thes 2:2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. 

2Tim 2:8-10 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 

Verse 10 suggests that Paul continued to work for the advancement of the gospel despite suffering for it.

2Cor 4:8-11, 15 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.  ... ¹⁵For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. 

In his work of proclaiming the gospel (cf. vv. 1-7), Paul endured much hardship and persecution (vv. 8-11). But for the benefit of others he continued his work, encouraged by the effect of God's grace and the glory it brought to God (v. 15). For comment on vv. 10-11, see [2Cor 4:8-11](#) – under ... and share Jesus Christ's sufferings, p. 2009.

Rev 12:11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 

These followers of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, were prepared to testify about him even if it meant death (cf. [Rev 6:9 ↓](#)).

✦ Some people lose their lives for testifying to the gospel:

Rev 6:9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 

Do not be ashamed of the gospel, even despite suffering for it

See also:

- [Spread the gospel boldly . . .](#), p. 1749
- [. . . Spread the gospel boldly with God's help](#), p. 1749



Note that most of the passages below contain powerful reasons as to why believers should not be ashamed of the gospel and of testifying to it.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 📖

2Tim 1:6-8, 11-12 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 📖 ... ¹¹for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹²which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. ⁿ 📖

ⁿ Or what I have entrusted to him; Greek my deposit

1Pet 4:16-17 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 📖

Suffering for spreading the gospel is a major part of the referred-to suffering (v. 16) that Christians face.

2Tim 1:16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, ... 📖

In conjunction with not being ashamed of the gospel, we should not be ashamed of other Christians and any punishment being given to them because of their faithfulness to the gospel (cf. **2Tim 1:8** ↑). We should likewise not be discouraged by this – “So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” (Eph 3:13)

Ps 119:46-47 I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, ⁴⁷for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. 📖

The last phrase of v. 46 is sometimes rendered as: “will not be ashamed” (GNT, NCV, NLT). Particularly in view of this, the passage is readily applicable to believers not being shamed or ashamed of the gospel and of testifying to it.

✦ **Keep a clear conscience so that opponents will be ashamed of their slander:**

1Pet 3:15-16 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone

who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 📖

Sharing the gospel is referred to in v. 15b. Note that similar to v. 16 – but in a different context – Paul tells Titus in his teaching ministry to use “... sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.” (Titus 2:8)

Try to persuade people to believe and respond to the gospel

2Cor 5:9-11, 20 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. ¹¹Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. 📖 ... ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 📖

In v. 11 Paul has at least partly in view his need to please Jesus Christ (v. 9), as like all people he will face Christ’s judgment of what he has done (v. 10). As such his healthy fear of Christ motivated him to please Christ by trying to persuade people to respond to the gospel. Knowing that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” should motivate us to try to persuade people to respond also for their own sake.

Acts 17:2-4 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” ⁴And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 📖

Acts 18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. 📖

Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 📖



Acts 26:28-29 And Agrippa said to Paul, “*In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?*”^o ²⁹*And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”* 📖

^o Or *In a short time you would persuade me to act like a Christian!*

Acts 28:23-24 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. *From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.* ²⁴*And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.* 📖

Acts 2:36, 40-41 Let all the house of Israel therefore *know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.* 📖 ... ⁴⁰*And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”* ⁴¹*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.* 📖

Although not explicitly referring to trying to “persuade” or “convince” people to believe and respond to the gospel, this and the following passages provide examples of or references to it.

Acts 17:17 *So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.* 📖

John 19:35 *He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.* 📖

Acts 26:17-18 ... delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸*to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.* 📖

Rom 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to *my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages* ²⁶*but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—* 📖

One can infer from this that the aim of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 25) is that we might bring people to believe and obey (v. 26).

2Cor 10:5 *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ...* 📖

In line with the first half of the verse, the second part indicates that in spreading the gospel we should aim to bring people with their “every thought” into obedience to Christ.

✦ **Jesus’ disciples were to be fishers of men:**

Matt 4:19 And he said to them, “Follow me, and *I will make you fishers of men.*” 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) What Things to Explain

See also:

- *c) Belief in Jesus Christ (I): General*, p. 1040

The following subsections are largely composed of verses that contain references to believers having witnessed and/or testifying to particular components of the gospel message. As such they illustrate what things believers today should explain as they spread the gospel message.

Subsections

- That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . .
- . . . Further key things about who Jesus Christ is
- Jesus Christ’s person and deeds – as witnessed and testified to by NT believers
- Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection . . .
- . . . NT believers testified to Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection having witnessed them
- The outcomes of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection
- The kingdom of God
- What God is like and what he has done . . .
- . . . including what God has done for you



- What else you have seen and heard (of God and Jesus Christ)
- How people should respond

That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . .

See also:

- [Luke 2:11](#) ↴; [1Jn 4:14](#) ↴
- [3. Jesus Christ](#), p. 91
- [11. God's Promised Messiah](#), p. 481
- [Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God](#), p. 1041

Acts 2:36 *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease *teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

Acts 18:5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, *testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.*

John 1:32-34 And John bore witness: *"I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."*

John's assertion that Jesus "is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (v. 33) appears in part to point to Jesus being the Son of God (v. 34) – the climax of John's testimony to what he had seen (v. 32) and the implications.

Acts 9:20 And immediately *he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."*

Rom 1:1-4 Paul, a servant^p of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for *the gospel of God*, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning his Son, who was descended from David^q according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, *Jesus Christ our Lord*, ...

^p Or slave; Greek bondservant

^q Or who came from the offspring of David

Important parts of "the gospel of God ... concerning his Son" (vv. 1b, 3a) are spoken of in vv. 3-4. As such they are things

which believers ought to bear in mind as they explain who Jesus Christ is. The reference to Jesus being a descendant of David has at least partly in view him being the Christ or Messiah, from the line of David.

. . . Further key things about who Jesus Christ is

Luke 2:11, 17-18 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ... ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.

The shepherds spread the word of what the angel had told them about who Jesus Christ is – with the angel's message basically being that Jesus Christ was Savior and Lord (v.11).

2Cor 4:5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants^r for Jesus' sake.

^r Greek bondservants

1Jn 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

Acts 10:42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

Rom 2:15-16 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

As per Acts 10:42 immediately above, this illustrates that one aspect of the gospel message is that Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all people.

‡ John the Baptist testified to Jesus' surpassing greatness and pre-existence:

John 1:15 (*John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'"*)

In Jewish thought, an older person was considered greater than one younger than themselves. Although John the Baptist had been born prior to Jesus, John claimed Jesus was greater than him because Jesus had existed before him. As such John points to the fact that Jesus surpasses all people in greatness.



Jesus Christ's person and deeds – as witnessed and testified to by NT believers

See also:

- [12. Jesus Christ's Mission](#), p. 537
- [Jesus Christ's words and knowledge](#) [give reason to believe in him], p. 1044

Although we are obviously not firsthand witnesses of Jesus' person (or being) and his deeds, we can still follow the example of NT believers in testifying to what we know about these things, explaining them to non-believers.

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* 

In saying that they had “seen his glory” (v. 14b), John probably means that he and others had seen Jesus' glory exhibited in his life through such things as his miracles, his transfiguration (cf. [2Pet 1:16-18 ↓](#)), and his death and resurrection. The final phrase is probably implying that God's grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

1Jn 1:1-2 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—* 

“That which was from the beginning” (v. 1a) and the references to the “life” – including “the word of life” (v. 1b) and “the eternal life” (v. 2b) – all refer to Jesus Christ. Here John is primarily speaking of Jesus Christ as having appeared – in a tangible, human form. In doing so he makes reference to Jesus Christ's eternal existence, even alluding to him being the source of eternal life.

2Pet 1:16-18 *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son,^s with whom I am well pleased,” ¹⁸we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.* 

^s Or *my Son, my (or the) Beloved*

Peter is speaking of James, John and himself being “eyewitnesses” of Christ's transfiguration (cf. [Matt 17:1-9](#)), in which Christ was visibly glorified.

John 4:39 *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”* 

This and the following verses speak of testifying to things that Jesus did.

Acts 2:22 *Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—* 

Here Peter testifies to God testifying to Jesus in Jesus' deeds.

Acts 10:39a *And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.* 

John 20:30-31 *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* 

John recorded Jesus' miracles as a testimony to not only what he did, but primarily to who he was.

‡ **Believers also attested to what Jesus had said:**

Heb 2:3 *... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ...* 

Jesus Christ's death and resurrection . . .

See also:

- [c\) Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death](#), p. 570
- [d\) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension](#), p. 579

Acts 2:23-24 *... this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* 

Acts 10:39b-40 *They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ...* 

Peter is witnessing (cf. [v. 39a ↑](#)) to Gentiles.

Acts 13:26-30 *Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. ²⁷For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor*



understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. ²⁸And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ...

This exemplifies that Jesus Christ's death and resurrection (vv. 27b-30) are key aspects of "the message of this salvation" (v. 26).

1Cor 1:23 ... but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ...

Paul and his associates preached that Christ was crucified.

1Cor 2:1-2 And I, when I came to you, brothers,^t did not come proclaiming to you the testimony^u of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

^t Or *brothers and sisters*

^u Some manuscripts *mystery* (or *secret*)

In v. 2, Paul says that he had decided that while he was with the Corinthians he would effectively forget about everything else and proclaim only Jesus Christ and his death.

1Cor 15:1, 3-5 Now I would remind you, brothers,^v of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ... ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

^v Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 6, 31, 50, 58

2Tim 2:8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ...

... NT believers testified to Jesus Christ's death and resurrection having witnessed them

See also:

- [1Cor 15:5](#) ↑
- [Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection](#), p. 582

John 19:33-37 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—

that you also may believe. ³⁶For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." ³⁷And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

Verses 36-37 explain the significance of what John testified to in vv. 33-35 – i.e. it was a fulfillment of Scripture that was understood to be messianic, thus indicative of Jesus being the Messiah.

Luke 24:33-35 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

John 20:18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

Acts 2:32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 5:30-32 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

In conjunction with their testimony of God raising Jesus from death (v. 30), Peter and the other apostles here also testify to God's exaltation of Jesus as "Leader and Savior" (v. 31). They were witnesses to this (v. 32a) in that they witnessed his ascension and both his teachings about this and the confirmation of his teachings by the wonders that had taken place following his exaltation.

Acts 10:40-41 ... but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹not not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

Here Peter is in effect testifying to a large gathering of Gentiles about what he had witnessed.



Acts 13:30-31 But *God raised him from the dead*, ³¹and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. 

1Pet 5:1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ... 

✦ **Jesus' exhortation to his disciples to witness:**

Luke 24:46-48 ... and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸*You are witnesses of these things.* 

Jesus' statement in v. 48 implies not only that the disciples did witness these things, but that they were to witness to others about these things.

The outcomes of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection

See also:

- [Luke 24:46-47](#) ; [Acts 5:30-31](#) 
- [13. Salvation through Jesus Christ](#), p. 587

Note that the passages cross-referenced above (that are in the previous subsection) both indicate that an outcome of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is that people can now repent and be forgiven.

2Cor 5:18-19, 21 All this is from *God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation*; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling^w the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.  ... ²¹*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* 

^w Or *God was in Christ, reconciling*

We are to tell others of how people can be reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. In v. 21, "become the righteousness of God" means either: to be made "right with God" (NCV™, NLT) or to "share the righteousness of God" (GNT). In any case, each alternative entails the other and they are both outcomes of God having Jesus take on our sins for us (v. 21a) in his death.

Acts 10:36, 43 As for the word that he sent to Israel, *preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ* (he is Lord of all),  ... ⁴³*To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.* 

Acts 13:32-33, 37-39 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."  ... ³⁷but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. ³⁸*Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹and by him everyone who believes is freed^x from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.* 

^x Greek *justified*; twice in this verse

In v. 32, "what God promised to the fathers" refers to messianic promises, fulfilled by God in raising Jesus (v. 33a). In v. 38, "Let it be known to you therefore" appears to indicate that forgiveness (v. 38) and freedom from sin (v. 39) are based on or confirmed by Jesus' resurrection (v. 37), it being affirmation that he was the promised Messiah (cf. vv. 30-36) who was to effect such things.

Acts 4:1-2 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and *proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.* 

Jesus Christ's own resurrection makes possible "resurrection from the dead" (cf. [Acts 17:18b](#) ). Our resurrection is based on Jesus' resurrection – in conjunction with his death and its significance – and confirmed by it. The raising of believers to eternal life is primarily in view.

Acts 17:18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babblers wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because *he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.* 

Note that "the resurrection" may be speaking of the resurrection of the dead, i.e. the resurrection of people (cf. CEV); hence the verse's inclusion here. However it may be referring instead to Jesus' own resurrection (cf. NCV, NIRV, NLT).

Acts 26:22-23 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so *I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by*



being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles. 

As a result of Jesus' resurrection, people have been given the "light of salvation" (GNT). This involves the promise of their own resurrection, as alluded to in v. 23 by the reference to Jesus Christ being "the first" to rise from the dead.

✦ Tell of the unsearchable riches of Christ:

Eph 3:8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to *preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ...* 

Paul preached to the Gentiles about "the endless treasures available to them in Christ" (NLT; cf. CEV, NIV).

The kingdom of God

See also:

- *Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God*, p. 566
- *c) The Kingdom of God*, p. 677

Matt 4:23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and *proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom* and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. 

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, *proclaiming the gospel of God*,¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." 

Matt 10:7 And *proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'* 

Luke 9:2 ... and he sent them out to *proclaim the kingdom of God* and to heal. 

Matt 24:14 And *this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations*, and then the end will come. 

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip as *he preached good news about the kingdom of God* and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 

Note that this mentions telling others about both the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ (cf. [Acts 28:23, 30-31](#) ↓), reflecting the fact that they are interrelated.

Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, *reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.* 

Acts 28:23, 30-31 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening *he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God* and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.  ... ³⁰He lived there two whole years at his own expense,^y and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹*proclaiming the kingdom of God* and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. 

^y Or in his own hired dwelling

What God is like and what he has done . . .

See also:

- *Note: Give praise and thanks to God with and among other people*, p. 1260

Ps 9:1 I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; *I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.* 

When God is praised in the Psalms it is usually in a public context, at the temple, with the psalmist telling others about God and what he has done. Often it includes a call to others to join in and acknowledge God's attributes and deeds. As such there are parallels and applications to NT evangelism.

Ps 68:34 *Ascribe power to God*, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies. 

The first clause may well suggest that we should proclaim God's power to others (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Ps 71:15-16 *My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.* ¹⁶*With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.* 

Ps 96:2-3 Sing to the LORD, bless his name; *tell of his salvation from day to day.* ³*Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!* 

This illustrates that we should proclaim God's salvation, glory and marvelous deeds to all people and nations – as is also clearly reflected in the following OT passages.

Ps 105:1-2 Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; *make known his deeds among the peoples!* ²Sing to him, sing praises to him; *tell of all his wondrous works!* 



Ps 145:4-6, 11-12 *One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.* ⁵On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. ⁶*They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.* ¹¹*They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,* ¹²*to make known to the children of man your^z mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*

^z Hebrew *his*; also next line

Isa 12:4-5 And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, *make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted.* ⁵“Sing praises to the LORD, for *he has done gloriously; let this be made known^a in all the earth.*”

^a Or *this is made known*

Proclaiming that “his name is exalted” (v. 4b), is akin to proclaiming that God is “great” (CEV, GNT) or “glorious” (NCV™).

Isa 66:19b And from them *I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.*

Acts 2:11b ... *we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.*

Here Jews “from every nation” are referring to the believers telling, in various languages, of mighty things God has done.

Acts 17:23-27 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, “To the unknown god.” *What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.* ²⁴*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,^b ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.* ²⁶*And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ...*

^b Greek *made by hands*

... including what God has done for you

Ps 66:16 Come and hear, all you who fear God, and *I will tell what he has done for my soul.*

Dan 4:2 *It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.*

Here Nebuchadnezzar begins his testimony to what God had done for him.

Ps 18:48b-49 ... *yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you rescued me from the man of violence.* ⁴⁹*For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name.*

Ps 71:24 And *my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long, for they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me hurt.*

Ps 102:18-20 *Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD: ¹⁹that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven the LORD looked at the earth, ²⁰to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die, ...*

The psalmist has his own anticipated deliverance partially in view.

Ps 118:17 *I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD.*

To “recount” something involves giving an account of it to another or others.

Isa 63:7 *I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.*

Jer 51:10 *The LORD has brought about our vindication; come, let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.*

This prophecy tells of former exiles in Babylon declaring what God had done for them in securing their release.

Luke 8:39 “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, *proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.*

1Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may *proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*



This indicates that one of the prime reasons why God has chosen us to belong to him – making us a priesthood and a holy people – is for us to proclaim his praises to other people (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT), including what he has done for us.

✦ The formerly blind man's testimony of what Jesus had done for him:

John 9:15, 25 So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And *he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."* ... ²⁵He answered, "*Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.*"

What else you have seen and heard (of God and Jesus Christ)

Acts 22:14-15 And he said, "The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ¹⁵*for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.*"

1Jn 1:1-3 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

Acts 4:18-20 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰*for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.*"

Acts 26:16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to *appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ...*

John 3:11 Truly, truly, I say to you, *we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen*, but you^c do not receive our testimony.

^c The Greek for *you* is plural here; also four times in verse 12

Jesus is speaking here. His use of "we" shows that what he says is inclusive of his disciples. His words are applicable to all believers.

John 15:27 *And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.*

Having been with Jesus "from the beginning", the disciples had been witness to much of Jesus' earthly ministry, seeing what he had done and hearing his teachings. As such they were to testify of such things.

John 21:24-25 This is *the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.* ²⁵*Now there are also many other things that Jesus did.* Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

The "things" (v. 24) that John testified to and wrote down in his gospel, presumably were: events of Jesus' life; things he taught; and in particular things that he did (v. 25; cf. 20:30-31).

How people should respond

See also:

- *I. Getting Right with God*, p. 1026

Note that faith and repentance are the two main responses spoken of.

Mark 1:15 ... and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent and believe in the gospel.*"

Acts 20:20-21 ... how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹*testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Acts 26:20 ... but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

Acts 2:37-38 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "*Brothers, what shall we do?*" ³⁸*And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

Acts 24:24-25 After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and *he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.* ²⁵*And as he reasoned about*



righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, “Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.” 

This appears to indicate that Paul was saying that people need to respond with faith in Jesus Christ (v. 24b) and with repentant lives as characterized by righteousness and self-control (v. 25a) – the importance of which is underscored by “the coming judgment,” (v. 25a), a further aspect of the gospel, supplementary to the basic gospel message.

Rom 10:8-9 But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, *the word of faith that we proclaim*); ⁹*because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* 

Rom 16:25-26 *Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—* 

2Cor 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. *We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* 

People must reconcile themselves to God, which as indicated above is done primarily through faith and repentance.

✦ Hearing the gospel is useless without faith:

Heb 4:2 *For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.*^d 

^d Some manuscripts *it did not meet with faith in the hearers*

This points to the assertion that hearing the gospel is of no use if one does not respond to it in faith.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) How to Spread the Message

See also:

- *Note: Churches send out workers, to aid the spread of the gospel and for other work . . .*, p. 1429
- *. . . The practice of workers going out in pairs*, p. 1430
- *b) How to Teach*, p. 1512

Subsections

- Present the gospel accurately and plainly
- The manner in which to present the gospel message
- Spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit
- Spread the gospel boldly . . .
- . . . Spread the gospel boldly with God’s help
- Work hard at spreading the gospel message
- Further notes on spreading the gospel message
- Note: Spreading the gospel is not to be done for profit; take measures not to be a financial burden

Present the gospel accurately and plainly

See also:

- *The teaching needs to be correct . . .*, p. 1515

Acts 18:25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit,^e *he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus*, though he knew only the baptism of John. 

^e Or *in the Spirit*

2Cor 4:2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. *We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.* 

In the second part of the verse, Paul speaks of how by openly stating the truth he sought to enable everyone to sense his sincerity.

Col 4:3-4 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴*that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.* 



✦ Verify that your account of the gospel is correct:

Gal 2:2 I went up because of a revelation and *set before them* (though privately before those who seemed influential) *the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.* 

Paul checked his version of the gospel with the church leaders in case his preaching was incorrect – and so “in vain”.

The manner in which to present the gospel message

See also:

- [1Thes 1:4-5](#) ↓

Col 4:6 *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.* 

The expression “seasoned with salt” most likely means either interesting (CEV, GNT) or pure.

1Pet 3:15 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet *do it with gentleness and respect, ...* 

Acts 18:25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And *being fervent in spirit,^f he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus,* though he knew only the baptism of John. 

^f Or *in the Spirit*

The phrase “fervent in spirit” appears to refer to Apollos’s great “enthusiasm” (GNT, NLT, NRSV) and/or “excitement” (CEV, NCV) in spreading the gospel. Such enthusiasm makes the gospel message more interesting and attractive. Note that it supplements spreading the gospel with a “deep conviction” ([1Thes 1:5](#) ↓) of its truth.

1Thes 2:3-5 For *our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.⁵ For we never came with words of flattery,^g as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.* 

^g Or *with a flattering speech*

Much of this points to the need to be sincere in spreading the gospel (cf. [2Cor 4:2](#) ↑).

Spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit

See also:

- [Acts 18:25](#) ↑
- *Serve God through the Holy Spirit*, p. 1419
- *The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God’s power*, p. 1770
- *The Holy Spirit witnesses about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief*, p. 1771

In spreading the gospel, we need to rely on the Holy Spirit – who brings God’s power (cf. [1Cor 2:5](#) ↓; [1Thes 1:5a](#) ↓). In doing so we need to be alert to the Holy Spirit’s promptings and guidance.

1Pet 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who *preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven,* things into which angels long to look. 

1Cor 2:4-5 ... and *my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,⁵ that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.* 

In v. 4 Paul acknowledges the Spirit’s power being behind the effectiveness of his preaching. While he does not expressly say that he looked to the Holy Spirit’s help in his preaching, his acknowledgement points to this as likely being the case. The same can be said of 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 below.

1Thes 1:4-5 For we know, brothers^h loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵*because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.* 

^h Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

✦ Filled with the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist would bring many of his people back to God:

Luke 1:15-16 ... for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and *he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.* ¹⁶*And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ...* 



Spread the gospel boldly . . .

Matt 10:26-28 So *have no fear of them*, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷*What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.* ²⁸*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.* Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.ⁱ 

ⁱ Greek *Gehenna*

The disciples were not to be afraid of those who would hate and persecute them (cf. vv. 21-23). Rather they were to fearlessly declare publicly what Jesus had told them in private, fearing instead “him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (v. 28b). Regarding v. 26b, in speaking of the inevitability of hidden things being made known, in this context Jesus appears most likely to be referring to the revelation and proclamation of the gospel – which the disciples were to help facilitate.

Acts 4:12-13, 18-20 [Peter:] *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* ¹³*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.*  ... ¹⁸*So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.* ¹⁹*But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,* ²⁰*for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”* 

In v. 12, Peter courageously declares the gospel before the antagonistic rulers, elders and teachers of the law (cf. vv. 5-11). Peter’s and John’s bold determination to continue preaching the gospel publicly despite the authorities’ continued opposition (vv. 18-20) is further illustrated and expressed immediately below in 5:27-29.

Acts 5:27-29 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, *“We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”* ²⁹*But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.* 

Acts 9:27-28 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus *he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.* ²⁸*So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.* 

Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months *spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.* 

Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, *“Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”* 

Acts 28:30-31 He lived there two whole years at his own expense,^j and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹*proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.* 

^j Or in his own hired dwelling

Phil 1:14 *And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word^k without fear.* 

^k Some manuscripts add *of God*

Phil 1:27-28 Only let your manner of life be worthy^l of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind *striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,* ²⁸*and not frightened in anything by your opponents.* This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. 

^l Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

In v. 27, “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” refers to the struggle to spread – and possibly also to guard – the body of truth of which the gospel consists.

. . . Spread the gospel boldly with God’s help

See also:

- *b) God Works through His People (I): General*, p. 961
- *c) God Works through His People (II): Empowerment*, p. 968
- *b) Do the Work through God*, p. 1414
- *Pray for the proclamation of the gospel, including others who proclaim it*, p. 1753
- *Pray for the salvation of unbelievers*, p. 1753
- *The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God’s power*, p. 1770

In spreading the gospel boldly, we should seek God’s help through prayer prior to telling others the gospel, and rely on God’s help while we are telling them.



1Thes 2:2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, *we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.* 📖

Acts 4:29-31 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants^m to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.* 📖

^mGreek bondservants

Acts 14:3 So they remained for a long time, *speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.* 📖

Acts 18:9-11 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” ¹¹And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. 📖

Undoubtedly Paul would have continued to teach the word of God (v. 11), without fear (v. 9), in reliance on God’s promised help (v. 10).

Eph 6:18b-20 To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹and also for me, *that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.* 📖

In his request to the Ephesians to pray for him in his work, Paul showed that he looked to God’s help in order to boldly proclaim the gospel.

✦ In difficult circumstances, Jesus Christ strengthened Paul so that he could proclaim the gospel:

2Tim 4:16-17 *At my first [court] defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.* So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. 📖

Work hard at spreading the gospel message

1Cor 15:10-11 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, *I worked harder than any of them*, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, *so we preach* and so you believed. 📖

With the reference to his preaching (v. 11), Paul presumably has his work in spreading the gospel primarily in mind when speaking of his hard work (v. 10b).

Col 1:28-29 *Him we proclaim*, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, *that we may present everyone mature in Christ.* ²⁹*For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* 📖

Here Paul is probably referring to his evangelistic work in spreading the gospel as well as to his pastoral work amongst Christians.

Phil 2:22 But you know Timothy’s^a proven worth, how *as a son^o with a father he has served with me in the gospel.* 📖

^a Greek *his*

^o Greek *child*

The fact that Timothy worked hard in furthering the gospel is suggested by him being said to have “served” in the work, a term which some commentators suggest could be taken as meaning slaved or labored – “toiled with me zealously” (AMP). The simile “as a son with a father” may also in part speak of Timothy’s dedication to the work.

Phil 4:3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion,^p *help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.* 📖

^p Or *loyal Syzygus*; Greek *true yokefellow*

These women had “worked hard” (GNT, NLT) in spreading the gospel.

1Thes 2:9 *For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.* 📖

Here Paul appears to be referring primarily at least to working hard to support himself (cf. Acts 18:2-4) while preaching the gospel to the Thessalonians. We often need to work hard not only in actually telling others the message, but in enabling ourselves to be in a position to do so.

1Tim 4:9-10 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰*For to this end we toil and strive,^a because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.* 📖



^q Some manuscripts *and suffer reproach*

Spreading the gospel of God's salvation for all people appears to be largely in view as that for which Paul and his associates would "toil and strive".

✦ Paul served with his spirit in preaching the gospel:

Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom *I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son*, that without ceasing I mention you ...

☰

This implies that Paul served wholeheartedly (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) in spreading the gospel.

Further notes on spreading the gospel message

Matt 7:6 *Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.* ☰

There is no point trying to give things that are "holy" (GNT, NCV, NLT) or of God (cf. CEV) to people who cannot – or will not – appreciate or understand them. While one needs to be very careful in applying this to telling (or not telling) the gospel message to someone, there certainly are times when doing so would obviously be of no benefit, even detrimental.

Matt 10:16-17 Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so *be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.* ¹⁷*Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ...* ☰

In sending his disciples out into a hostile world to preach the kingdom, Jesus warned them in v. 16 to be wise (cf. **Col 4:5** ↓) and pure, the latter possibly referring to their methods as well as their general behavior.

Col 4:5 *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.* ☰

Acts 18:28 ...for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus. ☰

This points to the importance of the Scriptures for spreading the gospel.

2Cor 4:1 Therefore, *having this ministry by the mercy of God,*^r *we do not lose heart.* ☰

^r Greek *as we have received mercy*

Paul draws encouragement from the fact that he had been given his ministry by God in his mercy – in spite of Paul's past. In doing so, Paul does not lose heart in his work of spreading the gospel (v. 1b). We likewise should bear in mind God's mercy to us as we spread God's word, so not to become disheartened.

Phil 1:7, 16 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace,^s both in my imprisonment and *in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.* ☰ ... ¹⁶The latter do it out of love, knowing that *I am put here for the defense of the gospel.* ☰

^s Or *you all have fellowship with me in grace*

This points to the fact that in spreading the gospel we must be prepared to defend the credibility of the gospel message (cf. **1Pet 3:15** ↓).

1Pet 3:15 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, *always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;* yet do it with gentleness and respect, ... ☰

✦ Jesus' instructions to the disciples regarding staying at a home, when taking the gospel to a town:

Matt 10:11-13 And *whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.* ¹²*As you enter the house, greet it.* ¹³*And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.* ☰

The references to "greet" (v. 12) and "peace" (v. 13) appear to have in view the middle-eastern customary greeting of peace ("Peace be to this house!" – Luke 10:5). Here it possibly alludes to, or is inclusive of, peace from that which sin causes (cf. AMP). A home being "worthy" (v. 13a) is most likely a reference to the occupants accepting the disciples' message; rejection of their message would of course usually result in them being unwelcome. On encountering rejection they were to rescind their greeting or blessing of peace (v. 13b).

Note: Spreading the gospel is not to be done for profit; take measures not to be a financial burden

See also:

- *Rather than insist on your own rights, act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel,* p. 1754
- *Support others spreading the gospel . . .*, p. 1757

2Cor 2:17 For *we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word,* but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. ☰

Matt 10:7-8 And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,^t cast out demons. *You received without paying; give without pay.* ☰



^t *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

1Cor 9:18 *What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.* 📖

Paul considered the “satisfaction” (NLT) or “privilege” (GNT) of preaching the gospel free of charge as being a reward in itself.

Acts 20:33-34 *I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.* 📖

2Cor 11:7, 9 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because *I preached God’s gospel to you free of charge?* 📖 ... ⁹And when I was with you and was in need, *I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.* 📖

Paul obtained support from other churches rather than from the people he was preaching the gospel to.

2Cor 12:14-18 Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. *And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.* ¹⁵*I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?* ¹⁶But granting that *I myself did not burden you, I was crafty, you say, and got the better of you by deceit.* ¹⁷*Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you?* ¹⁸I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. *Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?* 📖

In v. 14b Paul indicated that he saw himself as a parent in the faith to the Corinthians; as such he did not think it appropriate for them to have to support him.

1Thes 2:5, 9 For we never came with words of flattery,^u as you know, *nor with a pretext for greed*—God is witness. 📖 ... ⁹For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: *we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.* 📖

^u Or *with a flattering speech*

2Thes 3:7-8 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because *we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.* 📖

✦ **Elisha’s rejection of profit from Naaman’s healing – in contrast to his servant’s response:**

2Ki 5:14-16, 19-20, 26-27 So he [Naaman] went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. ¹⁵Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, “Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; *so accept now a present from your servant.*” ¹⁶But he said, “As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none.” And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 📖 ... ¹⁹He said to him, “Go in peace.” But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, ²⁰Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, “See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.” 📖 ... ²⁶But he [Elisha] said to him, “Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? *Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants?*” ²⁷Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.” So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow. 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Supplementary Actions

Subsections

- Pray for the proclamation of the gospel, including others who proclaim it
- Pray for the salvation of unbelievers
- Rather than insist on your own rights, act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel
- Live and act in a way that is consistent with the gospel
- In acting consistently with the gospel, you and the faith will not be discredited . . .
- . . . You will have credibility, attracting people to the gospel
- Support others spreading the gospel . . .
- . . . Give hospitality and aid to visiting preachers and workers
- Note: Guard the gospel message



Pray for the proclamation of the gospel, including others who proclaim it

See also:

- *Pray for those spreading the gospel*, p. 1323

Matt 9:37-38 Then he said to his disciples, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”* ☞

Ask God to enable and move more people to commit themselves and their time to reaching others with the gospel.

Acts 4:29-31 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants^v to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. ☞

^v Greek *bondservants*

Here the believers pray for their own efforts to proclaim the gospel. Similarly in 6:4 below, the disciples own efforts would have been at least partially in view. The remaining passages largely concern prayer for others spreading the word.

Acts 6:4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. ☞

The prayer that the disciples determined to give more attention to, would have at least in part concerned the “ministry of the word”. This would have involved spreading the gospel, as well as teaching believers.

Acts 13:2-3 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ☞

Presumably the prayer was focused on Barnabas and Saul and the work ahead of them (v. 2) in proclaiming the gospel.

Eph 6:18b-20 To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. ☞

Col 4:3-4 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. ☞

2Thes 3:1-2 Finally, brothers,^w pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored,^x as happened among you, ²and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. ☞

^w Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 6, 13

^x Or *glorified*

✚ Pray that God’s kingdom would come:

Matt 6:9-10 Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.^y ¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done,^z on earth as it is in heaven. ☞

^y Or *Let your name be kept holy*, or *Let your name be treated with reverence*

^z Or *Let your kingdom come, let your will be done*

“Your kingdom come” (v. 10) appears primarily to be a request for the full manifestation of the kingdom (cf. CEV, NLT). But some commentators interpret it to also refer to the further extension of the kingdom in its present form – in which the spreading of the gospel obviously is a vital part.

Pray for the salvation of unbelievers

Acts 26:28-29 And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?”^a ²⁹And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am— except for these chains.” ☞

^a Or *In a short time you would persuade me to act like a Christian!*

“I would to God” is indicative of a prayerful wish (cf. CEV, NASB; **Rom 10:1** ↓), comparable to a prayer – “I pray to God” (NCV™, NLT, NRSV; cf. GNT, NIV).

Rom 10:1 Brothers,^b my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ☞

^b Or *Brothers and sisters*

1Tim 2:1-4 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ☞



Verses 3-4 suggest that our prayers for other people (v. 1) should include prayer for their salvation.

Rather than insist on your own rights, act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel

1Cor 9:12-15, 18 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, *we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.* ¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. ¹⁵*But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision.* For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. ¶ ... ¹⁸What then is my reward? That *in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.* ¶

Paul forsook his right of being supported in his work of spreading the gospel, enduring “anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ” (v. 12). In v. 13, to illustrate that he has this right, Paul is referring to the OT law’s stipulations that those who work in the temple have the right to take from certain offerings for their own food.

1Cor 9:19-23 *For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.* ²⁰*To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.* ²¹*To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.* ²²*To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.* ²³*I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.* ¶

Further to foregoing his rights regarding being supported (cf. [vv. 12-15, 18 ↑](#)), in vv. 19-22 Paul tells of how he was even prepared to make himself a slave to others and to take measures so that they could identify with him (cf. [Gal 4:12](#) – “I also have become as you are”). He would “fit in with them” (NLT) and “find common ground” (NLT). All this he would do for the sake of the gospel (v. 23). Note that in v. 22 Paul is speaking of forgoing freedoms that he had in Christ for the sake of Christians with weak consciences.

1Cor 10:33 ... just as *I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.* ¶

Note that here – and possibly in other references in this and previous subsections – the sanctification of believers is as much in view as the saving of non-believers.

1Thes 1:5 ... because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. *You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.* ¶

When bringing the gospel to the Thessalonians (v. 5a), Paul (and his associates) lived among them in a way that was for their good (v. 5b; cf. [1Thes 2:6-9 ↓](#)).

1Thes 2:6-9 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though *we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.* ⁷*But we were gentle^c among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.* ⁸*So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.* ⁹*For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.* ¶

^c Some manuscripts *infants*

In addition to foregoing their rights so as not to be a burden to the Thessalonians (vv. 6-7, 9), such was their love for them that Paul and his co-workers even shared their lives with them (v. 8). This would have involved further expending of themselves.

✦ Jesus’ example of forgoing his right so as not to cause offense:

Matt 17:24-27 When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the tax?” ²⁵He said, “Yes.” And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?” ²⁶And when he said, “From others,” *Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free.* ²⁷*However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel.*^d *Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”* ¶

^d Greek *stater*, a silver coin worth four drachmas or approximately one shekel

In vv. 25-26 Jesus points out that the sons of the kingdom, of God’s family, have the right to not have to pay such taxes – they are in a sense above or apart from such things. But then



in v. 27 he shows that believers should forgo such rights so as to not unnecessarily cause offence to others.

Live and act in a way that is consistent with the gospel

Living and acting in a way that is consistent with the gospel involves following biblical teachings regarding how we should live, which accompany and complement the teachings of the basic gospel message.

1Cor 4:17 That is why I sent^e you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, *to remind you of my ways in Christ,*^f *as I teach them everywhere in every church.*

^e Or *am sending*

^f Some manuscripts add *Jesus*

Paul effectively claims that his way of life, that he lived in Christ, was what he taught – i.e. his actions were in agreement with his teachings (cf. CEV, NIV).

2Cor 9:13 By their approval of this service, they^g will glorify God because of *your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ,* and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ...

^g Or *you*

The Corinthians – at least in the matter being discussed – submitted in obedience to the gospel.

2Cor 13:8 *For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.*

There are a number of ideas as to precisely what Paul means here. Quite possibly he is saying he would not or could not do anything that is incompatible or contradictory to the gospel and its moral implications. (cf. NBC)

Eph 4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,* ...

Phil 1:27 *Only let your manner of life be worthy^h of the gospel of Christ,* so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ...

^h Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

Living a life “worthy of the gospel” is an important aspect of “striving ... for the faith of the gospel”.

1Thes 2:9-10 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, *while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.* ¹⁰*You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.*

The “holy and righteous and blameless” conduct of Paul and those ministering with him (v. 10), showed that they lived in a way that was consistent with and worthy of the gospel that they preached (v. 9).

3Jn 1:12 *Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself.* We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

John indicates that Demetrius’ life is shown in a good light by the gospel (as well as by the testimony of others). His conduct was in accordance with “the true message that he teaches” (CEV).

✦ **Our actions should not contradict any particular aspects of the gospel message:**

Gal 2:14 But when I saw that *their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel,* I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Here Paul rightly rebukes Peter for not acting in a way that is consistent with the gospel message (cf. vv. 11-14). Peter’s actions had implied that Gentiles needed to follow Jewish regulations, contrary to the gospel’s teaching that Christians have been freed from the OT law.

In acting consistently with the gospel, you and the faith will not be discredited . . .

See also:

- [Phil 1:27](#)
- [Glorify and honor God and Jesus Christ by how you live . . .](#), p. 1240

The following verses show that it is essential that our lives be consistent with our faith so as not to discredit ourselves and things related to our faith – including our ministry, God’s word, God’s name and other believers.

2Cor 6:3 *We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry,* ...

Paul asserts that he and companions did nothing that would discredit their ministry and so be an obstacle to anyone’s response.



2Cor 8:20-21 *We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, ²¹for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.*

Paul realized that it was critical for his ministry that his actions not only be right but that they also be seen to be so (v. 21), in order to avoid any blame or criticism (v. 20).

1Tim 5:13-14 Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and *give the adversary no occasion for slander.*

In a society where presumably there was minimal opportunity for women to be employed, Paul addresses his concerns regarding the prospect of idleness resulting in the whole church and the gospel being slandered.

1Tim 6:1 Let all who are under a yoke as slavesⁱ *regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.*

ⁱ Greek *bondservants*

Titus 2:4-5, 7-8 ... and so *train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.* ... ⁷*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.*

1Pet 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

The "ignorance of foolish people" refers to or at least encompasses "foolish accusations" (NLT) against believers.

1Pet 3:14b-16 Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶*having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*

2Pet 2:2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Peter here refers to the godless practices of false teachers corrupting others in the church, leading to the gospel being maligned.

Neh 5:9 So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies?"

... You will have credibility, attracting people to the gospel

2Cor 6:4-7 ... but *as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; ⁷by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ...*

Rather than discrediting their ministry (cf. v. 3), Paul claims that everything he and his companions did – persevering in hardship (vv. 4b-5) and acting in godly ways (vv. 6-7) – had shown them to be true servants of God (v. 4a).

1Thes 4:11-12 ... and to *aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ¹²so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.*

In v. 11 Paul urges the Thessalonians to live quietly and peacefully, to mind their own business and to earn their own living (cf. GNT). A key goal of this was so that their behavior be seen to be proper by outsiders (v. 12), earning their respect (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) and so having credibility.

Titus 2:9-10 *Slavesⁱ are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.*

ⁱ Or *servants*; Greek *bondservants*

The last clause implies that such behavior (vv. 9-10a) makes the gospel "attractive" (NCV™, NIV®, NLT).

1Pet 2:12 *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

Living honorable lives with "good deeds" will not only give believers credibility in the eyes of non-Christians, eventually it will be cause for them to glorify God "on the day of visitation". This last phrase is probably a reference to judgment day (cf. NLT, NRSV) or Christ's return (cf. NCV). However, some think it may refer to God granting salvation to such people, thereby implying that the good deeds of Christians can be a factor in the conversion of opponents (cf. **Titus 2:9-10 ; 1Pet 3:1-2**).



1Pet 3:1-2 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, *they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ²when they see your respectful and pure conduct.* 

2Tim 3:14-15 But as for you, *continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom^k you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* 

^k The Greek for *whom* is plural

Particularly in view of v. 15, those “from whom you learned it” (v. 14) appears to be a reference to Timothy’s mother and grandmother (cf. 1:5) – and possibly also to Paul himself. The character and lives of these people who had taught Timothy had been a significant factor in him accepting their teaching, as reflected by Paul’s appeal to this in encouraging Timothy to continue in his faith.

✦ The unity of believers promotes belief in others:

John 17:20-23 I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹*that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* ²²*The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,* ²³*I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.* 

The phrase “be in us” (v. 21b) is correlated with the unity of believers (cf. CEV, NCV), as is suggested by the surrounding statements and by some ancient authorities having “be one in us” (cf. NRSV text note).

Support others spreading the gospel . . .

See also:

- *Give your leaders material support . . .*, p. 1501
- *. . . Leaders deserve material support*, p. 1502

3Jn 1:7-8 For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸*Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.* 

1Cor 9:14, 18 In the same way, *the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.*  ... ¹⁸*What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.* 

In the last clause in v. 18 Paul refers to his right to support in his work of preaching the gospel. As such, in accordance with the Lord’s command (v. 14), v. 18 suggests that while spreading the gospel should not be done for profit, others still have the responsibility to support preachers.

2Cor 11:7-9 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because *I preached God’s gospel to you free of charge?* ⁸*I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.* ⁹*And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need.* So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 

Various churches supported Paul in his work of preaching the gospel, allowing him to preach it free of charge.

Phil 2:25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and *your messenger and minister to my need, . . .* 

Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians to bring their gifts of aid to Paul (cf. [Phil 4:18 ↓](#)) and apparently also to assist him in other ways in his work of spreading the gospel.

Phil 4:14-19 *Yet it was kind of you to share^l my trouble.* ¹⁵*And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.* ¹⁶*Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.* ¹⁷*Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.* ¹⁸*I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.* ¹⁹*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* 

^l Or *have fellowship in*

^m Or *I seek the profit that accrues to your account*

In v. 15, “giving and receiving” refers to what might be termed “transactions” between the Philippians and Paul. They gave him aid (vv. 16, 18) and in return spiritual blessings were credited to their account (v. 17; cf. v. 19).



... Give hospitality and aid to visiting preachers and workers

Rom 15:24 I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be *helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.* 

Rom 16:2 ... that you may *welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you,* for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. 

1Cor 16:5-6 I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, ⁶and *perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go.* 

Philem 1:22 At the same time, *prepare a guest room for me,* for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you. 

Titus 3:13 *Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing.* 

3Jn 1:5-6 Beloved, *it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ⁶who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.* 

Acts 16:15 And after she was baptized, and her household as well, *she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay."* And she prevailed upon us. 

Acts 21:8, 10 On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and *we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.*  ... ¹⁰While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 

Philip, himself an evangelist, gave hospitality to Paul and his associates.

Luke 10:7-8, 38 And *remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.* ⁸Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, *eat what is set before you.*  ... ³⁸Now as they went on their way, *Jesus^a entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.* 

^a Greek *he*

The instructions given in vv. 7-8 to the itinerant workers themselves, obviously imply that such hospitality should be

given to them, as Martha later exemplifies (v. 38). Note that the exhortations to stay in the one house (v. 7) may be admonishing against looking for a better offer.

2Ki 4:8-10 One day Elisha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who *urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food.* ⁹And she said to her husband, "Behold now, *I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way.* ¹⁰*Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there.*" 

† Some implications and results of receiving gospel workers (and other people of God):

Matt 10:40-42 "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." 

Note that other implications and results of receiving – or welcoming and assisting – itinerant workers are given above in 3 John 1:8 and in Philippians 4:14-19 in the previous subsection.

Note: Guard the gospel message

We are to guard the gospel message from being distorted. As such we need to guard: our own understanding and version of the gospel (which is partially in view in the references below from 1 and 2 Timothy and also Galatians 2:3); and the gospel message from being distorted by others (which is what is largely in view in the other references).

1Tim 6:20-21 O Timothy, *guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge,"* ²¹for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you. ^o 

^o The Greek for *you* is plural

The phrase "the deposit entrusted to you" is referring to the gospel (as is "the good deposit" in 2 Timothy 1:14 immediately below). In v. 20b, Paul urges Timothy to turn away from matters that would corrupt his message.



2Tim 1:13-14 Follow the pattern of the sound^p words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴*By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.* 📖

^p Or *healthy*

Gal 2:1-5 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ²I went up because of a revelation and *set before them* (though privately before those who seemed influential) *the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.* ³But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. ⁴Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— ⁵*to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.* 📖

As commented earlier, in v. 2 Paul tells of how he checked his version of the gospel with the church leaders in case his preaching was incorrect – and so “in vain”. In v. 5 Paul speaks of how he fought to maintain “the truth of the gospel” against corruption by supposed believers, who advocated circumcision and adherence to the law (vv. 3-4), apparently wanting to tie these in with the gospel message.

Jude 1:3-4 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write *appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.* ⁴For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 📖

Here “the faith” refers to the “sum of Christian belief” (AMP) – notably the gospel message, “the Good News” (GNT).

Gal 1:6-9 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a *different gospel*— ⁷*not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.* ⁸*But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.* ⁹*As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.* 📖

Here Paul vehemently speaks out for the gospel message – defending or guarding it – condemning the teaching of a distorted adaptation of the gospel.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Insights

See also:

- *b) God Works through His People (I): General*, p. 961
- *c) God Works through His People (II): Empowerment*, p. 968

This section provides insights on the gospel message itself and on why it is so critical that we tell others the gospel. It also teaches us that in all our efforts to do so, we must bear in mind that the effectiveness of the message comes from God – and that people’s responses to it are in his hands, not ours.

a) Insights on the Gospel Message

See also:

- *The gospel is the power and wisdom of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world*, p. 1770

Subsections

- The gospel is not made up by men – it is true
- The gospel reveals God’s hidden mystery concerning Jesus Christ
- The gospel is of God’s grace
- The gospel is good news
- The message of Jesus Christ is a stumbling block for many people
- Those who do not believe and respond to the gospel will be condemned

The gospel is not made up by men – it is true

Gal 1:11-12 For I would have you know, brothers, that *the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel.*^a ¹²*For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.* 📖

^a Greek *not according to man*

Note that in line with this, in v. 1 Paul points out that he was “not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father”.

1Thes 2:2-3, 13 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God *to declare to you the gospel of God* in the midst of much conflict. ³*For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive,* 📖 ... ¹³And we also thank God constantly^b for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. 📖

^b Or *without ceasing*

The reference to the gospel as “the gospel of God” (v. 2) and “the word of God” (v. 13) asserts that it is not made up by men – and so that it is true, not false in any way (v. 3).

2Pet 1:16 *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* 📖

Heb 2:3-4 ... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? *It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,* ⁴*while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.* 📖

The gospel message of salvation was first announced by Jesus Christ, and a number who had heard him confirmed what he had said to others (cf. [Luke 1:1-4](#) ↓) – including to the writer of Hebrews. In saying that they “attested” to it, the writer appears to mean that they attested or confirmed that it was what Jesus had said and so that it was “real and genuine” (AMP). This was also affirmed by the signs that had accompanied it (v. 4).

Luke 1:1-4 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ²*just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us,* ³*it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,* ⁴*that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.* 📖

Although Luke does not specifically say that he used the eyewitness accounts concerning “the word” (v. 2), the gospel message, this is implied. Luke’s Gospel and other such accounts (v. 1) were based largely on what eyewitnesses had passed on – along with careful investigation (v. 3a) – thus adding to the certainty of what they contain (v. 4).

John 19:35 *He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.* 📖



John 21:24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and *we know that his testimony is true.* 

The last clause speaks of John himself along with others, possibly including his readers, affirming “that his testimony is true” (cf. [John 19:35](#) ↑).

Acts 26:22-26 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, *saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.* ²⁴And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” ²⁵But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but *I am speaking true and rational words.* ²⁶*For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.* 

The gospel message was not made up by Jesus and/or his followers, for it says “nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass” (v. 22b; cf. [Rom 16:25-26](#) ↓). Also, it is both “true and rational” (v. 25). Verse 26 makes a further important point attesting to the truth of the gospel. The events it is based on were widely known, familiar to the king, as they did not take place in some obscure setting. Similarly, in Acts 2:22 Peter points out to a crowd that Jesus’ deeds were widely known, referring to his “mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know.”

Eph 1:13 In him you also, when you heard *the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation*, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ... 

The phrase “the word of truth” of course affirms the truth of the gospel. It is also used in reference to the gospel in: Colossians 1:5 (“the word of truth, the gospel”); 2Tim 2:15 (“a worker ... rightly handling the word of truth”); and James 1:18 (“he brought us forth by the word of truth”).

1Jn 2:21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because *no lie is of the truth.* 

The “truth” here is basically a reference to the gospel.

The gospel reveals God’s hidden mystery concerning Jesus Christ

Rom 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to *my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—* 

The term “the prophetic writings” (v. 26) appears to refer to the writings of the OT prophets. As such this passage speaks of the role of the prophets’ writings in the revelation of the gospel, the previously hidden mystery about Jesus Christ. Previous obscure aspects of their writings have now become clear because of: Jesus Christ’s fulfillment of them; his teachings; and the revelation given to the apostles both during and after Christ’s ministry. As such, the prophets’ writings help reveal and affirm the gospel message.

Eph 1:7-10 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, *in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known^c to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.* 

^c Or *he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known . . .*

Paul has the gospel in view as the means by which God has made known to us the mystery of his will that he would fulfill through Jesus Christ.

Eph 3:3-11 ... how *the mystery was made known to me by revelation*, as I have written briefly. ⁴When you read this, you can perceive my insight into *the mystery of Christ*, ⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶*This mystery is^d that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* ⁷*Of this gospel I was made a minister* according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, *to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^e God who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.



¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ...

^d The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

^e Or *by*

Verse 10 indicates that the aspect of the gospel mystery concerning the union of the Gentiles with Israel in the one body of the church (v. 6), had even been hidden from the heavenly powers (cf. [1Pet 1:12 ↓](#)).

Col 1:25-27 ... of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, *to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Col 2:2-3 ... that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of *God's mystery, which is Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

All the treasures of divine wisdom and spiritual knowledge are stored up in Christ – and now made accessible through the gospel which reveals God's mystery about him.

1Cor 2:1, 7-10 And I, when I came to you, brothers,^f did not come *proclaiming to you the testimony^g of God* with lofty speech or wisdom. ... ⁷*But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"— ¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.*

^f Or *brothers and sisters*

^g Some manuscripts *mystery (or secret)*

The "testimony of God" (v. 1) and "a secret and hidden wisdom of God" which Paul spoke to others of (v. 7), both probably refer to God's "mystery" (v. 1 text note), the gospel. This mystery concerns the crucified Christ (v. 8) and involves matters previously not perceived by humankind (vv. 8-9) all of which is revealed to people by the Holy Spirit (v. 10, cf. [Eph 3:5 ↑](#); [1Pet 1:10-12 ↓](#)).

Titus 1:1-3 Paul, a servant^h of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised

before the ages beganⁱ ³and *at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ...*

^h Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

ⁱ Greek *before times eternal*

At his appointed time God revealed the previously hidden gospel message – concerning the promise of eternal life (v. 2) in Christ – through the preaching of Paul, and others (cf. [1Pet 1:10-12 ↓](#)).

1Pet 1:10-12 *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

The prophets were given a limited revelation of the salvation that would come through the sufferings of Jesus Christ (vv. 10-11); as such it was a hidden mystery of God. Now through the preaching of the gospel, by the Holy Spirit, it has been fully revealed (v. 12). The final statement of v. 12 highlights the mystery that surrounds or surrounded what the gospel reveals.

‡ **This mystery of "godliness" – based on Jesus Christ – is great:**

1Tim 3:16 *Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He^j was manifested in the flesh, vindicated^k by the Spirit,^l seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*

^j Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^k Or *justified*

^l Or *vindicated in spirit*

The term translated here as "godliness" is also translated as "our religion" (CEV, GNT, NRSV) and similarly "our faith" (NLT). It appears to speak of the mystery that produces godliness. The remainder of the verse suggests that this is the gospel message about Jesus Christ and what he accomplished in his mission, which produces godliness as its significance is applied to one's life.

The gospel is of God's grace

The gospel message about Jesus Christ is founded on and manifests God's grace – as is reflected by the following verses.



Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to *the gospel of the grace of God*. 📖

Acts 20:32 And now I commend you to God and to *the word of his grace*, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 📖

Col 1:5b-6 *Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel*, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since *the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth*, ... 📖

Acts 14:3 So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to *the word of his grace*, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 📖

Here “the Lord” probably is Jesus Christ. The gospel illustrates both God’s and Jesus Christ’s grace (cf. Rom 5:15). God’s grace is seen in him providing a way of salvation for undeserving humankind at the cost of his only Son. Jesus Christ’s grace is seen in him willingly foregoing his glory for a time and enduring great suffering for undeserving humankind.

2Cor 4:15 For it is all for your sake, so that *as grace extends to more and more people* it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. 📖

With his reference to God’s grace, Paul may be referring to the gospel message being based on it and telling of it – as is the case elsewhere in this subsection. Alternatively, or additionally, he may have primarily in view God in his grace bringing people to believe in the message.

Eph 3:1-3 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— ²assuming that you have heard of *the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you*, ³how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 📖

There is some doubt as to how “grace” is used in v. 2. Amongst the possibilities are that it refers to God’s grace: in commissioning Paul for this work; in making known the mystery of Christ to Paul (cf. v. 3); in the message itself; and in imparting the message to the Ephesians or the Gentiles in general. If the third possibility is the case, the verse would clearly indicate that the gospel is of God’s grace. The other possibilities also reflect this, to varying degrees.

The gospel is good news

Note that the Greek word translated as “gospel” basically means “good news”.

Luke 2:10 And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, *I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people*. 📖

Luke 3:18 So with many other exhortations *he preached good news to the people*. 📖

Luke 8:1a Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and *bringing the good news of the kingdom of God*. 📖

Acts 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture *he told him the good news about Jesus*. 📖

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip as *he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*, they were baptized, both men and women. 📖

Acts 10:36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, *preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ* (he is Lord of all), ... 📖

Acts 13:32-33 And *we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers*, ³³*this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus*, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’” 📖

In v. 32, “what God promised to the fathers” refers to messianic promises, fulfilled by God in raising Jesus (v. 33a).

Acts 14:15 Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and *we bring you good news*, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 📖

Rom 10:15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who *preach the good news!*” 📖

1Pet 1:25 ... but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And *this word is the good news that was preached to you*. 📖

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming *the gospel of God*, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in *the gospel*.” 📖



That the terms “gospel” and “good news” are interchangeable is suggested by other translations at times rendering the Greek for “gospel” as “good news” (AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

✦ The gospel is “treasure”:

2Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

Here Paul likens the message of the gospel being entrusted to him in his human frailty, to treasure being placed in jars of clay. Speaking of the gospel as “treasure” reflects that further to it being good news, it is a wonderful, glorious message.

The message of Jesus Christ is a stumbling block for many people

The gospel’s message of Jesus Christ – with his death and resurrection – is a “stumbling block” for many people. They do not believe it and so, figuratively speaking, on the path to God’s salvation they stumble and fall over Christ – and so fail to obtain salvation and life.

1Pet 2:7-8 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”^m and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

^mGreek *the head of the corner*

Verse 7 speaks of Jesus Christ as the “stone” that was rejected but which has become the cornerstone of God’s kingdom. Those who reject Christ “stumble” (v. 8) because they do not believe and obey the message.

Matt 21:44 And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”ⁿ

ⁿ Some manuscripts omit verse 44

This is possibly referring to a Jewish saying of the time, indicating that like a pot that falls on a stone or one on which a stone falls, so everyone who rejects Jesus the “stone” will be doomed (cf. NSB).

1Cor 1:23 ... but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ...

The gospel of Christ is a stumbling block to Jews, being incompatible with their way of trying to gain righteousness through obedience to the law. It is also a stumbling block to Gentiles, with many seeing it as foolishness.

Luke 2:34-35 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, *this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel*, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Simeon’s prophetic word, on being presented with the infant Jesus, was indicative of Jesus Christ becoming a “stumbling block” for many people. Note that “rising” appears to refer to the salvation of the lowly.

✦ The message of the cross is offensive to some people:

Gal 5:11 But if I, brothers,^o still preach^p circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case *the offense of the cross* has been removed.

^o Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 13

^p Greek *proclaim*

Circumcision signifies one’s adherence to the OT law as the way to righteousness. As the message centered on Jesus Christ’s death on the cross conflicts with this, it causes offense (cf. **1Pet 2:8** ↑) to those who follow the way of the OT law. The message is also offensive to other people for other reasons.

Those who do not believe and respond to the gospel will be condemned

See also:

- *The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it*, p. 1768
- *The gospel brings life to those who respond*, p. 1768
- *Further blessings that spreading the gospel brings to those who respond*, p. 1769

Mark 16:15-16 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and *proclaim the gospel to the whole creation*. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but *whoever does not believe will be condemned*.”

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God*.

Rom 2:8 ... but for those who are self-seeking^q and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

^q Or *contentious*



2Cor 2:15-16 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient^r for these things? 

^r Or *competent*

In v. 16, "a fragrance from death to death" means a fragrance "of death that brings death" (NCV™; GNT, NKJV). For further comment see *Insights regarding spreading the gospel*, p. 1775.

2Thes 1:7b-9 ... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, *inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.* ⁹*They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from^s the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ...* 

^s Or *destruction that comes from*

2Thes 2:11-12 Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order *that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth* but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) The Need to Spread the Gospel

Subsections

- We have been entrusted with the gospel and the task of telling others . . .
- . . . We are responsible for telling others
- Through believers spreading the gospel message others come to believe . . .
- . . . and there are many ready to respond to the gospel – but they need someone to tell them
- The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it
- The gospel brings life to those who respond
- Further blessings that spreading the gospel brings to those who respond

We have been entrusted with the gospel and the task of telling others . . .

See also:

- [1Cor 9:16-17](#) 

In most of the references in this and the following subsection, Paul speaks of his commission and responsibility to tell others the gospel. He had a special commission to preach the gospel, and so perhaps a greater responsibility than most Christians. But the principle of being entrusted with the gospel and the associated task of telling it to others – with the corresponding responsibility – is applicable to all Christians.

Gal 2:7 On the contrary, when they saw that *I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised ...* 

1Thes 2:4 ... but just as *we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel*, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 

1Tim 1:11 ... in accordance with *the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.* 

1Tim 6:20 O Timothy, *guard the deposit entrusted to you.* Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," 

The reference is to the gospel, as in 2 Timothy 1:14 below. Thus in these two references Paul refers to Timothy being entrusted with the gospel. Note that this involves guarding the correctness of its content as well as spreading it to others.

2Tim 1:14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, *guard the good deposit entrusted to you.* 

Titus 1:3 ... and at the proper time manifested in his word through *the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ...* 

1Cor 4:1 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and *stewards of the mysteries of God.* 

As "stewards" of the mysteries of God, Paul and his co-workers were trustees (cf. AMP) of the gospel.

. . . We are responsible for telling others

Rom 1:14-15 *I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians,^t both to the wise and to the foolish.* ¹⁵*So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.* 



^t That is, non-Greeks

Like Paul, believers have an obligation or responsibility to tell all people – people of all nations and levels of understanding (v. 14).

1Cor 9:16-17 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. *For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!* ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, *I am still entrusted with a stewardship.* 

In v. 17 Paul appears to be saying that if it were that he preached voluntarily he would be rewarded; but as it is, he is simply doing what he has been entrusted to do (cf. GNT, NLT). Paul understood that he had no choice; he had to preach the gospel, the task that had been committed to him.

1Cor 4:2 Moreover, *it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.* 

Paul is speaking of being entrusted with the gospel (cf. v. 1 ).

Acts 18:5-6 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, *testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.* ⁶And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, *“Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”* 

In saying that he was innocent of the blood of the people he had preached the gospel to – here and in Acts 20:25-27 below – Paul indicates that he had a solemn responsibility to do so.

Acts 20:25-27 And now, behold, I know that none of *you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom* will see my face again. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that *I am innocent of the blood of all of you,* ²⁷*for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.* 

✦ Ezekiel's accountability for warning his fellow Israelites:

Ezek 3:17-21 “Son of man, *I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.* ¹⁸*If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for^a his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.* ¹⁹*But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.* ²⁰Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling

block before him, he shall die. *Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin,* and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, *but his blood I will require at your hand.* ²¹*But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.”* 

^u Or *in*; also verses 19, 20

Note that a “watchman” (v. 17) was one who watched out for danger, to give warnings of it.

Through believers spreading the gospel message others come to believe . . .

Rom 10:17 *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.* 

Faith or belief comes from hearing the message, the message of the gospel of Christ.

John 17:20 I do not ask for these only, but also for *those who will believe in me through their word, ...* 

Acts 4:1-2, 4 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and *proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*  ... ⁴*But many of those who had heard the word believed,* and the number of the men came to about five thousand. 

Acts 8:12 But when *they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ,* they were baptized, both men and women. 

Acts 11:20-21 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^v also, *preaching the Lord Jesus.* ²¹*And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.* 

^v Or *Greeks* (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)

Acts 14:1, 21 Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and *spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.*  ... ²¹*When they had preached the gospel to that city [Derbe] and had made many disciples,* they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ... 



Acts 15:7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days *God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.*”

Acts 18:8b And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

Acts 28:24 And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.

1Cor 15:1, 11 Now I would remind you, brothers,^w of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ...¹¹Whether then it was I or they, *so we preach and so you believed.*

^w Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 6, 31, 50, 58

1Thes 2:13 And we also thank God constantly^x for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

^x Or *without ceasing*

2Thes 1:10 ... when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because *our testimony to you was believed.*

John 1:6-7 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷*He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.*

John the Baptist came as a witness to testify to the light of Jesus Christ, so that “all” people could believe in Jesus Christ.

John 19:34-35 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵*He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.*

... and there are many ready to respond to the gospel – but they need someone to tell them

Matt 9:36-38 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

There are many ready to respond to the gospel – to be “harvested”. But more workers are needed to proclaim the gospel to them.

John 4:35-36 Do you not say, “There are yet four months, then comes the harvest”? *Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.* ³⁶*Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.*

In v. 36 Jesus appears to not be just simply making an observation that there are those now reaping, but also implying that those who are able should join in the harvesting. The ripe harvest needs harvesters now.

Rom 10:14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And *how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?* ^y *And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*

^y Or *him whom they have never heard*

Rom 15:20-21 ... and thus I make it my ambition *to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation,* ²¹*but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”*

Paul implies that in him preaching the gospel to those who had not previously known of Christ, a number of them would see and understand.

Acts 8:30-31, 35-36 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, *“Do you understand what you are reading?”* ³¹*And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?”* And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ... ³⁵*Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.* ³⁶*And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?”*

^z Some manuscripts add all or most of verse 37: *And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

The eunuch responded to the gospel – once it had been explained to him.

‡ **Teaching people the ways of God leads them to turn to him:**

Ps 51:13 Then *I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.*



The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it

See also:

- *God's word plays a role in salvation*, p. 312
- *We are saved* [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1050
- *The gospel is the power and wisdom of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world*, p. 1770

The fact that those who hear and respond to the gospel receive salvation and life (cf. the following subsection), underlines the vital need to spread the gospel.

Mark 16:15-16 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 📖

Acts 11:13-14 And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ 📖

Acts 13:26 Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent *the message of this salvation*. 📖

Acts 16:17 She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants^a of the Most High God, *who proclaim to you the way of salvation*.” 📖

^a Greek *bondservants*

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of *the gospel*, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 📖

1Cor 15:1-2 Now I would remind you, brothers,^b of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 📖

^b Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 6, 31, 50, 58

2Cor 2:15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ... 📖

Paul and his associates were “the aroma of Christ” in spreading the gospel of Christ amongst those who were being saved by it.

Eph 1:13-14 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee^c of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,^d to the praise of his glory. 📖

^c Or *down payment*

^d Or *until God redeems his possession*

Note the blessings associated with salvation for those who respond – i.e. the Holy Spirit and the inheritance of the afterlife.

2Thes 2:13-14 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits^e to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 📖

^e Some manuscripts *chose you from the beginning*

The gospel brings life to those who respond

See also:

- *We have eternal life* [outcomes of belief in Jesus Christ], p. 1051

Acts 5:20 “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.” 📖

The gospel message – “the words of this Life” – tells of spiritual life that can be gained through Jesus Christ.

2Cor 2:16 ... to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient^f for these things? 📖

^f Or *competent*

As “the aroma of Christ” (v. 15 ⬆) Paul and his associates signified death to those who rejected their message, but life to those who believed – “the aroma of life leading to life” (NKJV; cf. GNT, NCV).

Phil 2:16 ... holding fast to *the word of life*, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 📖

The phrase “the word of life” implies that the gospel brings life – spiritual and eternal.

2Tim 1:9-10 ... who saved us and called us to^g a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^h ¹⁰and which now has been manifested through the



appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*, ... 

^g Or *with*

^h Greek *before times eternal*

1Pet 4:6 For *this is why the gospel was preached* even to those who are dead, *that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does*. 

There are various interpretations of the first clause. One possibility, given the context, is that it refers to Christians who had received the gospel but had since died. Despite there being various interpretations, as a whole the verse does clearly indicate that those who respond to the gospel will live spiritually.

Further blessings that spreading the gospel brings to those who respond

See also:

- *e* [Belief in Jesus Christ \(III\): Outcomes](#), p. 1049

Note that the following blessings are associated with the blessings discussed in the previous two subsections – i.e. salvation and life.

Acts 26:17-18 ... delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to *open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me*. 

Rom 15:15-16 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles *in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit*. 

Eph 3:6 This mystery is ⁱ that *the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel*. 

ⁱ The words *This mystery is* are inferred from verse 4

What the “promise in Christ Jesus” (v. 6) refers to is not specified, but it probably relates to an aspect of salvation given in Jesus Christ. Possibly it may encompass, or at least be applicable to, all the blessings promised to those who are in Jesus Christ – “through the gospel”.

Eph 6:15 ... and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by *the gospel of peace*. 

The gospel is called “the gospel of peace” as it brings reconciliation and peace with God for those who respond.

Col 1:5b-6 Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, *the gospel*, ⁶which has come to you, as indeed *in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth*, ... 

The phrase “bearing fruit” may primarily refer to the gospel being productive, with people responding to it. Alternatively or additionally it may suggest that for those who hear, understand and accept it, the gospel is “bringing blessings” (GNT, NCV) and so is “changing lives” (NLT) – as it had been doing among the Colossians.

2Thes 2:14 To this he called you *through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*. 

Heb 4:1-3 Therefore, while *the promise of entering his rest* still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. ³For *we who have believed enter that rest*, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest,” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. 

^j Some manuscripts *it did not meet with faith in the hearers*

Those who believe the gospel – and persevere in their belief – will enter into the rest God has promised. For further comment see . . . [There will be no more sorrow](#), p. 743.

1Jn 1:3 ... *that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*. 

[Pray for persecuted Christians](#)



c) God and the Gospel's Effectiveness

See also:

- a) *Prologue: God Draws People to Himself*, p. 758
- *God works through his people in the spreading of the gospel*, p. 963
- b) *Do the Work through God*, p. 1414
- *The gospel has spread far and wide*, p. 1776

Subsections

- The gospel is the power and wisdom of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world
- The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power
- The Holy Spirit witnesses about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief
- God and Jesus Christ at times confirm the gospel message by miracles . . .
- . . . Miracles lead people to believe the message and turn to God

The gospel is the power and wisdom of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world

See also:

- *The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it*, p. 1768

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of *the gospel*, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 

1Cor 1:18, 21-25, 30 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.  ... ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.  ... ³⁰And because of him^k you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ... 

^k Greek *And from him*

Verse 24 is implying that Christ, or the gospel about him, is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” to save “those who are called”. Verse 25 is saying that the apparent “foolishness” and “weakness” of God – particularly that shown in the gospel – is in fact greater than worldly wisdom and strength, for, Paul implies, it is by this “foolishness” and “weakness” of God that we are saved. Verse 30 has a similar thought to v. 24. It is saying that God’s wisdom is shown in Christ, as it is by what God has done through him that we are enabled to have “righteousness and sanctification and redemption” – and so be saved.

1Cor 2:6-8, 14 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.  ... ¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 

The gospel message is of God’s wisdom, not the wisdom of the world (v. 6). God has determined that this wisdom would bring us glory (v. 7), presumably referring to the glorification in the afterlife (cf. AMP, NIV); as such he saves us through his wisdom. Because this wisdom is not worldly wisdom, the world does not understand it (vv. 8, 14b) or accept it, seeing it as foolish (v. 14a).

The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God's power

We are always to present the gospel appropriately, to the best of our ability. But in doing so we need to bear in mind that the gospel’s effectiveness is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God’s power.

1Cor 2:1-5, 13 And I, when I came to you, brothers,¹ did not come proclaiming to you the testimony^m of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.  ... ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.ⁿ 



^l Or *brothers and sisters*

^m Some manuscripts *mystery* (or *secret*)

ⁿ Or *interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual*

In vv. 1-2, Paul indicates that he did not try to employ great wisdom in conveying the gospel message (v. 1), but simply focused on the basic message, of Jesus Christ and his death (v. 2). In conjunction with this, his message and preaching was based on the Holy Spirit and God's power (vv. 3-4), working through him and in the minds of his listeners.

1Thes 1:4-5a For we know, brothers^o loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because *our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit* and with full conviction. 

^o Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

This alludes to the effectiveness of the gospel amongst the Thessalonians. In v. 5a Paul indicates that this was because his message of the gospel was not simply words, but empowered with God's power and the Holy Spirit.

2Cor 4:7 *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* 

Believers are like jars of clay, holding the treasure of the gospel. The weakness of their humanity and their often-unimpressive appearance serve to show that the "surpassing power" accompanying the message – moving people to respond – is of God and not of themselves.

1Cor 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but *to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.* 

Using words which are based on human wisdom, rather than speaking in reliance on God, impedes the power and effectiveness of the gospel message. Trying to persuade people primarily with human wisdom is ultimately not going to realize their salvation, despite any apparent initial success.

Acts 10:44 *While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.* 

This may be meaning that the Holy Spirit brought these people to faith – pointing to the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in the gospel's effectiveness. Hence the verse's inclusion here. However, it may instead be meaning that those "who heard the word" believed it and then subsequently received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 11:20-23 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^p also, *preaching the Lord Jesus.* ²¹*And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.* ²²The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³*When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ...* 

^p Or *Greeks* (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)

The great response to the message is not attributed to how it was presented, but to the "the hand of the Lord" being with the evangelists (v. 21) and "the grace of God" (v. 23). As such this illustrates that the gospel is not dependent on human wisdom and power, but on God's and Jesus Christ's power.

The Holy Spirit witnesses about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief

See also:

- [The Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ being the Son of God](#), p. 116

The Holy Spirit witnesses to non-believers about the reality of Jesus Christ and the truth of the gospel message. He does this often through believers as they tell others the gospel. This work of the Holy Spirit is crucial to the effectiveness of the gospel's proclamation. The Holy Spirit also witnesses/testifies to believers as well as non-believers, regarding spiritual truths about Jesus Christ.

John 15:26-27 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.* ²⁷And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. 

Particularly with v. 27 speaking of the disciples also witnessing about Jesus Christ, v. 26b is arguably primarily speaking of the Holy Spirit witnessing to non-believers. Taken with v. 27a, it is suggestive of the Holy Spirit working in conjunction with believers in witnessing (cf. [Acts 5:32](#) ↓). An alternative interpretation is that v. 26b is referring to the Holy Spirit witnessing to the disciples about Jesus (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT), who were in turn to witness themselves (v. 27).

John 16:8-11 And when he comes, *he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:* ⁹*concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;* ¹⁰*concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;* ¹¹*concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.* 



This speaks of the Holy Spirit convicting or convincing people that they are wrong about matters largely regarding Jesus Christ, thus in a real sense witnessing about him. Verse 9 speaks of the world either: languishing in its guilt of sin by not believing in the only one who can provide it with forgiveness; or being guilty of sin in not believing in Jesus Christ. Verse 10 quite possibly is speaking of the world's guilt in lacking righteousness, which is only obtainable through Jesus Christ as affirmed or consummated by his ascension. Alternatively some claim it has in view Jesus Christ's own righteousness, with it having been not acknowledged by the world but validated by his ascension. Verse 1 may be speaking of the world's guilt in the face of impending judgment, as affirmed by the judgment and condemnation of its prince, Satan. Alternatively the "judgment" (v. 11) may more precisely be the judgment of Satan – which in turn points to judgment subsequently befalling his subjects. The Holy Spirit convicts and convinces people of the reality of these things.

Acts 5:30-32 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And *we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit*, whom God has given to those who obey him. 

1Jn 5:5-8 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that *Jesus is the Son of God?* ⁶*This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.* ⁷*For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.* 

This speaks of the Holy Spirit testifying to the man Jesus – the truly human person who was baptized and crucified – being the Son of God. For more detailed comments on this passage see *The Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ being the Son of God*, p. 116.

1Cor 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and *no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.* 

No one can acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord except by the Holy Spirit (cf. **1Jn 4:2 ↓**), with his enlightenment and conviction about Jesus Christ.

1Jn 4:2 *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ...* 

Here "spirit" refers to a spirit influencing a person to either acknowledge Jesus Christ or not – indicative of whether the

spirit is the Holy Spirit or an evil one. As such it speaks of the Holy Spirit witnessing to one about Jesus Christ.

Heb 10:12-18 But when Christ⁹ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For *by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.* ¹⁵*And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,* ¹⁶*"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,"* ¹⁷then he adds, *"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."* ¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. 

⁹ Greek *this one*

This passage attributes the OT quotation (vv. 16-17) to the Holy Spirit, indicating that by it the Holy Spirit testifies to the significance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice (vv. 14-15), elaborated on in v. 18. 

God and Jesus Christ at times confirm the gospel message by miracles . . .

See also:

- *Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ*, p. 503
- *Jesus' deeds validated his claims about himself and God*, p. 545
- *Note: The empowerment to perform miracles*, p. 975

Mark 16:20 *And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.* 

Acts 14:3 So they remained for a long time, *speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.* 

Heb 2:3-4 ... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? *It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,* ⁴*while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.* 

Note that the distribution of "gifts of the Holy Spirit" (v. 4b) – which include gifts to heal and to perform miracles – was further testimony or confirmation by God of the validity of the gospel message.



Matt 10:7-8 And *proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’* ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,^r cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. 

^r *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

The message that the kingdom of heaven “has come near” (NRSV) – or “has come” or “is coming soon” (cf. NLT text note) – would be confirmed by the miraculous signs that would accompany the message (cf. [Luke 9:6 ↓](#)).

Luke 9:6 And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. 

Acts 4:29-30 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants^s to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. 

^s Greek *bondservants*

As with the verses from Matthew and Luke immediately above, reference is made to proclaiming God’s word (v. 29) and then to performing accompanying miraculous signs (v. 30), suggesting that the former would be confirmed by the latter.

Acts 8:6-7 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 

. . . Miracles lead people to believe the message and turn to God

See also:

- [Jesus’ deeds led many people to believe in him](#), p. 546

Rom 15:18-19 For I will not venture to speak of anything except *what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed*, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ... 

The reference in the last clause to him having “fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ” clearly indicates that earlier Paul is speaking of leading the Gentiles to obey the gospel of God by what he had said in proclaiming the gospel and by the accompanying miracles.

Acts 9:32-35, 40-42 Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. ³³There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. ³⁴And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.” And immediately he rose. ³⁵And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.  ... ⁴⁰But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴²And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 

Although not specifically stated, undoubtedly spreading the gospel was Peter’s main focus as he traveled about the country (v. 32). Thus such miracles done in the name of Jesus Christ (v. 34), the subject of Peter’s message, compelled many people to believe in and turn to the Lord (vv. 35, 42).

Acts 13:8-12 But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? ¹¹And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.” Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. ¹²Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. 

Seeing the miraculous sign performed by Paul, done in association with Paul’s teaching, led the proconsul to believe (v. 12).

Acts 16:25-30 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” ²⁹And the jailer^t called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 

^t Greek *he*



Unlike the previous references, the earthquake (and its effects) was not a sign or miracle performed through believers. However it appears to be an awesome wonder performed by God to vindicate his workers and their message – leading a person to respond (v. 30).

Ex 4:29-31 Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. ³⁰*Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people.* ³¹*And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.* 📖

Obviously this and the following reference are not speaking of the gospel, but they are excellent examples of miracles validating the word of God's messengers and leading people to believe their message.

1Ki 17:22-24 *And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.* ²³And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. *And Elijah said, "See, your son lives."* ²⁴*And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."* 📖

✦ **Paul's testimony about Christ was confirmed in the Corinthians:**

1Cor 1:4-7 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵*that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—* ⁶*even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—* ⁷*so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...* 📖

The Corinthians had been "enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge" (v. 5) – which probably refers in particular to the spiritual gifts from God (v. 7). The bestowal and manifestation of spiritual gifts are in essence miracles. As such they confirmed in the Corinthians Paul's testimony about Christ (cf. [Heb 2:3b-4](#) ↑).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Further Insights regarding the Gospel

Subsections

- Believers are to be light for the world
- Insights regarding spreading the gospel
- Those who spread the gospel will be blessed
- The gospel has spread far and wide
- The gospel will be preached to all nations before the end

Believers are to be light for the world

See also:

- *Instead of living in darkness, live according to the light and truth . . .*, p. 1862
- *. . . Insights on living in darkness and living in God's light and truth*, p. 1863

Christians are to be light for the world, showing the way of God by their character and actions, and by spreading the gospel.

Matt 5:14-16 *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.* ¹⁵*Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.* ¹⁶*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.* 📖

Luke 8:16-18 *"No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light.* ¹⁷*For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.* ¹⁸*Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."* 📖

One common interpretation of vv. 16-17 is that Jesus is saying that just as one who lights a lamp puts it on a stand to give light to others (cf. [Matt 5:15](#) ↑), the disciples were to make known Jesus' teachings, giving "light" to others (v. 16). For all of this "light" that was previously hidden or concealed is to be made known (v. 17). A somewhat different interpretation is that in view of v. 18 Jesus is meaning that: just as a lamp is not covered but instead gives light to others (v. 16), so those whose take Jesus' teaching to heart will inevitably bring a manifestation of his spiritual light to others (v. 17).



John 5:35 *He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.* 📖

Jesus is speaking of John the Baptist.

Acts 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, *“I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”* 📖

Phil 2:14-16 Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish *in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,* ¹⁶*holding fast to the word of life,* so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 📖

Rom 2:19 ... and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, *a light to those who are in darkness,* ... 📖

This is part of a warning or admonishment for Jews who considered themselves with their teaching to be a light for others – but whose actions found them wanting. Nevertheless, it is indicative that God’s people should be “a light to those who are in darkness”.

Eph 5:8-9 ... for at one time you were darkness, but *now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light* ⁹*(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),* ... 📖

As “children of light” (v. 8) God’s people should produce “every kind of” (GNT, NCV; cf. AMP) goodness, righteousness and truth. In saying this, Paul may have had in mind that living as such is enlightening to others who are still in spiritual darkness (cf. vv. 13-16).

✦ **We are also to be “the salt of the earth”:**

Matt 5:13 *You are the salt of the earth,* but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. 📖

As a result of this illustration, various uses of salt have been applied to believers. These include: adding flavor and fullness to people’s lives; acting as a preservative of society; creating a thirst for matters of the kingdom; and aiding spiritual healing.

Insights regarding spreading the gospel

See also:

- *l. General* [God’s plans for his people], p. 956
- *c) God and the Gospel’s Effectiveness*, p. 1770

John 4:36-38 *Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.* ³⁷*For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’* ³⁸*I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.* 📖

Here Jesus refers to the disciples harvesting souls for eternal life. “Others” (v. 38) may refer to the prophets including John the Baptist and possibly Jesus himself. These others had done the preparatory work for the kingdom and the gospel, and the time was now right – and still is today – to harvest the benefits of their work. Jesus’ words may also enunciate a principle which is often seen with the spread of the gospel: some people sow or tell the message, often without any apparent response – while later others, following on from this previous work, lead many to respond.

Rom 10:15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? *As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”* 📖

Here Paul applies part of Isaiah 52:7 to the spreading of the gospel. One implication of this application is that spreading the good news is a beautiful thing to do.

2Cor 2:14-16 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵*For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,* ¹⁶*to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient^a for these things?* 📖

^a Or *competent*

The “triumphal procession” (v. 14) alludes to Roman triumphs, where a victorious general would lead his soldiers and captives in a parade, accompanied by the fragrance of incenses. Similarly, God triumphantly leads believers in Christ, and through them spreads the fragrance of the message of Christ (v. 14). By spreading the gospel they are pleasing to God as the aroma of Christ (v. 15), an allusion to burnt offerings which were “a pleasing aroma to the LORD” (Lev 1:9 et al.). Also by spreading the gospel, they signify either death or life to people (v. 16) – depending on each hearer’s response. This passage ends with Paul implying what an awesome task spreading the gospel is, by asking who is “capable of such a task?” (GNT) The suggestion is that no one is in themselves, with Paul saying soon afterwards that his competency comes from God (cf. 3:5-6).



2Cor 4:13-14 *Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.* 

Paul's faith and belief in God – including his confidence that God would raise himself and others from death (v. 14) – motivated Paul to pursue his work of telling others the gospel. Note that Paul's strong faith may also be evident as motivating him to spread the gospel in 1 Thessalonians 1:5, where Paul refers to how he told the gospel "with full conviction".

1Thes 1:4-5 For we know, brothers^v loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because *our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit* and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 

^v Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Eph 3:7 *Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.* 

This points out that it is only by grace that believers have the privilege of being ministers of the gospel message.

Those who spread the gospel will be blessed

Mark 8:35 For whoever would save his life^w will lose it, but *whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.* 

^wThe same Greek word can mean either *soul* or *life*, depending on the context; twice in this verse and once in verse 36 and once in verse 37

The phrase "loses his life" probably does not refer specifically to dying physically – although that is encompassed – but rather to no longer living one's life for oneself (cf. v. 34). Those who effectively forgo their lives, living primarily for Jesus Christ and the gospel, will save their lives for eternity.

John 4:36 *Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.* 

The phrase "receiving wages" may be a general reference to blessings given to those who reap souls for eternal life, blessings shared in by those who sow. Alternatively it could

refer in particular to: the subsequently mentioned harvesting ("gathering fruit for eternal life") itself as a reward; and/or the harvesting rewarding him and the sower with the joy referred to later in the verse.

1Cor 9:23 *I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.* 

Philem 1:6 ... and *I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.*^x 

^x Or *for Christ's service*

If the phrase "the sharing of your faith" is speaking of sharing the gospel with non-believers (cf. NIV), then this verse indicates that doing so hones our understanding of all the blessings we have in Christ and leads us into a deeper experience of many of them. For further comment on the meaning of "the sharing of your faith", see [Further reasons](#), p. 1059.

Dan 12:3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above;^y and *those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.* 

^y Hebrew *the expanse*; compare Genesis 1:6-8

Although spreading the gospel is not being specifically referred to here, it is comparable to leading others to righteousness, and so the promise of such everlasting glory is applicable.

Whoever who wins souls is wise:

Prov 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and *whoever captures souls is wise.* 

This is speaking more of leading others "to do what is right" (NIV®; cf. CEV, NCV) rather than "winning souls" with the gospel message; in fact the Hebrew itself is not clear, and some translations give a very different rendering. Nevertheless, with the sense given here in the ESV and by some other translations, it can be applied to the spreading of the gospel (cf. AMP).

The gospel has spread far and wide

Acts 11:19-20 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen *traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.* ²⁰*But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^z also, preaching the Lord Jesus.* 

^z Or *Greeks* (that is, Greek-speaking non-Jews)



Acts 12:24 But the word of God increased and multiplied. 

The phrase “increased and multiplied” refers to the notable spread of the gospel (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Acts 13:49 And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. 

Acts 19:9-10 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.^a ¹⁰This continued for two years, so that *all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.* 

^a Some manuscripts add *from the fifth hour to the tenth* (that is, from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M.)

Acts 19:20 So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. 

The use of “increase” likely refers to the spread and increasing influence of the gospel. The phrase “prevail mightily” would appear to refer to the gospel overcoming forces – human and spiritual – that opposed it as it spread.

Rom 10:18 But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” 

The quotation from Psalm 19:4, originally referring to the heavens and the skies, is applied to those spreading the gospel. It is used here to illustrate that the Jewish people had indeed heard the gospel.

2Cor 4:15 For it is all for your sake, so that as *grace extends to more and more people* it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. 

Col 1:5b-6 Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, *the gospel*, ⁶*which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing*—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ... 

The “whole world” is either hyperbole or referring to the world Paul knew, in which the gospel was spreading throughout. However today, two thousand years later, the phrase is very much applicable in a literal sense.

Col 1:23 ... if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of *the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation^b under heaven*, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. 

^b Or *to every creature*

The phrase “all creation under heaven” would appear to be hyperbole, but indicative of the great spread of the gospel.

1Tim 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He^c was manifested in the flesh, vindicated^d by the Spirit,^e seen by angels, *proclaimed among the nations*, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. 

^c Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^d Or *justified*

^e Or *vindicated in spirit*

The gospel will be preached to all nations before the end

Matt 24:14 And *this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.* 

Mark 13:10 And *the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.* 

Note that this is from the parallel passage in Mark to that which Matthew 24:14 above comes, in which Jesus speaks of the signs or events that will precede the end of the age.

Matt 28:19-20 Go therefore and *make disciples of all nations*, baptizing them in^f the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰*teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* 

^f Or *into*

This indicates that believers are to “make disciples of all nations” (v. 19), teaching them to obey all Jesus taught (v. 20a). It suggests that this will occur – or at least that they are expected to accomplish this – before “the end of the age” (v. 20b).

Luke 3:6 ... and *all flesh shall see the salvation of God.* 

Quite possibly this is saying that God’s message of salvation will be made known to all peoples/nations.

Acts 1:7-8 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” 

Believers are not to be concerned about the times and dates of events of the end of the age (v. 7; cf. v. 6). They should instead concern themselves with their witness to all nations – “to the ends of the earth” (v. 8) – which is to be undertaken in the lead up to the events of the end.



Rev 14:6-7 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, *with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.* ⁷And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” 

The gospel message proclaimed here offers hope of being spared from God’s judgment (v. 7) – the final judgment and/or judgments preceding the end of the age. As such these verses reflect that the gospel will be proclaimed to all nations (v. 6) before the end.

✚ **God’s glory proclaimed among the nations in the end times:**

Isa 66:19 ... and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. 

A number of commentators think that “survivors” refers to a remnant of faithful Jews who survive God’s judgment in the end times (cf. vv. 15-18), although arguably survivors from the Gentile nations are in view.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Unit H

Persevering

36. Standing Firm	1781
37. Rejecting Sin	1829
38. Major Pitfalls	1885
39. Hard Times	1933
40. Persecution.....	1981

Standing Firm

I. General

a) Be Faithful to God	1782
b) Remember God and His Word	1787
c) Hold to the Faith.....	1792
d) Persist until the End.....	1798
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II. Spiritual Warfare

a) The Existence of Spiritual Warfare	1810
b) Engaging in Spiritual Warfare	1813
c) Counteraction of Demons	1817
d) Ungodly Spiritualistic Practices	1820

I. General

The New Testament contains numerous warnings and exhortations to be faithful to God and to hold to the Christian faith. It is every Christian's constant challenge to do so. We need to stand firm, until the end – while ever watching for Jesus Christ's return and the fulfillment of our hope.

a) Be Faithful to God

See also:

- *a) Be Faithful to God and Endure* [what to do in persecution], p. 2006

Subsections

- Be faithful to God and Jesus Christ
- Hold fast to God and his ways
- Serve God and Jesus Christ faithfully . . .
- . . . Examples of faithful service
- Do not be unfaithful to God by not keeping his commands
- Do not forsake God
- God and Jesus Christ protect and bless those who are faithful to them
- God punishes those who are unfaithful
- God punishes those who forsake him

Be faithful to God and Jesus Christ

1Ki 2:4 ... that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close attention to their way, to *walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul*, you shall not lack^a a man on the throne of Israel.' 

^a Hebrew *there shall not be cut off for you*

1Ki 8:61 *Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God*, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day. 

1Ki 15:14 But the high places were not taken away. Nevertheless, *the heart of Asa was wholly true to the LORD all his days.* 

2Ki 20:3a [Hezekiah:] "Now, O LORD, please remember how *I have walked before you in faithfulness* and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." 

Neh 9:8 *You found his [Abraham's] heart faithful before you*, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous. 

Acts 11:23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and *he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose*, ... 

1Cor 4:17 That is why I sent^b you *Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord*, to remind you of my ways in Christ,^c as I teach them everywhere in every church. 

^b Or *am sending*

^c Some manuscripts add *Jesus*

We are to be faithful in living a life in accordance with being in the Lord (cf. [Eph 1:1 ↓](#)), doing what pleases him.

Eph 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, *To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful^d in Christ Jesus*: ... 

^d Some manuscripts *saints who are also faithful* (omitting *in Ephesus*)

3Jn 1:3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers^e came and *testified to your truth*, as indeed you are walking in the truth. 

^e Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verses 5, 10

The phrase "your truth" refers to their integrity and "faithfulness to the truth" (NIV®, NRSV; cf. GNT), as per their life of "walking in the truth".

✚ **God's faithful people are still accountable to him:**

Ps 50:4-5 *He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people:* ⁵*"Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"* 

God judged his people according to his covenant with them, reflected in this psalm by his implied criticism and



exhortations to the people in general (cf. vv. 7-15); and his stinging attack and threat of destruction to the wicked amongst them (cf. vv. 16-23).

Hold fast to God and his ways

To “hold fast” to God essentially means to be faithful or remain true to him.

Deut 10:20 You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and *hold fast to him*, and by his name you shall swear.

Deut 11:22-23 For if you will be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the LORD your God, walking in all his ways, and *holding fast to him*, ²³then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves.

Deut 30:20 ... loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and *holding fast to him*, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Josh 23:8 ... but you shall *cling to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day*.

2Ki 18:6 For *he held fast to the LORD*. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses.

Psa 119:31 *I cling to your testimonies, O LORD*; let me not be put to shame!

Job 17:9 Yet *the righteous holds to his way*, and he who has clean hands grows stronger and stronger.

The ways of the righteous are God’s ways. As such the righteous hold to God’s ways.

Serve God and Jesus Christ faithfully . . .

See also:

- *a) Do God’s Work – the Best You Can*, p. 1409

Josh 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD and *serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness*. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

1Sam 12:24 Only fear the LORD and *serve him faithfully with all your heart*. For consider what great things he has done for you.

Matt 24:45 *Who then is the faithful and wise servant,^f whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?*

^f Greek *bondservant*; also verses 46, 48, 50

1Cor 4:1-2 This is how one should regard us, as *servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God*. ²Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

Paul realized that in serving Christ he was required to be found trustworthy – “prove faithful” (NIV®) – in handling that of which he had been made a steward or trustee (cf. AMP), which was the mysteries of the gospel of God.

1Tim 1:12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because *he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service*, ...

1Sam 2:35 And I will raise up for myself *a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind*. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.

1Pet 4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to *serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace*: ...

We should be “faithful stewards” (AMP), “faithfully administering” (NIV®) whatever gift that God in his grace has given us for serving him and others.

2Chr 29:11 My sons, *do not now be negligent, for the LORD has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him and to be his ministers and make offerings to him*.

To serve God faithfully we must not be negligent.

. . . Examples of faithful service

2Chr 31:12, 15, 18 And *they faithfully brought in the contributions, the tithes, and the dedicated things*. The chief officer in charge of them was Conaniah the Levite, with Shimei his brother as second, ... ¹⁵Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah *were faithfully assisting him in the cities of the priests, to distribute the portions to their brothers, old and young alike, by divisions*, ... ¹⁸They were enrolled with all their little children, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, the whole assembly, for *they were faithful in keeping themselves holy*.



Verse 12 appears to be speaking of the priests (cf. NCV) and/or Levites faithfully handling what the people had earlier given (cf. vv. 5-8). Verse 18b indicates that the priests were also faithful in preparing themselves or keeping themselves ready (cf. NCV) for the work.

2Chr 31:20 Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and *he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God.* 

Hezekiah's faithful service is mentioned again at the start of the following chapter – "After these things and these acts of faithfulness ..." (32:1a).

2Chr 34:12a And *the men did the work faithfully.* 

The reference is to work in repairing the temple.

Eph 6:21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, *Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord* will tell you everything. 

Col 1:7 ... just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant.^g *He is a faithful minister of Christ on your^h behalf ...* 

^g Greek *fellow bondservant*

^h Some manuscripts *our*

Heb 3:1-2, 5 Therefore, holy brothers,¹ you who share in a heavenly calling, *consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ²who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's^j house.*  ...
⁵*Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ...* 

¹ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 12

^j Greek *his*; also verses 5, 6

3Jn 1:5 *Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, ...* 

The phrase "a faithful thing" is most likely speaking of faithfulness to the Lord, although it could be referring to faithfulness to the "brothers" (which in itself is ultimately faithfulness to the Lord).

1Ki 22:13-14 And the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, "*Behold, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king. Let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably.*"¹⁴*But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I will speak."* 

The prophet Micaiah was put under pressure to conform (v. 13), which would have required him to make up a false

prophecy. Instead he resolved to faithfully only say what God told him (v. 14).

Jer 17:15-16 Behold, they say to me, "Where is the word of the LORD? Let it come!"¹⁶*I have not run away from being your shepherd, nor have I desired the day of sickness. You know what came out of my lips; it was before your face.* 

Despite the difficulties he faced from the people (v. 15), Jeremiah did not try to escape being God's shepherd to his people (v. 16) – nor did he long for the day of God's judgment and their despair.

Ezek 44:15 But *the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me. And they shall stand before me to offer me the fat and the blood, declares the Lord GOD.* 

✦ **Balaam's stated intention to do and say only what God wanted:**

Num 22:18, 38 But *Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD my God to do less or more.*  ...³⁸*Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come to you! Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak."* 

Do not be unfaithful to God by not keeping his commands

Ps 119:158 I look at *the faithless* with disgust, because *they do not keep your commands.* 

Ps 78:8-10, 36-37 ... and that they should not be like their fathers, *a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.* ⁹*The Ephraimites, armed with^k the bow, turned back on the day of battle.* ¹⁰*They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law.*  ...³⁶*But they flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues.* ³⁷*Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant.* 

^k Hebrew *armed and shooting*

1Chr 10:13 So Saul died for *his breach of faith. He broke faith with the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance.* 



Hos 6:7 But like Adam *they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.*

Israel broke their covenant with God by acting contrary to God's commands (cf. vv. 8-10). As such they were unfaithful to God.

Num 5:5-6 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, *“Speak to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the LORD, and that person realizes his guilt, ...*

To commit sin obviously involves breaking God's commands; in doing so one is “breaking faith with” God, being unfaithful to him.

1Ki 15:3 And he walked in all the sins that his father did before him, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father.

Ezra 10:2 And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: *“We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this.*

Isa 1:21 *How the faithful city has become a whore,¹ she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.*

¹ Or become unchaste

Do not forsake God

See also:

- *Do not have other “gods” or idols*, p. 1822

To forsake means to “abandon” or to “turn away from”.

2Chr 29:6 *For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the LORD our God. They have forsaken him and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD and turned their backs.*

This verse correlates forsaking God with being unfaithful to him. Note that the next few verses speak of not forsaking God, while the remainder contain examples of people who did forsake God.

Josh 24:16 Then the people answered, *“Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, ...*

2Chr 13:10a But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him.

Ps 18:21 *For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.*

Heb 3:12 *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*

Deut 32:15 But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then *he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.*

Judg 10:10 And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, *“We have sinned against you, because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals.”*

Isa 1:4 Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! *They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.*

Rev 2:4 But I have this against you, that *you have abandoned the love you had at first.*

The love they had at first is most likely referring to their initial love for God or Jesus Christ (cf. GNT), but could also be inclusive of love for each other (cf. NLT).

‡ **Do not be false to God by trusting or worshipping other things:**

Job 31:24-28 *If I have made gold my trust or called fine gold my confidence, ²⁵if I have rejoiced because my wealth was abundant or because my hand had found much, ²⁶if I have looked at the sun^m when it shone, or the moon moving in splendor, ²⁷and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand, ²⁸this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above.*

^mHebrew *the light*

God and Jesus Christ protect and bless those who are faithful to them

Ps 31:23 Love the LORD, all you his saints! *The LORD preserves the faithful* but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.

Isa 26:1-2 In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: *“We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. ²Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.*



God protects and saves those who keep faith.

Ezek 18:9 ... walks in my statutes, and *keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord GOD.* 

In conjunction with protecting those who are faithful to him, God decrees that they will live – an OT theme with strong spiritual parallels in the NT. Note that the following verses speak of God and Jesus Christ blessing those who are faithful to them.

1Ki 3:6 And Solomon said, “*You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day.*” 

1Sam 26:23 *The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the LORD’s anointed.* 

Neh 9:8 *You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous.* 

Matt 24:45-47 *Who then is the faithful and wise servant,ⁿ whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.* 

ⁿ Greek *bondservant*; also verses 46, 48, 50

This and 25:21 below speak of the blessings – in particular authority – granted to faithful servants of Jesus Christ on his return.

Matt 25:21 His master said to him, *‘Well done, good and faithful servant.^o You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’* 

^o Greek *bondservant*; also verses 23, 26, 30

Rev 17:14 They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and *those with him are called and chosen and faithful.* 

This appears to anticipate Jesus Christ’s second coming and his final victory (cf. Rev 19:11-21). Thus it would then appear to indicate that he will be accompanied by his faithful followers, who will then share in his triumph.

God punishes those who are unfaithful

See also:

- *God’s anger arises in response to people forsaking him,* p. 72
- *God’s jealousy arises particularly in response to unfaithfulness,* p. 86
- *Consequences of unfaithfulness,* p. 1608
- *Having other “gods” and idols culminates in God’s retribution,* p. 1826

2Chr 30:7 Do not be like *your fathers and your brothers, who were faithless to the LORD God of their fathers, so that he made them a desolation, as you see.* 

Neh 1:8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, *‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ...*’ 

Ps 73:27 For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; *you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.* 

Prov 14:14 *The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways.* 

The phrase “backslider in heart” has in view faithlessness to God (cf. AMP, NASB, NKJV, NLT). The verse may not be meaning that God punishes them, but rather that they reap the natural consequences of their ways.

Jer 5:10-11 Go up through her vine rows and destroy, but make not a full end; *strip away her branches, for they are not the LORD’s.* ¹¹*For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly treacherous to me, declares the LORD.* 

Ezek 15:8 *And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, declares the Lord GOD.* 

Ezek 39:23 And the nations shall know that *the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword.* 



God punishes those who forsake him

See also:

- [Falling away brings dire consequences](#), p. 1801

Judg 10:6-7 The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And *they forsook the LORD and did not serve him. ⁷So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites, ...* 

2Ki 22:17 *Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched.* 

2Chr 28:6 For *Pekah the son of Remaliah killed 120,000 from Judah in one day, all of them men of valor, because they had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers.* 

Ezra 8:22 For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, since we had told the king, “The hand of our God is for good on all who seek him, and *the power of his wrath is against all who forsake him.*” 

Isa 1:28 But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and *those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed.* 

Jer 2:17, 19 *Have you not brought this upon yourself by forsaking the LORD your God, when he led you in the way? ... ¹⁹Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts.* 

Jer 16:10-12 And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, ‘*Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?*’ ¹¹then you shall say to them: ‘*Because your fathers have forsaken me, declares the LORD, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law, ¹²and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to me.*’ 

Jer 17:13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, *all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you^p shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water.* 

^p Hebrew *me*

‡ **God will forsake those who forsake him:**

2Chr 15:2 ... and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but *if you forsake him, he will forsake you.*” 

1 Chronicles 28:9b makes a similar point: “If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.”

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Remember God and His Word

See also:

- [b\) Learn God’s Commands – and All His Word](#), p. 1171
- [c\) Keep in Mind God and His Word](#) [in hard times], p. 1942

Subsections

- [Ensure you remember God](#)
- [Remember what God has done](#)
- [Remember God’s word and commands](#)
- [Persistently meditate on God’s word and commands . . .](#)
- [. . . Keep God’s word and commands in your heart and thoughts](#)
- [Note: Forgetting God has dreadful consequences](#)

Ensure you remember God

Deut 6:10-12 And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, ¹¹and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are



full, ¹²then *take care lest you forget the LORD*, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 

Deut 8:11-14, 17-18 *Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹²lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,  ... ¹⁷Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. *

Ps 63:6 ... when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; ... 

Ecc 12:1 *Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; ... *

One should remember God before the troubles of old age come (cf. vv. 2-5) and before death (cf. vv. 6-7). Continuing to remember him before such times enables one to be prepared for them – as well as to be productive for him during the best of one’s years.

Deut 4:9-13 *Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children—¹⁰how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’ ¹¹And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. ¹²Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. ¹³And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments,⁹ and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. *

⁹ Hebrew words

The people were to remember the manifestation of God they had witnessed (vv. 10-11) – including the fact that they saw no form (v. 12b) – and also the commandments that he gave (v. 13; cf. v. 10b).

Jer 2:32 *Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number. *

Note that the final phrase appears to speak of God’s people having forgotten him for more days than could be counted (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NirV, NLT).

Jer 18:13-15 *Therefore thus says the LORD: Ask among the nations, Who has heard the like of this? The virgin Israel has done a very horrible thing. ¹⁴Does the snow of Lebanon leave the crags of Sirion?^r Do the mountain waters run dry,^s the cold flowing streams? ¹⁵But my people have forgotten me; they make offerings to false gods; they made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient roads, and to walk into side roads, not the highway, ... *

^r Hebrew *of the field*

^s Hebrew *Are foreign waters plucked up*

That Israel could forget God was: unparalleled (v. 13a); a “very horrible thing” (v. 13b); and both unnatural and extraordinary (v. 14).

Remember what God has done

See also:

▪ [Deut 8:17-18](#) 

Deut 7:18 ... you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ... 

1Chr 16:12 *Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered, ... *

Ps 103:2-5 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. *

This speaks of blessings from God that his people have experienced and continued to experience.

Isa 46:8-10 *Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, ⁹remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ *

We must remember the things God has done – including the fact that he makes known things of the future, things by



which he accomplishes his purposes (v. 10). Accordingly we should remember that he alone is God (v. 9).

Mic 6:5 O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD. 

Here the people are exhorted to remember the saving acts that God had done for them: by causing Balaam to bless Israel rather than curse her as Balak had wanted; and in their journey from Shittim to Gilgal, which featured the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River in which God stopped its waters from flowing.

Ex 13:3-10, 14-16 Then Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. ⁴Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. ⁵And when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. ⁶Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. ⁷Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. ⁸You shall tell your son on that day, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ ⁹And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. ¹⁰You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year.  ... ¹⁴And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. ¹⁵For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ ¹⁶It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.” 

Such observances and practices were to ensure that the Israelites would not forget what God had done for them in delivering them out of Egypt. Likewise memorials such as mentioned in Joshua 4:4-7 below also served to remind the people of what God had done for them.

Josh 4:4-7 Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each

tribe. ⁵And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, ⁶that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ ⁷then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.” 

Neh 9:17a They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. 

Failure to remember what God has done is effectively condemned here and in the verses below.

Ps 78:42-43 They did not remember his power^t or the day when he redeemed them from the foe, ⁴³when he performed his signs in Egypt and his marvels in the fields of Zoan. 

^t Hebrew hand

Ps 106:7 Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. 

Remember God’s word and commands

See also:

- [Persistently read and study God’s commands – and all of God’s word](#), p. 1172

Num 15:38-40 Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. ³⁹And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow^u after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. ⁴⁰So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. 

^u Hebrew to spy out

The tassels were simple, constant reminders to remember and obey God’s commands. As well as being visual reminders (v. 39), the wearer may have also been aware of their movement as he or she walked along.



Mal 4:4 Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules^v that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. 

^v Or and just decrees

Deut 26:13b I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them. 

Ps 119:16, 52, 61, 83, 93 I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.  ... ⁵²When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD.  ... ⁶¹Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.  ... ⁸³For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, yet I have not forgotten your statutes.  ... ⁹³I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life. 

Note that in v. 93b the psalmist appears to be speaking of the strength and meaning he found in God's word during his affliction.

Prov 3:1 My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, ... 

Here and in 4:5 below the godly teacher exhorts his son not to forget his instructions, instructions which are in accordance with God's laws.

Prov 4:5 Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. 

James 1:23-25 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. 

2Pet 3:2 ... that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ... 

The "command of the Lord and Savior" probably refers to Jesus' teachings as a whole, although some commentators think that the command to love one another may be primarily in view.

Persistently meditate on God's word and commands . . .

Josh 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 

Ps 1:2 ... but his delight is in the law^w of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 

^w Or instruction

Ps 119:13, 15, 48, 95, 97, 148 With my lips I declare all the rules^x of your mouth.  ... ¹⁵I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.  ... ⁴⁸I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.  ... ⁹⁵The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies.  ... ⁹⁷Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.  ... ¹⁴⁸My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise. 

^x Or all the just decrees

In v. 13, "declare" may have in view reciting God's laws (cf. GNT, NLT), in conjunction with meditating on them – hence the verse's inclusion. However, declaring them to others is arguably more likely in view. In v. 15, "your ways" are "the paths of life marked out by Your law" (AMP).

2Tim 2:7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 

Paul's letters are a part of God's word. Thus this amounts to a direction to think carefully about God's word. This is an important aspect of meditating on it.

. . . Keep God's word and commands in your heart and thoughts

See also:

▪ [Josh 1:8](#) ↑

Deut 6:6-9 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. 



God's commands are to be on the hearts of his people (v. 6). As such his people should take steps to keep his commands in their thoughts (vv. 7-9). The instructions in vv. 8-9 were probably figuratively underlining the need to keep the God's commands in one's thoughts (cf. [Deut 11:18 ↓](#); [Prov 6:21 ↓](#); [Prov 7:3 ↓](#)), although later Jews did take them literally.

Deut 11:18 You shall therefore *lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.* 

Deut 32:46 ... he said to them, *“Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.* 

Moses exhorts the people to embed God's laws in their consciousness, so as to obey them.

Job 22:22 Receive instruction from his mouth, and *lay up his words in your heart.* 

We are to “store” (NLT) or “keep” (GNT, NCV) God's words in our hearts.

Ps 37:31 *The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.* 

Ps 40:8 I delight to do your will, O my God; *your law is within my heart.* 

Ps 119:11, 30, 98 *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*  ... ³⁰I have chosen the way of faithfulness; *I set your rules before me.*  ... ⁹⁸Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. 

Prov 4:3-4, 21 When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, ⁴he taught me and said to me, *“Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.*  ... ²¹*Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.* 

Prov 6:20-21 My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. ²¹*Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck.* 

Prov 7:1-3 My son, *keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; ²keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; ³bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.* 

Jer 15:16 *Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.* 

In saying that he “ate” God's words, Jeremiah indicates that he absorbed them, one result of which was that they became a joy and his heart's delight.

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* 

Like the psalms, presumably the hymns and spiritual songs contained extracts from or reflections on God's word. The thought then behind the exhortation to sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” may be – in part at least – that this was a further way of ensuring that God's word dwelt within them.

✦ **God's promise to put his law in the hearts of his people:**

Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.* And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 

Note: Forgetting God has dreadful consequences

Deut 8:19 *And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.* 

Deut 32:18-19 *You were unmindful of the Rock that bore^y you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth. ¹⁹“The LORD saw it and spurned them, because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters.* 

^y Or fathered

Verse 19 probably has primarily in view the unfaithfulness and idolatry mentioned in the preceding verses (cf. vv. 15-17). Forgetting God went hand in hand with this betrayal and so was part of the reason for the consequences.

Job 8:11-13 *Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water? ¹²While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither before any other plant. ¹³Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish.* 

Ps 9:17 *The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.* 



Ps 50:22 *Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!* 📖

The implication is that God will destroy those who forget him.

Ps 106:13-15, 20-23 *But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel.* ¹⁴But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert; ¹⁵he gave them what they asked, but *sent a wasting disease among them.* 📖 ... ²⁰They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. ²¹*They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt,* ²²*wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.* ²³*Therefore he said he would destroy them—* had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them. 📖

Forgetting God results in rebellion (vv. 13-15, 20-22) – which brings fearful consequences (vv. 15, 23).

Isa 17:10-11 *For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not remembered the Rock of your refuge; therefore, though you plant pleasant plants and sow the vine-branch of a stranger, ¹¹though you make them grow^z on the day that you plant them, and make them blossom in the morning that you sow, yet the harvest will flee away^a in a day of grief and incurable pain.* 📖

^z Or *though you carefully fence them*

^a Or *will be a heap*

Isa 51:12-13 *I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, ¹³and have forgotten the LORD, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor?* 📖

One consequence of forgetting God is living in fear of one's enemies.

Jer 3:21 *A voice on the bare heights is heard, the weeping and pleading of Israel's sons because they have perverted their way; they have forgotten the LORD their God.* 📖

Quite probably "the weeping and pleading" of the people has in view their anguish amidst suffering dreadful judgment for forgetting God and sinning.

Jer 18:15-17 *But my people have forgotten me; they make offerings to false gods; they made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient roads, and to walk into side roads, not the highway, ¹⁶making their land a horror, a thing to be hissed at forever. Everyone who passes by it is horrified and shakes his*

head. ¹⁷*Like the east wind I will scatter them before the enemy. I will show them my back, not my face, in the day of their calamity.* 📖

Forgetting God is here associated with idolatry and subsequent ungodly ways (v. 15), leading to God's punishment (vv. 16-17).

Ezek 23:35 *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you yourself must bear the consequences of your lewdness and whoring.* 📖

Hos 13:6-8 ... but when they had grazed,^b they became full, they were filled, and their heart was lifted up; therefore *they forgot me.* ⁷*So I am to them like a lion; like a leopard I will lurk beside the way.* ⁸*I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of her cubs; I will tear open their breast, and there I will devour them like a lion, as a wild beast would rip them open.* 📖

^b Hebrew *according to their pasture*

‡ **Do not forget past sins and the consequences faced:**

Deut 9:7-8 *Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.* ⁸*Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Hold to the Faith

See also:

- *Remain "in" Jesus Christ*, p. 1079
- ... *Exhort others to continue in God's grace*, p. 1332
- *Hold fast to God and his ways*, p. 1783
- *Stand firm until the end*, p. 1798

Subsections

- [Continue in the faith](#)
- [Stand firm](#)
- [Hold to Christian teaching, abiding in it . . .](#)



- . . . Continue to live by Christian teaching
- Grow in the faith and in your knowledge
- Grow in all aspects of your Christian life . . .
- . . . and produce spiritual “fruit”

Continue in the faith

See also:

- [1Cor 16:13](#) ↓; [Phil 1:27-28](#) ↓; [1Pet 5:9](#) ↓

The body of Christian beliefs is often referred to as “the faith” – e.g. “preaching the faith” (Gal 1:23), “the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 1:3), and as in a number of the following verses.

Acts 14:21-22 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to *continue in the faith*, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. 📖

Col 1:22-23 ... he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³if indeed you *continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard*, which has been proclaimed in all creation^c under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. 📖

^c Or *to every creature*

1Tim 2:15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they *continue in faith* and love and holiness, with self-control. 📖

Continuing in the faith of course involves continuing to have faith – believing in the truths of the faith, along with trusting God.

1Tim 3:9 *They must hold the mystery of the faith* with a clear conscience. 📖

2Tim 3:14 But as for you, *continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed*, knowing from whom^d you learned it ... 📖

^d The Greek for *whom* is plural

2Tim 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, *I have kept the faith*. 📖

Titus 1:13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may *be sound in the faith*, ... 📖

The last clause possibly refers to being “strong in the faith” (NCV™, NLT), although it may instead refer to having a sound understanding of the faith (cf. AMP, Nlrv). The first meaning would be the more relevant one to this subsection.

Heb 3:6, 14 ... but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house if indeed *we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope*.^e 📖 ... ¹⁴For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed *we hold our original confidence firm to the end*. 📖

^e Some manuscripts insert *firm to the end*

Continuing in the faith involves holding to our confidence in and our hope of the realization of the aspects of the faith that concern the future (cf. [Heb 10:23](#), [35](#) ↓).

Heb 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, *let us hold fast our confession*. 📖

Heb 10:23, 35 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful*. 📖 ... ³⁵Therefore *do not throw away your confidence*, which has a great reward. 📖

Rev 2:25 Only *hold fast what you have* until I come. 📖

The expression “what you have” encompasses – or at least is applicable to – such things as the truths of the faith (cf. CEV), personal faith and faithfulness to Christ (cf. NCV).

Stand firm

See also:

- [Stand firm until the end](#), p. 1798

1Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, *be steadfast, immovable*, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. 📖

1Cor 16:13 Be watchful, *stand firm in the faith*, act like men, be strong. 📖

Gal 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; *stand firm therefore*, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 📖

Paul is speaking of standing firm against incorrect teaching – here the propagation of living under the OT law.

Eph 6:11, 13-18 *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil*. 📖 ...



¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ...

For comment, see the comment on Eph 6:10-15 – under *Use spiritual weapons and armor*, p. 1814.

Phil 1:27-28 Only let your manner of life be worthy^f of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that *you are standing firm in one spirit*, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

^f Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

The Philippians stood firm together “in united spirit and purpose” (AMP), for the faith (v. 27b) and against their opponents (v. 28).

Phil 4:1 Therefore, my brothers,^g whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, *stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

^g Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21

Note that in saying “stand firm thus in the Lord”, Paul appears to be referring to the teaching of the preceding verses, including his instructions: to “walk according to the example you have in us” (3:17); and to be focused on Jesus Christ’s return and all that it entails (cf. 3:20-21).

1Pet 5:9 Resist him [Satan], firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

1Pet 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that *this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.*

✦ **We should stand in the gospel:**

1Cor 15:1 Now I would remind you, brothers,^h of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ...

^h Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 6, 31, 50, 58

We should take our stand firmly believing and in accordance with the truths of the gospel message.

Hold to Christian teaching, abiding in it . . .

In the following verses, references to holding to Christian teaching generally refer to believing Christian truths and/or to following practical Christian instructions. (The latter is largely in view in the following subsection.)

Luke 8:15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, *hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart*, and bear fruit with patience.

1Cor 15:2 ... and by which you are being saved, if you *hold fast to the word I preached to you*—unless you believed in vain.

Phil 2:16 ... *holding fast to the word of life*, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

2Thes 2:15 So then, brothers, stand firm and *hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.*

1Tim 3:9 *They must hold the mystery of the faith* with a clear conscience.

2Tim 3:14-15 But as for you, *continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whomⁱ you learned it* ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

ⁱ The Greek for *whom* is plural

This implies that what Timothy had “learned and ... firmly believed” (v. 14a) was taught to him by reliable teachers (v. 14b) and based largely on the Scriptures (v. 15). As such, Paul encourages him to continue to believe or hold to these truths (v. 14a).

Titus 1:9 He must *hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught*, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

^j Or *healthy*; also verse 13

Rev 19:10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant^k with you and your brothers who *hold to the testimony of Jesus*. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

^k Greek *fellow bondservant*

The “testimony of Jesus” may well refer to that which can be learned from Jesus through not only his teaching, but also his life and death; hence the verse’s inclusion here. However,



it could possibly instead be speaking of testifying about Jesus (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). Note that the final statement quite possibly means that holding to or proclaiming this testimony is the essence of prophecy. “For the substance (essence) of the truth revealed by Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy... the inspiration of all inspired preaching and interpretation of the divine will and purpose...” (AMP)

Prov 23:23 *Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.*

Get God’s truth and keep it, holding to it.

John 8:31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ...*

To “abide in” Jesus’ word (cf. 2Jn 1:9 ↓) – or to have it abide in us (cf. John 15:7 ↓; 1Jn 2:24 ↓) – involves reflecting on it and applying it in our lives, and persisting in doing this.

John 15:7 If you abide in me, and *my words abide in you*, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

1Jn 2:24 *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.*

2Jn 1:9 Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever *abides in the teaching* has both the Father and the Son.

... Continue to live by Christian teaching

See also:

- *Listen carefully to Jesus’ teaching*, p. 1173
- *Pay attention to all Christian teaching*, p. 1174

Phil 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, *as you have always obeyed, so now*, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ...*

Paul exhorts the Philippians, in line with their persistent obedience to his teaching, to continue to “work out” their salvation. There are different interpretations of what Paul means by this. Arguably it refers to bringing one’s salvation to completion (cf. GNT, NCV), doing what is required to attain or accept – not earn – salvation, living lives reflecting one’s redeemed state.

Phil 3:16 Only *let us hold true to what we have attained.*

Paul exhorts his readers to keep living according to either the truth that they had already grasped (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT) or

the standard of Christian living that they had already achieved (cf. CEV, NASB, NKJV).

Phil 4:9 *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things*, and the God of peace will be with you.

1Tim 4:16 *Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this*, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Paul urges Timothy to both continue to teach and to live by that which is in accordance with correct Christian doctrine (cf. v. 6).

James 1:25 *But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts*, he will be blessed in his doing.

The “law of liberty” (cf. 2:12) refers to God’s word (cf. vv. 22-24) – seemingly including the OT moral law as interpreted by NT teaching. This “law” that Christians are to live by gives freedom from both rigorous regulations and sin – which means that they are in fact freer to please God.

3Jn 1:3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers¹ came and testified to your truth, as indeed *you are walking in the truth.*

¹ Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verses 5, 10

Rev 3:3 *Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it*, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

Prov 4:13 *Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.*

‡ **Continue to do what is right:**

Rev 22:11 *Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.*



Grow in the faith and in your knowledge

See also:

- [2Thes 1:3](#) ↴; [2Pet 1:5-6](#) ↴; [2Pet 3:18](#) ↴
- *Pursue faith – and grow in faith*, p. 1085
- *Pray for their spiritual growth and maturity*, p. 1326

Phil 1:25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for *your progress and joy in the faith*, ...



Paul was keen that the Philippians “progress... in the faith”.

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, *building yourselves up in your most holy faith* and praying in the Holy Spirit, ...

As in Philippians 1:25 above, “faith” again refers to the Christian faith, the teachings that Christians believe and live in accordance with – rather than to an individual’s trust in God.

Phil 1:9 And it is my prayer *that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment*, ...

A key aspect of increasing in love is a corresponding growth in knowledge of matters of the faith – and also discernment or insight. Such love is more effective in whatever it seeks to achieve.

Col 1:10 ... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and *increasing in the knowledge of God*. ...

The final phrase quite likely speaks of growing or increasing in knowledge about God, quite possibly encompassing coming to know him better (cf. CEV, Nlrv, NLT). But note that some commentators interpret Paul to be speaking of “the knowledge of God” as the sphere in which we grow, or the means by which we grow.

1Pet 2:2 *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—* ...

The term “pure spiritual milk” here probably denotes God’s word or truth. Below in 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 and Hebrews 5:12-13 the figure of “milk” is used to depict very basic truths of the faith that the readers should have progressed beyond, having been Christians for some time. In line with this, the final clause may well speak of growing “in respect to” (NASB) or “into the fullness of” (NLT) salvation, maturing in the faith. Alternatively, it has been interpreted to speak of securing (not earning) salvation, being saved (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

1Cor 3:1-2 But I, brothers,^m could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ...

^mOr brothers and sisters

In this and in the following references the readers are rebuked for their lack of growth in their knowledge of the faith. Here Paul rebukes them in part for their lack of progress in the moral aspects of the faith, which had hampered their growth in knowledge of the faith.

Heb 5:11-14 About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. ...

Heb 6:1-2 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²and of instruction about washings,ⁿ the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ...

ⁿ Or baptisms (that is, cleansing rites)

Note that this follows on directly from 5:11-14 immediately above.

✚ Be spiritually mature in your thinking:

1Cor 14:20 Brothers, *do not be children in your thinking*. Be infants in evil, but *in your thinking be mature*. ...

Note that Paul says this in the context of speaking of using the gift of tongues wisely (vv. 1-25).

Grow in all aspects of your Christian life . . .

See also:

- [Phil 1:9](#) ↑

2Thes 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers,^o as is right, because *your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing*. ...

^o Or brothers and sisters. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and



women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Here "faith" refers to an individual's faith or trust in God.

1Tim 4:15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them,^p so that all may see your progress. 📖

^p Greek *be in them*

James 1:2-4 Count it all joy, my brothers,^q when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 📖

^q Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verses 16, 19

Believers must look upon trials as opportunities to grow in their Christian life through being steadfast (vv. 2-3), leading to them becoming "perfect and complete" (v. 4).

2Pet 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,^r and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these qualities^s are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 📖

^r Or *excellence*; twice in this verse

^s Greek *these things*; also verses 9, 10, 12

Note that Peter is not meaning that we should obtain each characteristic before addressing the following one. Nor is Peter necessarily meaning that adjacent characteristics are more closely associated with each other than the others, although in some cases there is a strong link.

2Pet 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 📖

Peter appears to be speaking of believers growing spiritually in or by Christ's grace and knowledge of him.

1Thes 4:1, 9-10 Finally, then, brothers,^t we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 📖 ... ⁹Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, ¹⁰for that indeed

is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, ... 📖

^t Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 10, 13

A key part of growing in our Christian lives is increasingly doing the things that please God, doing them "more and more" (vv. 1, 10).

... and produce spiritual "fruit"

In the following references the term "fruit" is often understood to refer to personal spiritual characteristics produced in a believer (cf. Gal 5:22-23 ↓) as they grow spiritually. However bear in mind that in some of the references, the produce of one's work for the kingdom may instead be in view.

Luke 8:15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. 📖

John 15:8, 16 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 📖 ... ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 📖

Rom 7:4 Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. 📖

Eph 5:8-9 ... for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ... 📖

Phil 1:10-11 ... so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. 📖

Spiritual "fruit" is produced through Jesus Christ.

Matt 13:23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. 📖



Matt 7:17-19 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 📖

John 15:2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 📖

Luke 13:6-9 And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' ⁸And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" 📖

The fig tree represents the Jewish nation. It as a whole had failed to produce fruit, including a positive response to Jesus. So it faced being cut out of its relationship with God, no longer using up the soil (possibly a reference to God's love or grace). The scenario is applicable as a warning to anyone who professes to be one of God's people.

✦ The "fruit" of the Holy Spirit:

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 📖

These characteristics are described as "fruit of the Spirit" because their source and means of growth is the Holy Spirit. The implication is that our lives should produce such "fruit".

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Persist until the End

Subsections

- Stand firm until the end
- Persist and be diligent so that you will receive the reward . . .
- . . . Be like an athlete, striving for a prize
- Be careful not to turn away from God . . .

- . . . Do not rebel against God
- Some people do fall away
- Falling away brings dire consequences
- Note: Dreadful consequences of Israel's rebellion against God

Stand firm until the end

See also:

- *Stand firm*, p. 1793

Heb 3:14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 📖

Rev 2:25 Only hold fast what you have until I come. 📖

James 5:8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 📖

We are to "strengthen and confirm" (AMP) our hearts, with the Lord's return in view.

Matt 24:12-13 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 📖

In v. 12 "love" probably refers to either love in Christ for others, or love for God. Enduring (v. 13) involves persisting in such love.

✦ Exhortation to stand firm in the face of enemy attack:

2Chr 20:17 You will not need to fight in this battle. *Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.* Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you. 📖

Similarly Exodus 14:13 says, "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today." See also Ephesians 6:11, 13-18.

Persist and be diligent so that you will receive the reward . . .

See also:

- Heb 3:14 ↑
- *d) Epilogue: Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution*, p. 2018



Matt 10:22 ... and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But *the one who endures to the end will be saved.* 📖

This speaks of the salvation (cf. [1Tim 4:16](#) ↓) that is fundamental to the believer's reward.

Rom 2:6-7 He will render to each one according to his works: *7to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ...* 📖

1Tim 4:16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. *Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.* 📖

Heb 4:11 Let us therefore *strive to enter that rest*, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 📖

Here "rest" may well be referring to the reward of rest in the afterlife – the reason for its inclusion here. But note that some think it refers to rest from trying to gain salvation by works.

Heb 6:11-12 And we desire each one of you to *show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* 📖

Heb 10:35-36 Therefore *do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.* 📖

2Pet 1:10-11 Therefore, brothers,^u *be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* 📖

^u Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

2Jn 1:8 *Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.* 📖

^v Some manuscripts *you*

A number of commentators consider that here John is speaking not of missing out on salvation, but of not being rewarded to the extent that one could be.

Jude 1:21 ... *keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.* 📖

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon. *Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.* 📖

... Be like an athlete, striving for a prize

Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, *if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.* 📖

Here "course" appears to have the sense of a "race" (NIV®, NKJV).

Phil 3:10-14 ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹²*Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own*, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and *straining forward to what lies ahead, 14I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* 📖

In v. 12 Paul is probably talking of pressing on to take hold of the spiritual goals he had listed in v. 10 – which he had not "already obtained" v. 12a – and also perfection (v. 12a). Possibly he also has in mind the resurrection from the dead (v. 11). The latter is certainly one aspect of the prize (v. 14) for attaining such spiritual goals.

1Tim 6:12 *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life* to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 📖

"Fight the good fight" is understood to be an allusion to sport (cf. [2Tim 4:7-8](#) ↓) rather than warfare. "Take hold of the eternal life" appears to primarily have in view the consummation of the believer's eternal life in the age to come.

2Tim 4:7-8 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.* 📖

Heb 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and *let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him*



endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 

The writer exhorts his readers as they run their spiritual “race” with endurance (v. 1) to look to Jesus, primarily in order to follow his example of enduring all for the joy that would follow (v. 2).

2Tim 2:5 *An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.* 

The implication of this illustration in the context is that God’s people must “compete” according to God’s requirements in order to receive their reward.

✦ **Be purposeful and disciplined, so as to win the prize:**

1Cor 9:24-27 *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷But I discipline my body and keep it under control,^w lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.* 

^w Greek *I pummel my body and make it a slave*

The clause “I discipline my body” (v. 27) depicts Paul’s strong discipline of himself, bringing his body with its desires into submission.

Be careful not to turn away from God . . .

See also:

- [Josh 22:29](#) ; [Isa 59:12-13](#) ; [Jer 5:23](#) 
- *Take care not to sin*, p. 1854

Deut 11:16 *Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; ...* 

Heb 2:1 *Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.* 

Heb 3:12 *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.* 

This is applicable to being careful in regard to both ourselves and others.

Heb 4:1 *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.* 

This is speaking of fearing so as to be careful (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NRSV) to not miss out on God’s eternal rest in the afterlife, by turning away from him (cf. [Heb 2:1](#) ; [Heb 3:12](#) 

2Pet 3:17 *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.* 

. . . Do not rebel against God

Num 14:9a *Only do not rebel against the LORD.* 

Josh 22:29 *Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away this day from following the LORD by building an altar for burnt offering, grain offering, or sacrifice, other than the altar of the LORD our God that stands before his tabernacle!* 

1Sam 12:14 *If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well.* 

1Sam 15:23a *For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.* 

Isa 50:5 *The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.* 

Ezek 2:3, 8 *And he said to me, “Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.  ... ⁸“But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.” *

Heb 3:15-16 *As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” ¹⁶For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? *

In v. 16 the author appears to be warning his readers of the danger of falling into rebellion, pointing to the rebellion of the Exodus generation despite them having witnessed God’s miraculous deliverance.

Ps 78:40 *How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert!* 

This and the following verses speak in condemnatory tone of cases of God’s people rebelling against him.



Isa 59:12-13 For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know *our iniquities*: ¹³*transgressing, and denying the LORD, and turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.*

Isa 65:2 I spread out my hands all the day to *a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices*; ...

Jer 5:23 But *this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away.*

Zeph 3:1-2 *Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! ²She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God.*

Some people do fall away

See also:

- *Note: False teachers often succeed in leading people astray . . .*, p. 1533
- *. . . False teachers can lead many astray*, p. 1533

The question of whether a true Christian can fall away has been one of no small debate. Certainly some people who consider themselves Christians – and appear to be so – do fall away. This topic shows one of the “tensions” in Scripture. Many of the verses in this and the following subsection – with the notable exception of 1 John 2:19 – appear to support the affirmative (as do a number of the verses in the subsections above). On the other hand, God and Jesus Christ promise to keep their followers – as shown in *God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own – until the end*, p. 943.

Matt 13:20-21 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹*yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.*^x

^x Or *stumbles*

This speaks of those who receive God’s word superficially, without any real commitment to it.

Matt 24:10-12 And *then many will fall away*^y and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹*And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.* ¹²*And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.*

^y Or *stumble*

John 6:66 After this *many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.*

Some of those who had been following Jesus apparently found his teaching too offensive or difficult to accept. Quite possibly they did not carefully consider the metaphorical language he used on this occasion (cf. vv. 25-65), failing to grasp its true meaning.

Gal 5:4 *You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified*^z *by the law; you have fallen away from grace.*

^z Or *counted righteous*

Those who were the focus of Paul’s rebuke here appear to have been church members who had been misled to the point of being in grave spiritual danger, rather than having already irrevocably fallen away.

1Tim 4:1 Now *the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith* by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ...

1Tim 5:15 For *some have already strayed after Satan.*

1Tim 6:20-21 O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of *what is falsely called “knowledge,”* ²¹*for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.* Grace be with you.^a

^a The Greek for *you* is plural

2Pet 2:15 *Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, ...*

‡ **John spoke of people who had left the church as not having been truly of the body of believers:**

1Jn 2:19 *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*

This supports the view that those people who fall away have never in fact been truly Christians (cf. [2Pet 2:22](#) ↓).

Falling away brings dire consequences

See also:

- *God punishes those who forsake him*, p. 1787
- *Further implications of deliberately or habitually continuing to sin*, p. 1836



John 15:6 *If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.* 

Commentators differ in various aspects in their interpretations of this verse – but even so it is a clear warning against not remaining in Christ.

Rom 11:22 Note then the kindness and *the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen*, but God’s kindness to you, provided you *continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.* 

As with those of the nation of Israel who fell away, those who stumble (cf. v. 11) in unbelief and stop following God (cf. NCV, NlrV), will be cut off from God and the associated blessings of a relationship with him.

Heb 2:1-3a Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, *lest we drift away from it.* ²*For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution,* ³*how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?* 

Heb 6:4-8 *For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ⁷For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.* 

In v. 4, the “heavenly gift” may refer to Jesus Christ, the subsequently mentioned Holy Spirit, or more generally “the good things of heaven” (NLT). Verse 8 depicts the fate of those who fall away, whose lives produce useless and bad things.

Heb 10:38-39 ... but my righteous one shall live by faith, and *if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.* ³⁹*But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.* 

2Pet 2:20-22 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, *they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.* ²¹*For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from*

the holy commandment delivered to them. ²²What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.” 

In saying that such apostates are worse off than they were originally (vv. 20-21), Peter probably has their greater accountability primarily in view, with them having in some sense known both Jesus Christ (v. 20) and “the way of righteousness” (v. 21). Verse 2 gives credence to the view that those who fall away never were genuine Christians. The two illustrations parallel such people with creatures returning to that which is reflective of what they are and have been all along.

Matt 5:13 You are the salt of the earth, but *if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.* 

The “taste” or “saltiness” of salt speaks of “its strength, its quality” (AMP). If we lose such things as our spiritual fervor or our spiritual integrity, we face being thrown out of God’s kingdom and consequent destruction.

Num 14:43 For there the Amalekites and the Canaanites are facing you, and you shall fall by the sword. *Because you have turned back from following the LORD, the LORD will not be with you.* 

Ps 125:5 *But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the LORD will lead away with evildoers! Peace be upon Israel!* 

Ezek 33:18 *When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it.* 

Zeph 1:4, 6 *“I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests,  ... ⁶those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him.”* 

Note: Dreadful consequences of Israel’s rebellion against God

See also:

- [Num 14:43](#) ; [Zeph 1:4, 6](#) 

The people of Israel are in view in the following verses. The consequences described reflect the more physical or observable consequences of rebelling against God under the first covenant. For believers who rebel against God today



under the new covenant, the consequences in this lifetime may not be as such but they are nevertheless just as serious, even more so. For they involve spiritual consequences with dire eternal repercussions.

1Sam 12:15 But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king.^b 

^b Septuagint; Hebrew fathers

Ps 78:56, 62-64 Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep his testimonies,  ... ⁶²He gave his people over to the sword and vented his wrath on his heritage. ⁶³Fire devoured their young men, and their young women had no marriage song. ⁶⁴Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation. 

Ps 106:43 Many times he delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purposes and were brought low through their iniquity. 

Ps 107:10-12, 17 Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, ¹¹for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. ¹²So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help.  ... ¹⁷Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; ... 

Isa 1:2, 5-7, 19-20, 28 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: “Children^c have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.  ... ⁵Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. ⁶From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. ⁷Your country lies desolate; your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence foreigners devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.  ... ¹⁹If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”  ... ²⁸But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. 

^c Or Sons; also verse 4

Isa 63:10 But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. 

Isa 66:24 “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.” 

Note that the end of the age is in view here.

Lam 1:18, 20 The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering; my young women and my young men have gone into captivity.  ... ²⁰“Look, O LORD, for I am in distress; my stomach churns; my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death. 

The speaker is Jerusalem personified.

Ezek 20:8, 13, 38 But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. None of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. “Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.  ... ¹³But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. “Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them.  ... ³⁸I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. 

Hos 7:13 Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me. 

Hos 13:16 ^d Samaria shall bear her guilt, because she has rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword; their little ones shall be dashed in pieces, and their pregnant women ripped open. 

^d Ch 14:1 in Hebrew

Pray for persecuted Christians



e) Be Ready for Jesus Christ's Return

See also:

- *b) The Timing of Jesus Christ's Return*, p. 696
- *Set your hope on Jesus Christ's return and what will follow*, p. 1107

Subsections

- Await Jesus Christ's return – and for all that will follow
- As we do not know when Jesus Christ will come, "stay awake" and be ready
- To be ready for Jesus Christ's return, live a godly life . . .
- . . . and live a constructive life
- Do not live an ungodly life, leaving you unprepared for Jesus Christ's return
- Do not be deceived by false claims, for Christ's return will be only after certain events – and obvious to all

Await Jesus Christ's return – and for all that will follow

See also:

- *Look forward to what is to come in the afterlife . . .*, p. 1202

1Cor 1:7 ... so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you *wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ...

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we *await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*, ²¹*who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body*, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

In conjunction with waiting for Jesus Christ's return (v. 20), Paul appears to be speaking of waiting for the transformation of "our lowly body" (v. 21).

1Thes 1:10 ... and to *wait for his Son from heaven*, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

2Tim 4:8 Henceforth *there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing*.

As with "righteousness" below in Galatians 5:5, the term "crown of righteousness" could refer either to being pronounced right with God or being made completely

righteous (i.e. the consummation of our sanctification). Another possibility is some kind of crown bestowed as a reward for a righteous life. The phrase "have loved his appearing" is either speaking of the future reaction of Christians at the occurrence of his appearing, or is referring to setting our hearts on his appearing, longing for it (cf. NIV, NRSV).

Titus 2:13 ... *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*, ...

Heb 9:28 ... so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save *those who are eagerly waiting for him*.

James 5:7-8 *Be patient, therefore, brothers,^e until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

^e Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 9, 10, 12, 19

2Pet 3:11-12 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²*waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God*, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

The phrase "hastening the coming" suggests that believers can in some sense hasten the arrival of "the day of God" – the day of Christ's return (cf. v. 4). In light of the reference to repentance of non-believers in v. 9, this may primarily refer to evangelism – notably prayer and witnessing.

Rom 8:23-25 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we *wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies*. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, *we wait for it with patience*.

Gal 5:5 *For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness*.

Jude 1:21 ... keep yourselves in the love of God, *waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life*.

1Cor 16:22b *Our Lord, come!*^f

^f Greek *Maranatha* (a transliteration of Aramaic)



‡ Encourage one another, as Christ's return is drawing near:

Heb 10:25 ... not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but *encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.* 📖

Note that 1 Thessalonians speaks of encouraging one another with the fact and details of Jesus Christ's return (cf. 1Thes 4:12-18).

As we do not know when Jesus Christ will come, "stay awake" and be ready

See also:

▪ *Jesus Christ's return will be at an unexpected time, while people are living as usual*, p. 697

Instructions in the following verses to "stay awake" have in view being alert and watchful – akin to being ready.

Matt 24:42-44 Therefore, *stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.* ⁴³*But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.* ⁴⁴*Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.* 📖

Mark 13:32-37 "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³*Be on guard, keep awake.*^g *For you do not know when the time will come.* ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants^h in charge, each with his work, and *commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.* ³⁵*Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows,¹ or in the morning—* ³⁶*lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.* ³⁷*And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."* 📖

^g Some manuscripts add *and pray*

^h Greek *bondservants*

ⁱ That is, the third watch of the night, between midnight and 3 A.M.

Matt 25:1-13 *Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps^j and went to meet the bridegroom.*^k *Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.* ³*For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,* ⁴*but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.* ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶*But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'* ⁷Then all those virgins rose and

trimmed their lamps. ⁸*And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'* ⁹*But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'* ¹⁰*And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.* ¹¹*Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.'* ¹²*But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.'* ¹³*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.* 📖

^j Or *torches*

^k Some manuscripts add *and the bride*

The ten virgins probably had a role similar to bridesmaids. Jesus' illustration draws a parallel between them waiting for the bridegroom and professing believers waiting for his return, to emphasize the importance of being prepared and ready. The bridegroom's reply to the foolish virgins (v. 12) implies that supposed adherents to Christianity who are not ready for Jesus Christ's return will not have truly been in a right relationship with him.

Luke 12:35-38 *Stay dressed for action^l and keep your lamps burning,* ³⁶*and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.* ³⁷*Blessed are those servants^m whom the master finds awake when he comes.* Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸*If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!* 📖

^l Greek *Let your loins stay girded*; compare Exodus 12:11

^m Greek *bondservants*

The "second or third watch of the night" (v. 38) would be very late in the night, the exact time depending on whether the Roman or Jewish system of time was in view. The point is that believers should be ready at all times. (cf. NEL)

Luke 21:36 But *stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.* 📖

In order to be ready for Jesus Christ's return – to be able "to stand before" him – we need to be always "awake" and pray. The "things that are going to take place" probably are events prior to Jesus Christ's return; it may refer to traumatic events that all mankind will be exposed to or primarily persecution of Christians. (Another possibility is that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was foremost in view.) Here "escape" may have the sense "go safely through" (GNT), rather than meaning to avoid altogether.



Rev 16:15 (*“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”*) 

Jesus Christ will come unexpectedly, like a thief. So we need to be ready, prepared spiritually, so that we will not be ashamed.

✦ OT prophecy of the sudden appearance of the Lord:

Mal 3:1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And *the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.* 

Malachi’s prophecy is probably referring to Jesus Christ’s second coming, and affirms how sudden it will be.

To be ready for Jesus Christ’s return, live a godly life . . .

See also:

- [Rev 16:15](#) 
- [Make every effort to be holy and godly, particularly in view of what is to come](#), p. 1871

1Tim 6:11-14 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹²*Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called* and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before^a Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴*to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...* 

^a Or *in the time of*

Paul calls on Timothy to live a godly life (vv. 11-12) until Christ’s return (v. 14). Quite likely Paul mentions the latter so as to inspire Timothy to obey his instruction in order to be ready for Christ’s return (cf. [2Tim 4:1-2](#) ).

2Pet 3:11-14 *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!* ¹³But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, *since you are waiting for these, be*

diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 

The “day of God” (v. 12) is linked with Christ’s return (cf. v. 4). For further comment see [Await Jesus Christ’s return – and for all that will follow](#), p. 1804.

1Pet 4:7, 13 *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.*  ... ¹³*But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* 

Participation in the sufferings of Christ (v. 13) goes “hand in hand” with living a godly, faithful life in him (cf. [1Jn 2:28](#) ). It ensures that one will not only be ready, but overjoyed on his return.

Rev 3:11 *I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.* 

“Hold fast what you have” is an exhortation to keep “strong in your faith” (NCV™) – which of course is involved in living a godly life.

Isa 56:1 Thus says the LORD: *“Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed.”* 

Though not referring specifically to Jesus Christ’s return, this OT exhortation is certainly applicable to it.

. . . and live a constructive life

See also:

- [1Tim 6:12](#) 

Matt 24:45-47 *Who then is the faithful and wise servant,^o whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.* 

^o Greek *bondservant*; also verses 46, 48, 50

Matt 25:14-30 For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants^p and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents,^q to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶*He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he*



who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.'²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.^r You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.'²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'²⁴He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'²⁶But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?'²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.²⁹For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 

^p Greek *bondservants*; also verse 19

^q A talent was a monetary unit worth about twenty years' wages for a laborer

^r Greek *bondservant*; also verses 23, 26, 30

For comment on vv. 24-30, see the comment on [Matt 25:24-30](#) – under *Whoever does not produce good "fruit" will be cut off from God and Jesus Christ*, p. 1400.

1Cor 7:29-31 This is what I mean, brothers: *the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none,*³⁰*and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods,*³¹*and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.* 

With the relatively short amount of time left before Christ's return (v. 29a), believers should live with the end of the age in view (v. 31b), with their actions and attitudes reflecting this fact (vv. 29b-31a). As such they will be able to lead constructive lives, not hampered or restricted by transitory things.

2Tim 4:1-2 *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* 

Jesus Christ's "appearing" upon which he will judge all people and establish his kingdom (v. 1), should compel one to live a faithful, constructive life (v. 2).

✦ **Abide in Jesus Christ in order to be confident when he appears:**

1Jn 2:28 *And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.* 

Do not live an ungodly life, leaving you unprepared for Jesus Christ's return

Matt 24:48-51 *But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,'⁴⁹and begins to beat his fellow servants^s and eats and drinks with drunkards,⁵⁰the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know⁵¹and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* 

^s Greek *bondservants*

The punishments given to the ungodly (v. 51) and the unproductive (cf. [Matt 25:28-30](#) ) underline their unreadiness for Christ's return. Note that this passage follows on from vv. 45-47 in the previous subsection.

Luke 21:34 *But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.* 

Rom 13:11-12 Besides this you know the time, that *the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.*¹²*The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.* 

Col 3:4-5 *When Christ who is your^t life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*⁵*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^u sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* 

^t Some manuscripts *our*

^u Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*



1Thes 5:4-6 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵For you are all children^v of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 

^v Or sons; twice in this verse

Here “darkness” (v. 4) may refer to ungodliness (cf. [Rom 13:12](#) ) or to ignorance (of the day of the Lord) – or both. In v. 6 Paul exhorts his readers to not be spiritually asleep, like the ungodly, but rather to be alert and self-controlled so as to not be caught off guard by the day of Christ’s return (cf. v. 4).

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ... 

Luke 17:30-33 ... so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. ³²Remember Lot’s wife. ³³Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. 

These verses most likely are meaning that to be prepared for Jesus Christ’s return one needs to avoid: attachments to things of this world (vv. 31-32); and living a self-centered life rather than living for Christ (v. 33).

Do not be deceived by false claims, for Christ’s return will be only after certain events – and obvious to all

See also:

- [b\) The Timing of Jesus Christ’s Return](#), p. 696
- [Siege, suffering and deliverance of Jerusalem – followed by judgment on its attackers](#), p. 993
- [c\) The Antichrist and the Final Persecution](#), p. 1992

Matt 24:3-14 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” ⁴And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. ⁵For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. ⁶And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷For

nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will fall away^w and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹²And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. 

^w Or stumble

In v. 8 “birth pains” denotes the time of distress which leads into – or “gives birth” to – the reign of the Messiah, following his return.

Matt 24:23-33 Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. ²⁹Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. ³²“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 

There are different interpretations of v. 28, but it probably is implying that just as the gathering of vultures makes obvious that there is a carcass, Jesus Christ’s return will likewise be made obvious to all. (cf. NBC) There are also different interpretations of v. 29, regarding whether the language is literal or figurative; it certainly speaks of monumental events. In v. 30, “the sign of the Son of Man” may well simply be referring to Jesus Christ himself appearing.

Luke 21:8, 11 And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time



is at hand!' Do not go after them. ... ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

2Thes 2:1-10 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,^x ²not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness^y is revealed, the son of destruction,^z ⁴who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. ⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

^x Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 13, 15

^y Some manuscripts *sin*

^z Greek *the son of perdition* (a Hebrew idiom)

This "man of lawlessness" is quite likely the first beast of Revelation 13, understood by many to be a final antichrist. There are a number of theories as to who or what is "restraining him" (vv. 6-7). Possibly it is the archangel Michael.

Rev 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail^a on account of him. Even so. Amen.

^a Or *mourn*

The largely sinful nations will all see Jesus Christ return. As mentioned in Matthew 24:30 above, they will mourn as they recognize that the time of reckoning has come.

✦ **The day of Jesus Christ's return will affect all people:**

Luke 21:35 For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Spiritual Warfare

See also:

- [Angels, Satan and Demons](#), p. 163

Living as God wants necessarily means involvement in spiritual warfare. Believers are faced with challenges from spiritual adversaries and also from within themselves. Although the forces that oppose believers are formidable, the Bible gives clear instructions on how to counter any threat – through the supreme power of God.

a) The Existence of Spiritual Warfare

Subsections

- Believers are involved in conflict of a spiritual nature
- Believers have spiritual enemies, notably Satan
- Believers have human enemies, spiritually opposed to them
- Believers face internal spiritual conflict
- God and Jesus Christ aid believers in spiritual warfare, enabling them to overcome

Believers are involved in conflict of a spiritual nature

1Tim 1:18 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may *wage the good warfare*, ... 

Note that the phrase “by them” appears to refer to the prophecies made about Timothy, likely ones regarding his ministry. As such Paul may be speaking of Timothy drawing encouragement from these in waging “the good warfare”.

Eph 6:13 Therefore *take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day*, and having done all, to stand firm. 

Conflict with evil spiritual adversaries is in view (cf. v. 12 )

1Cor 9:7 Who *serves as a soldier* at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? 

In using these three examples or illustrations to make a point, Paul may have in mind that there are other parallels between such workers and the Christian life. As such the first rhetorical

question reflects that believers serve as soldiers, in spiritual warfare.

2Cor 7:5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but *we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within*. 

Spiritual conflict often has a non-spiritual dimension or effect/s, as is mostly in view here and below in Philippians 1:29-30 and 1 Thessalonians 2:2 (and arguably other verses in this subsection).

Phil 1:29-30 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,³⁰ *engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have*. 

Col 2:8 *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit*, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^a of the world, and not according to Christ. 

^a Or *elementary principles*; also verse 20

1Thes 2:2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, *we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict*. 

1Tim 6:12 *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life* to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 

“Fight the good fight” is more often understood to be an allusion to sport (cf. 2Tim 4:7-8) rather than warfare. Nevertheless, it is reflective of and readily applicable to the spiritual warfare that believers are involved in.

2Tim 2:3-4 *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him*. 

Paul likens spiritual aspects of the Christian life to the life of a soldier. These aspects are endurance of hardship (v. 3) – such as persecution by enemies – and undivided devotion to the Lord’s cause (v. 4).



Believers have spiritual enemies, notably Satan

See also:

- *c) Satan's Work against God's People*, p. 188

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 

Although believers may have human opponents, primarily and ultimately their struggle is against spiritual powers.

1Pet 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. *Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* 

Rev 12:17a Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. 

The dragon signifies Satan. The woman (cf. vv. 1-6) may be symbolic of the church. Alternatively the woman may symbolize primarily Israel or believing Jews.

Rev 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 

Matt 13:38-39 The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. 

Satan, or the devil, is spoken of in this passage primarily as the enemy of the "Son of Man" (v. 37), Jesus Christ. By implication he is also the enemy of Christ's followers.

Believers have human enemies, spiritually opposed to them

See also:

- *God's people are hated*, p. 1985
- *God's people may face plots against them*, p. 1986

Believers have human enemies who are opposed to them in regard to spiritual matters – notably in seeking to prevent the spread of the gospel and/or in seeking to impose their own opposing beliefs.

Matt 10:35-36 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. 

Here Jesus quotes Micah 7:6 in emphasizing that as a result of following him, Christians may face hostility even from family members.

John 15:19-20 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' *If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.* If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 

The "world" (cf. [James 4:4 ↓](#)) is the flawed, ungodly world order – including ungodly people – which is under Satan's control and opposed to God. Those who are of the "world" often hate and even persecute Christians.

1Cor 16:8-9 But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. 

Phil 1:27-28 Only let your manner of life be worthy^b of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. 

^b Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

Heb 12:3-4 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴*In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.* 

In view of v. 3 and the reference to shedding blood (v. 4b), "sin" (v. 4a) appears to primarily be referring to sinful forces, notably physical enemies. However, the use of "sin" may also allude to believers' own internal fight against temptation and sin.

James 4:4 You adulterous people!^c Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 

^c Greek *You adulteresses!*



This implies that all that is in the “world” – including those who are of it – are enemies of God and by implication of God’s people.

Ps 38:19 *But my foes are vigorous, they are mighty, and many are those who hate me wrongfully.* 

The psalmists often speak of their enemies, some of whom it would appear were antagonistic towards them in part because of the psalmists’ relationship with God.

Believers face internal spiritual conflict

See also:

- [Heb 12:4](#) 

Although opposing spiritual forces are understood to at least at times play a role in internal spiritual conflicts that believers face, these internal conflicts are in no small part due to the sinful human nature – as shown in the following verses.

Rom 7:21-23 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³but *I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.* 

Even though believers desire to do what is right, they face conflict with the controlling power of sin – the “law” or controlling principle of sin (v. 23). Note, however, that there is some debate amongst commentators as to whether Paul is talking here of his Christian or his pre-Christian experience.

Gal 5:17 *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.* 

The opposing desires of the sinful nature and the Holy Spirit, who indwells believers, produce spiritual conflict within believers. Note that the final clause is probably speaking of the influence of the sinful nature in hindering one from doing the good one wants to do – in conflict with the Holy Spirit. Alternatively, it possibly could be speaking of the Spirit helping us to not indulge the desires that we naturally want to fulfill.

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if *by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body*, you will live. 

Through the Holy Spirit believers are to keep killing off the tendencies and actions of our sinful beings.

1Pet 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to *abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* 

James 4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that *your passions^d are at war within you?*^e 

^d Greek *pleasures*; also verse 3

^e Greek *in your members*

God and Jesus Christ aid believers in spiritual warfare, enabling them to overcome

See also:

- *God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world, including Satan*, p. 919
- *God protects his people from all evil, including Satan*, p. 943
- *God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own – until the end*, p. 943

Luke 10:19-20 *Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.* ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. 

Here “serpents and scorpions” (v. 19) most likely is a reference to evil spirits (v. 20). The “enemy” is Satan (cf. CEV). There is disagreement among commentators as to whether this authority was only given primarily to the disciples or is more widely applicable.

Rom 8:31, 35-39 What then shall we say to these things? *If God is for us, who can be^f against us?*  ... ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, *in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* ³⁸*For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹*nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* 

^f Or *who is*

Verse 31b implies that if God is for us then no one can effectively oppose us. It would appear that “all these things” (v. 37) includes the aspects of spiritual warfare mentioned – such as persecution and threat of being killed (vv. 35-36) and also demonic “powers” (v. 38).



Rom 16:20 *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.* 

2Cor 2:14 *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.* 

The “triumphal procession” alludes to Roman triumphs, where a victorious general would lead his soldiers and captives in a parade, accompanied by the fragrance of incenses. Similarly, God triumphantly leads believers in Christ, and through them spreads the fragrance of the message of Christ.

2Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* 

The term translated here as “evil deed” is sometimes rendered “evil attack” (NIV®, NLT, NRSV; cf. AMP).

1Jn 4:4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 

The reference is to overcoming false prophets or teachers.

Isa 54:15, 17 *If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you. ... ¹⁷no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication^g from me, declares the LORD.* 

^g Or righteousness

These promises are made to Jerusalem in its time of future renewal. Arguably, they are applicable at least in a spiritual sense to believers of all ages.

† God has even given believers victory over death:

1Cor 15:54-57 *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” ⁵⁵“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 

God has even given us victory over death by what he has done for us in Jesus Christ, releasing us from the law and so nullifying the power of sin with its consequences, principally death.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

Believers are to engage in spiritual warfare both in standing firm in their faith and in advancing the cause of God’s kingdom. Generally speaking, the former has a defensive sense and the latter an offensive sense.

Subsections

- Beware of spiritual dangers
- Resist Satan
- Use spiritual weapons and armor
- Spiritual weapons and armor include: faith; . . .
- . . . God’s word; . . .
- . . . and prayer

Beware of spiritual dangers

See also:

- *Note: Be on your guard against persecutors and avoid persecution when appropriate*, p. 2010

Matt 10:16-17 *Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ...* 

Verse 16a illustrates the need to be alert to opponents (v. 17a) – as does (v. 17b). The two directives in v. 16b similarly reflect this need.

Luke 12:1 *In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”* 

Jesus is warning his disciples to guard against being fooled by and/or falling into the hypocritical ways of the Pharisees.

Luke 12:15 *And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”* 



1Cor 16:13 *Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.* 

2Pet 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, *take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.* 

2Tim 4:14-15 Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. ¹⁵*Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.* 

✦ Guard the message of the gospel:

2Tim 1:13-14 Follow the pattern of the sound^h words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴*By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.* 

^h Or healthy

Resist Satan

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* 

1Pet 5:9 *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.* 

To encourage his readers to stand firm amidst sufferings he appears to associate with Satan, Peter points out that fellow believers are also undergoing such sufferings. In resisting Satan, believers should draw strength in the knowledge that they are not alone, but part of a fellowship of suffering believers.

Matt 4:10-11 Then Jesus said to him, *“Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”* ¹¹*Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.* 

Jesus provides an excellent example (cf. vv. 3-9) of effectively resisting Satan.

Eph 4:26-27 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and *give no opportunity to the devil.* 

Anger is not always in itself sinful, but anger should not be allowed to linger, as it makes one susceptible to Satan's schemes. In resisting Satan we should not entertain anything that might give Satan an opportunity.

1Jn 2:13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because *you have overcome the evil one.* I write to you, children, because you know the Father. 

The clause “you have overcome the evil one” may be referring to: primarily the believer's victory over Satan and evil through being in Jesus Christ and sharing in his victory; and/or victories in ongoing combat with Satan. The believers in question serve as encouraging examples of ones who have successfully resisted and overcome Satan.

Use spiritual weapons and armor

Eph 6:10-15 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore *take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.* ¹⁴*Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,* ¹⁵*and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.* 

In v. 15, “the readiness given by the gospel of peace” may well speak of a readiness to proclaim the gospel (cf. CEV, GNT, NRSV), a readiness produced in us by its message. The gospel produces such readiness by its wonderful good news, along with its warnings – both of which should inspire and motivate us to tell others.

2Cor 6:7 *... by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ...* 

The term “weapons of righteousness” is often understood as a reference to the spiritual power and protection given by a life of righteousness and integrity – “right living” (NCV™, cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). However some see it as possibly referring to “weapons” associated with the righteousness believers have in God's sight (through being justified and deemed righteous). These would include other spiritual weapons spoken of in this and the following subsections. Note that although “truthful speech” is not specifically presented as such here, truth is portrayed as a spiritual weapon elsewhere (cf. Eph 6:14 ↑).

2Cor 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, *we are not waging war according to the flesh.* ⁴*For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.* ⁵*We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion*



raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ... 

Paul used such weapons as proclaiming the gospel, prayer and faith – weapons involving God’s divine power (v. 4; cf. [2Cor 6:7 ↑](#)) – to demolish opposition to God. In doing so he took “captive” for Christ “every thought” (v. 5) of people, bringing their thinking in line with the gospel.

Rom 13:12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and *put on the armor of light.* 

“The night” refers to this age that is so characterized by spiritual darkness. In saying that it “is far gone”, the thought may be that it “is far spent”, running out of power – and “almost gone” (NASB, NLT; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV). The phrase “the day” probably refers to the age to come (cf. NCV text note) – though some understand it to more specifically refer to the day of Christ’s return (cf. NIRV). As we look forward to “the day” we should arm ourselves with godly spiritual attitudes and actions that are characteristic of God’s spiritual light.

1Thes 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, *having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.* 

The “hope of salvation” gives confidence and encouragement during the battle. Note that the use of “the day” is similar to that in Romans 13:12 above, but probably speaks more generally of God’s spiritual light and realm in its present form.

2Tim 1:14 *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.* 

1Pet 4:1 *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,ⁱ arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,* for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ... 

ⁱ Some manuscripts add *for us; some for you*

Believers are to “arm” themselves with the same attitude as Jesus Christ had in the face suffering (cf. 2:19-23) – a steely resolve to do God’s will, being willing to patiently endure suffering.

1Sam 17:45 Then David said to the Philistine, “*You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.*” 

As opposed to simply relying on physical weapons, David had come to fight in God’s name – on God’s authority and in reliance on his power.

✦ **Reference to God putting on armor and garments for battle:**

Isa 59:17-18 *He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.* ¹⁸According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment. 

The above NT references to putting on spiritual armor may well have been inspired by v. 17.

Spiritual weapons and armor include: faith; . . .

See also:

▪ [1Thes 5:8 ↑](#)

Eph 6:16 In all circumstances *take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ...* 

1Tim 1:18-19 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may *wage the good warfare,* ¹⁹*holding faith* and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ... 

In v. 19 “faith” appears to be referring to one’s faith in God – as reflected in most modern translations – although some commentators understand it to be speaking of “the faith”, the body of Christian truth. Note, never underestimate the importance for spiritual warfare of “a good conscience” (v. 19a).

1Pet 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵*who by God’s power are being guarded through faith* for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 

1Pet 5:9 *Resist him, firm in your faith,* knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 

Christians are to stand against Satan by faith in God.

1Jn 5:3-5 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome*



the world—our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

To “overcome the world” means to rise above its sinful way of life. This victory is our faith (v. 4) – or won through our faith, “by means of our faith” (GNT) – which is essentially believing that Jesus is the Son of God (v. 5) and acting accordingly.

Heb 11:32-34 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, *stopped the mouths of lions*, ³⁴*quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*

Physical engagements (cf. **Ps 27:1-3** ↓) are generally, at least in a sense, a manifestation or product of spiritual warfare – and likewise should be undertaken in faith.

Rev 12:11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

This appears to be saying that the believers in question overcame Satan by their belief in and testimony to Jesus Christ’s death and its outcomes. Such an inference is applicable to all believers in their conflict with Satan.

Ps 27:1-3 *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold^j of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ²When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. ³Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet^k I will be confident.*

^j Or *refuge*

^k Or *in this*

At the prospect of facing physical enemies, David shows exemplary faith. Believers should show such faith when facing (or amidst) any conflict.

... **God’s word**; ...

Eph 6:17 ... and take the helmet of salvation, and *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*, ...

The description of God’s word as “the sword of the Spirit” reflects its: power; offensive and defensive roles; spiritual nature; and importance to the work of the Holy Spirit. Note that the “helmet of salvation” may well have in view the hope of salvation (cf. 1Thes 5:8).

Heb 4:12 For *the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

This is indicative of the potency of God’s word as a spiritual weapon.

1Jn 2:14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and *the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

Although not stated directly, this may well be implying that the word of God living in these people was a significant factor in them overcoming Satan.

Matt 4:3-11 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴*But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* ⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” ⁷*Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰*Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”* ¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Three times Satan tempts Jesus and each time Jesus uses God’s word to rebuff Satan. Note that Satan is himself prepared to use God’s word (v. 6), misconstruing it, in tempting people.

Ps 119:98, 110, 114 *Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.* ... ¹¹⁰*The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.* ... ¹¹⁴*You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word.*

God’s word makes one wiser than one’s enemies (v. 98). It also enables one to escape spiritual snares that one’s enemies may set, as arguably can be inferred from v. 110. Verse 114 indicates that the fact that God is the believer’s hiding place and shield in the face of adversaries, gives good reason to base one’s hope on his word.



... and prayer

See also:

- [Ask God for help to avoid sin . . .](#), p. 1855

Eph 6:18 ... praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ... 

In the face of evil (cf. vv. 11, 13), believers should keep on praying – not just for themselves but for “all the saints”.

Matt 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but *deliver us from evil!*¹ 

¹ Or *the evil one*; some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*

We should ask God to deliver us from all forms of evil – including Satan (cf. text note). The fact that this request is part of the “Lord’s Prayer” is indicative of the prominence such requests should have in our prayers.

Luke 22:31-32 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you,^m that he might sift you like wheat, ³²but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” 

^mThe Greek word for *you* (twice in this verse) is plural; in verse 32, all four instances are singular

Jesus’ prayers for his followers against Satan’s attacks (cf. [John 17:15 ↓](#)) illustrate that we also should pray for the spiritual protection of ourselves and other believers.

John 17:15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you *keep them from the evil one.*ⁿ 

ⁿ Or *from evil*

Phil 4:6-7 ... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything *by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 

Prayer leads to God’s peace which will “guard” our hearts and minds.

Ps 35:1-3 *Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me! ²Take hold of shield and buckler and rise for my help! ³Draw the spear and javelin^o against my pursuers! Say to my soul, “I am your salvation!”* 

^o Or *and close the way*

Here and in 55:16-18 below, David’s prayers regarding physical warfare are eminently applicable to spiritual warfare. There are no doubt other such examples.

Ps 55:16-18 But I call to God, and the LORD will save me. ¹⁷Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. ¹⁸He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me.



Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Counteraction of Demons

See also:

- [d\) Demons](#), p. 192

Subsections

- [Distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and demons](#)
- [Jesus Christ drove out demons . . .](#)
- [. . . Jesus Christ gave some of his followers similar authority over demons](#)
- [Demons are driven out of people in Jesus Christ’s “name”](#)
- [The Holy Spirit, faith and prayer also figure in the driving out of demons](#)

Distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and demons

See also:

- [e\) Guarding against False Teachers](#), p. 1529

Even within the church a person operating with marked powers or abilities is not necessarily gifted by the Holy Spirit. The person may instead be possessed or under the influence of a demon (or evil spirit), empowering him or her. Thus churches need to be able to determine whether the Holy Spirit or an evil spirit is at work in such a person. Guidelines regarding how to do this are given below in 1 Corinthians 12:3 and 1 John 4:2-3, 6. However the fact that 1 Corinthians 12:10 below speaks of a spiritual gift of “distinguishing between spirits” indicates that at least at times a person with this gift is required.

1Cor 12:1-3 Now concerning^p spiritual gifts,^q brothers,^r I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³Therefore *I want you to understand that no one*



speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. 

^p The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1

^q Or *spiritual persons*

^r Or *brothers and sisters*

In the context of discussing spiritual gifts (v. 1; cf. vv. 7-11, 27-31) and with the reference in v. 2 to being influenced and led astray to worship idols, in v. 3 Paul quite likely has distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and evil spirits in view. Evil spirits will typically not allow a person to openly acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, instead evoking cursing of him.

1Jn 4:1-3 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but *test the spirits to see whether they are from God*, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²*By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God*, ³*and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist*, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 

Here "spirit" refers to a spirit influencing a person. Having in view a particular heresy that was facing his readers, John indicates that they could tell if the spirit in a prophet (v. 1; CEV, GNT, NLT) is the Holy Spirit or an evil one by whether or not the prophet acknowledged Jesus Christ, in particular whether they acknowledged that he had come in the flesh. To do so would be indicative of the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and conviction. Presumably this test for recognizing the Holy Spirit can be applied to other biblical truths about Jesus Christ (cf. **1Cor 12:3** ↑).

1Jn 4:6 *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* 

We can infer from this that teachers who do not listen to the teachings of the apostles are not from God and are under the influence of evil spirits.

✦ **The spiritual gift of being able to distinguish between spirits:**

1Cor 12:7-8, 10 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,  ... ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, *to another the ability to distinguish between spirits*, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 

Jesus Christ drove out demons . . .

See also:

▪ *Demons both fear and have to submit to God and Jesus Christ*, p. 195

Matt 8:16 That evening they brought to him *many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.* 

Matt 9:32-33 As they were going away, behold, *a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him.* ³³*And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel."* 

Matt 12:28 But if it is *by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons*, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 

Matt 17:18 And *Jesus rebuked the demon,^s and it^t came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.*^u 

^s Greek *it*

^t Greek *the demon*

^u Greek *from that hour*

Mark 1:34, 39 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and *cast out many demons*. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.  ... ³⁹And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and *casting out demons.* 

Mark 9:25-27 And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, *he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."* ²⁶*And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out*, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 

Mark 16:9 Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, *from whom he had cast out seven demons.* 

. . . Jesus Christ gave some of his followers similar authority over demons

The following verses show that Jesus gave his disciples and the seventy-two referred to in Luke 10:17-20 authority over demons – as God similarly did with Paul (**Acts 19:11-12** ↓). These verses do not imply that this authority is necessarily given to all believers.



Mark 6:7, 13 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ... ¹³And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. 

Luke 9:1 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ... 

Luke 10:17-20 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” ¹⁸And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” 

As noted earlier, “serpents and scorpions” (v. 19) probably speaks figuratively of demons or evil spirits, referred to in vv. 17, 20. The “enemy” (v. 19) is Satan.

Acts 5:12a, 16 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. ... ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. 

Acts 8:6-7 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 

‡ Similarly, God drove out demons through Paul:

Acts 19:11-12 And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. 

Demons are driven out of people in Jesus Christ’s “name”

See also:

- [Luke 10:17](#) ↑

To drive out demons in Jesus Christ’s “name” is usually understood to mean to do so with his authority. For a fuller explanation of what doing things “in the name of Jesus

Christ” means, see . . . *Do God’s work in the “name” of Jesus Christ*, p. 1418.

Mark 9:38-40 John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name,” and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” ³⁹But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰For the one who is not against us is for us. 

‡ Some manuscripts add *who does not follow us*

Mark 16:17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ... 

Acts 16:16-18 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants^w of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” ¹⁸And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. 

^w Greek *bondservants*

‡ Jesus Christ’s name cannot be used by just anyone as a mere formula to drive out demons:

Acts 19:13-17 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” ¹⁴Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” ¹⁶And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all^x of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. 

^x Or *both*

This illustrates that Jesus Christ’s name cannot be used by just anyone as a mere formula or cliché to drive out demons. Although it is not specifically listed in the NT as a spiritual gift, the ability to drive out demons may be one. The Jews here attempting to drive out the demon may not even have been followers of Jesus Christ. Any previous success they may have had (cf. v. 13) would appear not to have been actually through Jesus Christ and his authority.



The Holy Spirit, faith and prayer also figure in the driving out of demons

Matt 12:28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. 

Matt 17:18-20 And Jesus rebuked the demon,^y and it^z came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.^a ¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁰He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”^b 

^y Greek it

^z Greek the demon

^a Greek from that hour

^b Some manuscripts insert verse 21: *But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting*

Mark 9:28-29 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”^c 

^c Some manuscripts add *and fasting*

Some commentators see Jesus’ reply as implying that the disciples had become somewhat self-reliant in the light of their past success at casting out demons, no longer relying prayerfully on God’s power. Alternatively, on face value Jesus’ reply indicates that certain kinds of demons can only be driven out by actually praying. Note that the text note points to a need for fasting along with prayer.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Ungodly Spiritualistic Practices

In conjunction with engaging in spiritual warfare, we are not to engage in any ungodly spiritualistic practices, which ultimately involve cooperative interaction with demons and even Satan.

Subsections

- Do not practice witchcraft or other occult practices
- Do not consult anyone who does perform occult practices
- Do not have other “gods” or idols
- Other “gods” and idols are man-made, lifeless fallacies . . .
- . . . Other “gods” and idols are useless
- Worship of idols is correlated with worship of demons
- Having other “gods” and idols is very detrimental
- Having other “gods” and idols is detrimental to our relationship with God
- Having other “gods” and idols culminates in God’s retribution
- Note: Other “gods” and idolatry are not restricted to physical images

Do not practice witchcraft or other occult practices

Lev 19:26 You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. *You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes.* 

Deut 18:10-12 *There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering,^d anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer¹¹ or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead,¹² for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you.* 

^d Hebrew makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire

Divination (v. 10) involves seeking knowledge of events that cannot be gained through normal means – future events or ones otherwise indiscernible. Sorcery (v. 10) is practicing magic, particularly through spirits; it is essentially witchcraft. A medium (v. 11) is a person who communicates with spirits on behalf of others. Similarly, a necromancer (v. 11) is one who claims to communicate with the dead, particularly in order to predict the future. Verse 12b points out that such practices were the reason why the nations of Canaan were to be driven out.

1Sam 15:23 For rebellion is as *the sin of divination*, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king. 



Isa 2:6 For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because *they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines*, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. 📖

The “things from the east” appear to be ones associated with magic practices (cf. GNT, NLT). Note that although not stated explicitly, both here and in the following reference (47:9, 12) God’s disapproval of the practices in question is implicit.

Isa 47:9, 12 These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, *in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments*. 📖 ... ¹²*Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed; perhaps you may inspire terror*. 📖

Verse 12 is spoken with sarcasm.

Jer 8:2 *And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped*. And they shall not be gathered or buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. 📖

This appears to be speaking of the practice of astrology (cf. [Isa 47:13-15](#) ↓) – and related acts – effectively denouncing astrology.

Ezek 13:20 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, *I am against your magic bands* with which you hunt the souls like birds, and I will tear them from your arms, and I will let the souls whom you hunt go free, the souls like birds. 📖

The “magic bands” – such as wristbands – were presumably given or sold to people, bringing them under the influence of the false prophetesses being addressed.

Mal 3:5 Then *I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers*, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. 📖

Acts 19:19 *And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all*. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. 📖

Gal 5:19-21 Now *the works of the flesh are evident*: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰*idolatry, sorcery*, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹*envy*,^e drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn

you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 📖

^e Some manuscripts add *murder*

Idolatry and sorcery are mentioned together here (cf. [1Sam 15:23](#) ↑; [Rev 21:8](#) ↓), suggestive that idolatry and occult practices both have a spiritual aspect. It also illustrates that the two are often linked.

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, *sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death*. 📖

✚ Related practices to avoid:

Lev 19:28 *You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves*: I am the LORD. 📖

The forbidding of tattoos – along with cutting of the body – primarily had in view the significance of this in the pagan rituals of Israel’s neighbors. Some also see the practice of tattooing as disfiguring our bodies which were made in God’s likeness and so dishonoring to God; thus they see this command as a timeless one.

Do not consult anyone who does perform occult practices

Lev 19:31 *Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them*: I am the LORD your God. 📖

Note that looking to spirits for help – through mediums or spiritists – demonstrates a lack of trust in God and unfaithfulness to him.

Lev 20:6 *If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people*. 📖

Deut 18:14 ... for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, *listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do this*. 📖

1Chr 10:13-14 So *Saul died for his breach of faith*. He broke faith with the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD, and also *consulted a medium, seeking guidance*. ¹⁴He did not seek guidance from the LORD. Therefore the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse. 📖



Isa 8:19 And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? 

Isa 47:13-15 You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you. ¹⁴Behold, they are like stubble; the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame. No coal for warming oneself is this, no fire to sit before! ¹⁵Such to you are those with whom you have labored, who have done business with you from your youth; they wander about, each in his own direction; there is no one to save you. 

The last statement in v. 14 appears to reinforce the uselessness of astrologers, as per the theme of the subsequent verse (v. 15). They are not like coal or fire that is useful for warming people. Rather, as the prior statements in v. 14 imply, they themselves will be consumed in the fire of God’s judgment.

Zec 10:2 For the household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; they tell false dreams and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. 

This points to the falseness and so also the unreliability of diviners.

Do not have other “gods” or idols

See also:

- [Do not trust in idols](#), p. 1136
- [Worship God alone – do not worship anything or anyone else](#), p. 1342

Ex 20:2-6, 23 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³“You shall have no other gods before^f me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands^g of those who love me and keep my commandments.  ... ²³You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. 

^f Or besides

^g Or to the thousandth generation

The importance of the above verses is highlighted by the fact that they involve the first two of the Ten Commandments. Note that unlike the first commandment (v. 3), a number of commentators interpret the second (vv. 4-5) to be concerned more with how we worship, rather than just with who (or what) we worship. As God is spiritual and invisible, any visual representation of him is necessarily false – hence it is wrong to use any in worship of God (cf. [Deut 4:15-18](#) ↓). However, it still may be that worship of other “gods” is primarily in view.

Ex 23:13, 23-24 Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips.  ... ²³“When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, ²⁴you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. 

2Ki 17:35 The LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them, “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, ... 

Ps 81:9 There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. 

Ps 44:20-21 If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, ²¹would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart. 

Deut 4:15-18 Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, ¹⁶beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, ¹⁸the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. 

Hos 14:3, 8 Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy.”  ... ⁸O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you.^h I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit. 

^h Hebrew *him*



The rhetorical question in v. 8 is in essence exhorting Israel to have nothing more to do with idols (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

1Cor 10:7, 14 *Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.”* ... ¹⁴*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.*

1Jn 5:21 Little children, *keep yourselves from idols.*

✦ **Do not worship any other thing:**

Job 31:26-28 ... *if I have looked at the sunⁱ when it shone, or the moon moving in splendor,²⁷ and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand,²⁸ this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above.*

ⁱ Hebrew *the light*

The last clause of v. 27 appears to refer to offering a kiss of homage (cf. GNT, NCV, NIV).

Other “gods” and idols are man-made, lifeless fallacies . . .

See also:

- [Isa 46:7](#) ; [Jer 2:11](#) ; [Jer 10:15](#) ; [Hab 2:18-19](#)

Ps 115:4-7 *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.⁵ They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see.⁶ They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell.⁷ They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat.*

Ps 135:15-17 *The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands.¹⁶ They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see;¹⁷ they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths.*

Jer 10:3-5a, 14 ... *for the customs of the peoples are vanity.^j A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman.⁴ They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move.⁵ Their idols^k are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk.* ... ¹⁴*Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them.*

^j Or vapor, or mist

^k Hebrew *They*

Rev 9:20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and *idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ...*

Isa 44:12-20 *The ironsmith takes a cutting tool and works it over the coals. He fashions it with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He becomes hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint.¹³ The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil.¹⁴ He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house.¹⁴ He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it.¹⁵ Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it.¹⁶ Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, “Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!”¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, “Deliver me, for you are my god!”¹⁸ They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand.¹⁹ No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, “Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?”²⁰ He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?”*

¹ Hebrew *stylus*

Any idea that idols are real is a delusion or a lie (v. 20; [Jer 10:14](#) ; [Isa 41:29](#)), which should be obvious in view of what they are made from (v. 19).

1Cor 8:4 Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.”

Gal 4:8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

The reference in the last clause is to supposed gods, who are in fact non-existent (CEV, NCV, NLT).



... Other "gods" and idols are useless

1Sam 12:21 And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. 

Idols are "empty" – they are "nothing" (NKJV) and so "useless" (NCV™, NIV®, NLT, NRSV).

Isa 41:22-24, 29 Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come. ²³Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified.^m ²⁴Behold, you are nothing, and your work is less than nothing; an abomination is he who chooses you.  ... ²⁹Behold, they are all a delusion; their works are nothing; their metal images are empty wind. 

^mOr that we may both be dismayed and see

Isa 44:9-10 All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. ¹⁰Who fashions a god or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? 

Isa 46:6-7 Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! ⁷They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble. 

Jer 2:11-13 Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. ¹²Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, ¹³for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water. 

In v. 13 useless idols are compared to wells or reservoirs that are cracked and therefore useless for holding water.

Jer 10:5b, 15 Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good."  ... ¹⁵They are worthless, a work of delusion; at the time of their punishment they shall perish. 

Jer 11:12 Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they make offerings, but they cannot save them in the time of their trouble. 

Jer 14:22 Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not he, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for you do all these things. 

Hab 2:18-19 What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! ¹⁹Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it. 

1Ki 18:25-26 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it." ²⁶And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. 

Worship of idols is correlated with worship of demons

Most of the following references do not explicitly correlate worship of idols with worship of demons, but each reference makes or suggests an association between the two and appears to imply such a correlation.

1Cor 10:19-21 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 

Although idol worshipers may believe that they are offering sacrifices to an idol, they are in reality ultimately offering them to demons. As such one cannot take part in such practices and also acceptably participate in godly worship practices, such as the Lord's Supper.

Lev 17:7 So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations. 

The reference to sacrificing to demons (cf. [Deut 32:17](#) ↓) likely speaks of the people's sacrifices to idols, whom they considered to be gods but were in fact demonic.



Deut 32:16-17 They stirred him to jealousy *with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger.* ¹⁷*They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.*

The phrase “that were no gods” means that they were not real gods, with there only being one real God.

Ps 106:36-37 *They served their idols, which became a snare to them.* ³⁷*They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; ...*

Rev 9:20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up *worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, ...*

Having other “gods” and idols is very detrimental

2Chr 28:22-23 In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the LORD—this same King Ahaz. ²³*For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, “Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.*

2Ki 17:15 They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. *They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them.*

The people went after idols – things which are fallacies and futile – and became like them (cf. [Ps 115:8 ↓](#)), in effect “worthless” (CEV, GNT, NIV, NLT).

Ps 16:4 *The sorrows of those who run after^a another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.*

^a Or *who acquire*

Ps 97:7 *All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols; worship him, all you gods!*

Ps 106:36 *They served their idols, which became a snare to them.*

Ps 115:8 *Those who make them become like them [idols]; so do all who trust in them.*

People naturally tend to acquire characteristics and values associated with anyone or anything that they are devoted to. As such if people are devoted to worthless idols, they tend to acquire such things as foolishness and a corrupt morality.

Isa 42:17 *They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, “You are our gods.”*

Isa 44:9, 11 *All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame.* ... ¹¹*Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human. Let them all assemble, let them stand forth. They shall be terrified; they shall be put to shame together.*

Verse 9 is not actually asserting that the characteristics mentioned are a result of having idols, though possibly this is implied. Note that the idols’ “witnesses” refers either to those who testify to their authenticity, or to the worthlessness of those who worship them as evidencing what the idols themselves are like.

Jer 7:6 ... if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not *go after other gods to your own harm, ...*

Jer 7:18-19 The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, *to make cakes for the queen of heaven. And they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger.* ¹⁹*Is it I whom they provoke? declares the LORD. Is it not themselves, to their own shame?*

Rather than spiting (cf. NASB) or “hurting” (GNT, NCV, NLT) God, the people’s sin in turning away from him to other “gods” would only hurt themselves. For it would leave them open to troubles that God would have saved them from and also to punishment from God. Note that the “queen of heaven” (v. 18) is a goddess, probably of Canaanite or Babylonian origin.

Jer 18:15 But my people have forgotten me; *they make offerings to false gods; they [the false gods] made them stumble in their ways, in the ancient roads, and to walk into side roads, not the highway, ...*

Ezek 22:4 You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and *defiled by the idols that you have made, and you have brought your days near, the appointed time of^a your years has come. Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all the countries.*

^a Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, Targum; most Hebrew manuscripts *until*



Idol worship both defiled the people and brought God's judgment.

Hos 9:10b But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved. 

Detestable practices – even human sacrifices (cf. 13:2) – are often associated with idol worship.

Hos 13:1 When Ephraim spoke, there was trembling; he was exalted in Israel, but he incurred guilt through Baal and died. 

Ephraim – signifying all the northern tribes of Israel – turned to worshipping the god Baal. And so it became guilty and “died”. The latter refers to either a spiritual death and/or the future destruction of the nation.

Having other “gods” and idols is detrimental to our relationship with God

See also:

- Ezek 14:7 
- God's anger arises in response to people forsaking him, p. 72

Deut 31:18 And I will surely hide my face in that day because of all the evil that they have done, because they have turned to other gods. 

Deut 32:16-19 They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. ¹⁷They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded. ¹⁸You were unmindful of the Rock that bore^p you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth. ¹⁹“The LORD saw it and spurned them, because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters. 

^p Or fathered

Judg 10:13-14 Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods; therefore I will save you no more. ¹⁴Go and cry out to the gods whom you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress. 

2Ki 17:7, 9 And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods  ... ⁹And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were

not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. 

Israel worshipped other gods despite the fact that God was “their God” who had rescued them (v. 7). Doing such things against God “that were not right” (v. 9) greatly undermined their relationship with him. Note that the “high places” (v. 9) were “pagan places of worship” (GNT; cf. NCV, NLT).

Jer 5:7 How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores. 

Verse 7a indicates that the people's adherence to other gods was at least one reason why God could not or would not forgive the people's other sins (cf. vv. 1-6). Note that the prostitution and adultery (v. 7b) were probably associated with the worship of false gods.

Ezek 14:3 Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them? 

Jonah 2:8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. 

Having other “gods” and idols culminates in God's retribution

Josh 24:20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good. 

1Ki 9:6-7 But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, ⁷then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 

The reference to Israel becoming “a proverb and a byword” (v. 7b) means that such would their punishment be that they would be cited by other peoples as a notable example of destruction.

Jer 5:19 And when your people say, ‘Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?’ you shall say to them, ‘As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.’ 



Jer 44:19-22 And the women said,^q “When we made offerings to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, was it without our husbands’ approval that we made cakes for her bearing her image and poured out drink offerings to her?”²⁰ Then Jeremiah said to all the people, men and women, all the people who had given him this answer: ²¹“As for the offerings that you offered in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your officials, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them? Did it not come into his mind? ²²The LORD could no longer bear your evil deeds and the abominations that you committed. Therefore your land has become a desolation and a waste and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day. 

^q Compare Syriac, Hebrew lacks *And the women said*

Ezek 5:9 And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. 

Ezek 14:7-8 For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to a prophet to consult me through him, I the LORD will answer him myself. ⁸And I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the LORD. 

Note that v. 7 suggests that to turn to idols is to effectively separate oneself from God, severing one’s relationship with him.

Ezek 44:10 But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment.^r 

^r Or *iniquity*; also verse 12

Hos 13:2-3 And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves metal images, idols skillfully made of their silver, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of them, “Those who offer human sacrifice kiss calves!” ³Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window. 

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death. 

✚ Those who have idols are under God’s curse:

Deut 27:15 ‘Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to the LORD, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret.’ And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’ 

Note: Other “gods” and idolatry are not restricted to physical images

Hab 1:11 Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, *guilty men, whose own might is their god!* 

The Babylonians were “guilty of worshiping their own strength” (NCV™; cf. CEV).

Phil 3:19 Their end is destruction, *their god is their belly*, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 

Here “belly” may be a metaphor for “bodily desires” (GNT, cf. NCV) – particularly in light of the following clause “they glory in their shame”. Whether or not this is the case, Paul clearly has in view a mindset focused on earthly or worldly things, making them one’s top priority, effectively one’s “god”.

Eph 5:5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or *who is covetous (that is, an idolater)*, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 

The description of such a person as “an idolater” probably refers primarily to being covetous (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT; [Col 3:5](#) ↓), rather than also to the preceding adjectives. Covetous or greedy people effectively put themselves and material things in the place of God. As such they are “serving a false god” (NCV™).

Col 3:5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^s sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and *covetousness, which is idolatry.* 

^s Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

Pray for persecuted Christians



Rejecting Sin

I. Encountering Sin

- a) Consequences of Sin for God's People..... 1830
- b) Addressing Sin (I): Return from Sin to God..... 1837
- c) Addressing Sin (II): Deal with Sin before God..... 1841
- d) God's Response to Repentance..... 1847

II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

- a) Avoiding Sin..... 1854
- b) Alternatives to Sin..... 1861
- c) Be Holy (I): General..... 1868
- d) Be Holy (II): Being Set Apart..... 1875

I. Encountering Sin

Inevitably on occasions sin “leaks” into our lives, with its ill effects on ourselves and on our relationship with God. But if we address it as the Bible says to, God promises to forgive our sins and take in hand its effects.

Note that the teaching in this section is applicable to both new believers ridding themselves of their old ways and to believers returning to God after having lapsed into sin. However, the focus is more on the latter – with the former being primarily dealt with in the section *b) Repentance*, p. 1034.

a) Consequences of Sin for God’s People

See also:

- *d) Sin’s Intrinsic Ill Effects*, p. 371
- *e) Sin Brings God’s Judgment – Ultimately Death*, p. 377
- *d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons*, p. 869

Subsections

- Prelude: God’s people still sin
- Sin deprives God’s people of his blessings
- Sin deprives God’s people of rest and peace
- God punishes sin, which can mean physical suffering and emotional anguish . . .
- . . . along with various other troubles
- Sin defiles God’s people – making them spiritually unclean
- God turns away from those who persist in sin . . .
- . . . God rejects them and thrusts them from his presence
- Further implications of deliberately or habitually continuing to sin

Prelude: God’s people still sin

James 3:2 *For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.* 📖

No one is perfect.

1Jn 1:8 *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* 📖

No one’s sinful nature has been completely eradicated.

Heb 5:1-3 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since *he himself is beset with weakness*. ³*Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins* just as he does for those of the people. 📖

Even high priests are “liable to moral weakness” (AMP). The same can be said for all leaders amongst God’s people.

Rom 7:18-19 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but *the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.* 📖

Opinions differ on whether Paul is speaking here of a Christian or a pre-Christian experience.

Sin deprives God’s people of his blessings

Not all the references in this and the following subsections actually state that sin was the reason for the consequences of which they speak, but it is clear from their contexts that this is the case. Note that it is Israel’s sin that is largely in view in this and the following subsections.

Jer 5:24-25 They do not say in their hearts, ‘Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.’ ²⁵*Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have kept good from you.* 📖

Isa 63:15 Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and beautiful^a habitation. *Where are your zeal and your might? The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me.* 📖

^a Or *holy and glorious*

This reflects on the blessings of the people’s relationship with God before their sinful rebellion (cf. v. 10). “The stirring of your inner parts” appears to refer to God’s pity (cf. AMP) or love (cf. CEV, GNT).

Jer 16:5 For thus says the LORD: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament or grieve for them, for *I have taken away my peace from this people, my steadfast love and mercy, declares the LORD.* 📖



Jer 17:3b-4 *Your wealth and all your treasures I will give for spoil as the price of your high places for sin throughout all your territory. ⁴You shall loosen your hand from your heritage that I gave to you, and I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.* 📖

Lam 4:16 The LORD himself^b has scattered them; *he will regard them no more*; no honor was shown to the priests, no favor to the elders. 📖

^b Hebrew *The face of the LORD*

The clause “he will regard them no more” suggests that God would no longer take care of them (cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Amos 8:11-12 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I will send a famine on the land— *not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.* ¹²*They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.* 📖

Sin deprives God’s people of rest and peace

See also:

▪ **Jer 16:5** ↑

Following on from the previous subsection, rest and peace are further blessings that sin deprives God’s people of. Note that the first four references speak of “rest” as being a blessing of God or from following his ways. They indicate or imply that if one does not walk in God’s ways – i.e. continues to sin – one fails to find such spiritual rest. The other references similarly speak of “rest” and “peace” being inaccessible, with their contexts indicating that sin was the reason.

Isa 28:11-12 For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the LORD will speak to this people, ¹²*to whom he has said, “This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose”; yet they would not hear.* 📖

Note that the “strange lips and ... a foreign tongue” (v. 11) allude to enemies and captivity – in contrast to rest and peace (v. 12).

Jer 6:16 Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, and *ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’* 📖

Jer 50:6 My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have *led them astray, turning them away on the mountains. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their fold.* 📖

The references to roaming and wandering over mountains allude to the sin of the people in wandering away from God – particularly to idolatry, with mountains being favored places for idol worship (cf. AMP). Their “fold” was their “resting place” (AMP, CEV, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV).

Heb 3:18-19 *And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?* ¹⁹*So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.* 📖

This is referring to the Israelites, who had been rebellious, not being able to enter Canaan – God’s place of rest.

Deut 28:65, 67 *And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul.* 📖 ... ⁶⁷*In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were evening!’ and at evening you shall say, ‘If only it were morning!’ because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see.* 📖

The term “a languishing soul” (v. 65) speaks of despair (cf. GNT, NLT).

Lam 1:3 Judah has gone into exile because of affliction and hard servitude; she dwells now among the nations, but *finds no resting place*; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.^c 📖

^c Or *in the narrow passes*

Lam 5:5 Our pursuers are at our necks;^d we are weary; *we are given no rest.* 📖

^d Symmachus *With a yoke on our necks*

Lam 3:17 ... *my soul is bereft of peace*; I have forgotten what happiness^e is; ... 📖

^e Hebrew *good*

Jer 8:15 *We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror.* 📖

Ezek 7:25 *When anguish comes, they will seek peace, but there shall be none.* 📖



God punishes sin, which can mean physical suffering and emotional anguish . . .

See also:

- Deut 28:65, 67 [↑]; Jer 8:15 [↑]; Ezek 7:25 [↑]
- Judg 2:15 [↓]; Neh 9:37 [↓]; Lam 1:5 [↓]
- *When his people turn to sin, God punishes and disciplines them . . .*, p. 870

Ps 6:1-3, 6-7 *O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.* ²Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. ³My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long?  ... ⁶I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. ⁷My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. 

In v. 1 David appears to be pleading to be spared from any further discipline, being in agony from that which he had already received (vv. 2-3, 6-7).

Ps 32:3-4 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up^f as by the heat of summer. Selah 

^f Hebrew *my vitality was changed*

The phrase “when I kept silent” (v. 3a) refers to the psalmist’s failure to acknowledge his sin.

Ps 38:3-8, 10, 17-18 *There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.* ⁴For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. ⁵My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, ⁶I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. ⁷For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. ⁸I am feeble and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart.  ... ¹⁰My heart throbs; my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me.  ... ¹⁷For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever before me. ¹⁸I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. 

Ps 102:3-11 For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. ⁴My heart is struck down like grass and has withered; I forget to eat my bread. ⁵Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh. ⁶I am like a desert owl^g of the waste places; ⁷I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop. ⁸All the day my enemies taunt me; those who deride me use my name for a

curse. ⁹For I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink, ¹⁰because of your indignation and anger; for you have taken me up and thrown me down. ¹¹My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass. 

^g The precise identity of these birds is uncertain

This is considered one of the penitential psalms (as are the psalms from which the above extracts are taken) expressing sorrow and regret for sin. This is reflected by the reference in v. 10 to God’s anger, pointing to sin as being behind the psalmist’s predicament. Note that the simile in v. 6 points to the psalmist’s withered lonely state.

Isa 64:6-7 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. *We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* ⁷There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and *have made us melt in^h the hand of our iniquities.* 

^h Masoretic Text; Septuagint, Syriac, Targum *have delivered us into*

Jer 4:18 *Your ways and your deeds have brought this upon you. This is your doom, and it is bitter; it has reached your very heart.* 

Lam 1:2, 4, 12-13, 15-16, 20-22 *She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.*  ... ⁴The roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the festival; all her gates are desolate; her priests groan; her virgins have been afflicted,ⁱ and she herself suffers bitterly.  ... ¹²“Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the LORD inflicted on the day of his fierce anger. ¹³“From on high he sent fire; into my bones^j he made it descend; he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back; he has left me stunned, faint all the day long.  ... ¹⁵“The Lord rejected all my mighty men in my midst; he summoned an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord has trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah. ¹⁶“For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my spirit; my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed.”  ... ²⁰“Look, O LORD, for I am in distress; my stomach churns; my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death. ²¹“They heard^k my groaning, yet there is no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that you have done it. You have brought^l the day you announced; now let them be as



I am. ²²“Let all their evildoing come before you, and deal with them as you have dealt with me because of all my transgressions; for my groans are many, and my heart is faint.”

ⁱ Septuagint, Old Latin *dragged away*

^j Septuagint; Hebrew *bones and*

^k Septuagint, Syriac *Hear*

^l Syriac *Bring*

Jerusalem is in view in vv. 2a, 4 and the speaker in the subsequent verses is Jerusalem personified. The “virgin daughter of Judah” (v. 15) signifies Jerusalem and her people.

Lam 5:15-17 *The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning.* ¹⁶The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we have sinned! ¹⁷For this our heart has become sick, for these things our eyes have grown dim, ...

Ezek 7:16-18 And if any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, each one over his iniquity. ¹⁷All hands are feeble, and all knees turn to water. ¹⁸They put on sackcloth, and horror covers them. Shame is on all faces, and baldness on all their heads.

The last clause refers to heads shaven in mourning.

Ezek 33:10 And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’

... along with various other troubles

See also:

- [Lam 5:16](#) ↑

Deut 31:16-17 And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. ¹⁷Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured. And many evils and troubles will come upon them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’

Judg 2:13-15 They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. ¹⁴So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their

surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. ¹⁵Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

Ezra 9:7 From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today.

Neh 9:37 And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress.

Ps 40:12 For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.

The clause “my iniquities have overtaken me” refers to the results of David’s sins, which had overwhelmed him (cf. [Lam 1:14](#) ↓).

Ps 107:10-12, 17 Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, ¹¹for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. ¹²So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. ... ¹⁷Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; ...

Isa 59:9-12 Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. ¹⁰We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among those in full vigor we are like dead men. ¹¹We all growl like bears; we moan and moan like doves; we hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. ¹²For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: ...

The darkness referred to in v. 9 and illustrated in v. 10, refers to their grim predicament, quite possibly also inclusive of spiritual darkness.

Lam 1:5, 14 Her foes have become the head; her enemies prosper, because the LORD has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions; her children have gone away, captives before the foe. ... ¹⁴“My transgressions were bound^m into a yoke; by his hand they were fastened together; they were set



upon my neck; he caused my strength to fail; the Lord gave me into the hands of those whom I cannot withstand. 

^mThe meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain

Hos 8:7 For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; it shall yield no flour; if it were to yield, strangers would devour it. 

"For they sow the wind" likely refers to idolatry and possibly also to largely unrestrained sin in general. This "wind" had resulted in a "whirlwind" – God's devastating punishment.

Hos 14:1 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. 

Mic 6:13-14 Therefore I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins. ¹⁴You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be hunger within you; you shall put away, but not preserve, and what you preserve I will give to the sword. 

✦ God's punishment of Israel's sin is an example and warning to us:

1Cor 10:5-12 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put Christ^a to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹²Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 

^a Some manuscripts *the Lord*

Sin defiles God's people – making them spiritually unclean

See also:

- *Spiritual defilement . . .*, p. 372
- *. . . Spiritual uncleanness*, p. 372
- *Note: Spiritual purity is paralleled with cleanness, and sin with uncleanness*, p. 408

Ps 106:39 Thus they became unclean by their acts, and played the whore in their deeds. 

Ezek 20:43 And there you shall remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. 

Heb 12:15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ... 

The "root of bitterness" denotes either sinfulness itself (cf. AMP) – possibly unbelief in particular (cf. NLT) in light of the earlier reference to God's grace exhibited in the gospel – or a person (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) who exhibits such sinfulness. Sin in the church can influence others to so sin, thus by it many can "become defiled".

Lam 1:8-9 Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns her face away. ⁹Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; ^otherefore her fall is terrible; she has no comforter. "O LORD, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!" 

^o Or *end*

"Her uncleanness was in her skirts" (v. 9a) refers to Jerusalem's uncleanness, caused by her sin (v. 8a). Note that "her nakedness" (v. 8) refers to her spiritual prostitution – possibly in conjunction with actual prostitution – and unfaithfulness to God.

Matt 15:18-20 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone. 

Isa 64:5b-6 Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? ^p ⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. 

^p Or *in your ways is continuance, that we might be saved*

In saying "all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (v. 6) Isaiah may be: speaking of the people's righteous acts being polluted or stained by their sin; implying that even their good acts do not meet God's standard of righteousness; or possibly using "righteous" in an ironic sense.



2Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us *cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body^a and spirit*, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. 

^a Greek *flesh*

Here “every defilement” would appear to refer to all sinful influences that make unclean our body and spirit – effectively our whole being.

God turns away from those who persist in sin . . .

See also:

- *Separation from God . . .*, p. 373

As sin makes people spiritually unclean, God will ultimately turn away from those who persist in sin, for God in his holiness will not coexist with such uncleanness.

Deut 31:16-18 And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and *they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them*. ¹⁷*Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them*, and they will be devoured. And many evils and troubles will come upon them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’ ¹⁸*And I will surely hide my face in that day because of all the evil that they have done, because they have turned to other gods*. 

Isa 59:2 . . . but *your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear*. 

Isa 64:7 There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for *you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in^r the hand of our iniquities*. 

^r Masoretic Text; Septuagint, Syriac, Targum *have delivered us into*

Jer 6:7-8 *As a well keeps its water fresh, so she keeps fresh her evil; violence and destruction are heard within her; sickness and wounds are ever before me*. ⁸*Be warned, O Jerusalem, lest I turn from you in disgust, lest I make you a desolation, an uninhabited land*. 

Lam 3:42, 44 *We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven*.  . . . ⁴⁴*you have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through*. 

Ezek 8:6a And he said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing, *the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary?* 

Likewise Psalms 78:60 speaks of God earlier abandoning the tabernacle when his people had turned to sin – “He forsook his dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among mankind, ...”

Hos 5:5-6 The pride of Israel testifies to his face;^s *Israel and Ephraim shall stumble in his guilt; Judah also shall stumble with them*. ⁶*With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find him; he has withdrawn from them*. 

^s Or *in his presence*

Hos 9:9, 12 *They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah: he will remember their iniquity; he will punish their sins*.  . . . ¹²*Even if they bring up children, I will bereave them till none is left. Woe to them when I depart from them!* 

Mic 3:4 *Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil*. 

Isa 63:10-11 But *they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them*. ¹¹*Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people.† Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, ...* 

[†] Or *Then his people remembered the days of old, of Moses*

. . . God rejects them and thrusts them from his presence

Ps 78:58-59 For *they provoked him to anger with their high places; they moved him to jealousy with their idols*. ⁵⁹*When God heard, he was full of wrath, and he utterly rejected Israel*. 

Jer 7:28-29 And you shall say to them, ‘*This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips*. ²⁹“*Cut off your hair and cast it away; raise a lamentation on the bare heights, for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.*’ 



Jer 14:10 Thus says the LORD concerning this people: “They have loved to wander thus; they have not restrained their feet; therefore the LORD does not accept them; now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins.”

2Ki 17:18-23 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. ¹⁹Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. ²⁰And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight. ²¹When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. ²²The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, ²³until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

The promised land was God’s land, particularly as his sanctuary was there (although it was in the southern kingdom of Judah rather than in the northern kingdom of Israel, which is largely in view here). By exiling the sinful people from his land, in a real sense God was removing them from his presence – removing them “out of his sight” (vv. 18, 20, 23).

Hos 9:15b, 17 Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels. ... ¹⁷My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations.

Jer 7:13-15 And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, ¹⁴therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. ¹⁵And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.

Because of the people’s wickedness and disregard for God (v. 13), God would thrust them from his presence (v. 15). This probably has primarily in view sending them into exile away from his land, but could additionally refer to the destruction of the temple that bore his name (v. 14). In bearing God’s name, the temple signified God’s presence. Its removal would thus be indicative of the people’s exclusion from God’s presence.

Lam 4:16 The LORD himself^a has scattered them; he will regard them no more; no honor was shown to the priests, no favor to the elders.

^a Hebrew *The face of the LORD*

This illustrates God’s rejection and expulsion of his people, a consequence of their sin.

‡ Due to sin we are not worthy to be in God’s presence:

Ezra 9:15 O LORD, the God of Israel, you are just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as it is today. Behold, we are before you in our guilt, for none can stand before you because of this.

Here in repentance Ezra and the people prayed before God; as such they were not intent on persisting in sin and so had not been thrust from God’s presence. But even so, because of their sin the people were not worthy to “stand” in God’s presence – which in view of Ezra’s prostrate position (cf. v. 5) may be a reference to physically standing.

Further implications of deliberately or habitually continuing to sin

See also:

- *Note: Implications of not obeying God*, p. 1170
- *Note: Ill consequences of not obeying God*, p. 1187
- *Note: Not repenting and returning to God brings judgment . . .*, p. 1852

Deut 29:19-20 ... one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.’ This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. ²⁰The LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book will settle upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.

The reference is to willfully breaking the terms of the covenant God made with Israel, and thus willfully sinning. Note that v. 19b appears to be meaning that willful sin can bring consequences that also affect others (cf. CEV, GNT), but the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain (cf. NRSV text note).

Heb 10:26-31 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse



punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 

To deliberately keep on sinning after having previously accepted Christ's sacrifice as payment for sin is by implication to do the things listed in v. 29. The result is that "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (v. 26) and so one faces God's judgment and dreadful punishment (vv. 27, 30-31).

1Jn 3:6-10 *No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.* ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's^v seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. ¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. 

^v Greek *his*

In referring to not having "either seen him or known him" (v. 6), John speaks of not having "recognized, perceived, or understood Him, or... had an experiential acquaintance with Him" (AMP). In saying that the devil "has been sinning from the beginning", v. 8 may have in view the fact that sin originated from the devil – both sin itself and human sin. Thus those who persist in sin are ultimately "of the devil", in a sense a product of him, emulating his character (cf. AMP). They follow him and in effect belong to him (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). In v. 9, "God's seed" may well speak of God's nature (cf. AMP, GNT) with the new life that it brings (cf. CEV, NCV, NLT). Alternatively, it may denote God's word or the Holy Spirit, through which the new life comes.

1Jn 5:18 We know that *everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning*, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. 

This implies that anyone who does continue in a life of sin has not been born of God (cf. [1Jn 3:9-10](#) ↑).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Addressing Sin (I): Return from Sin to God

See also:

- [b\) Repentance](#), p. 1034

Even if sin has not led to a believer completely falling away from God, all sin hinders one from being fully devoted to God to some extent. Thus one needs to turn away from any sin and return to being completely devoted to God.

Subsections

- [Stop sinning, turning away from sin](#)
- [Do not be stubborn, like the Israelites were, resisting God and persisting in sin](#)
- [So get rid of sin . . .](#)
- [. . . and get rid of things involved in sinful practices](#)
- [Return to God](#)
- [Return to God with all your heart – not insincerely](#)
- [In returning from sin to God, do what God wants](#)

Stop sinning, turning away from sin

See also:

- [. . . and turn from sinful ways](#), p. 1035
- [In turning from sin, do what is good and right . . .](#), p. 1035

1Cor 15:34 Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and *do not go on sinning*. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. 

Rom 6:1-2, 12 What shall we say then? *Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* ²*By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*  ... ¹²*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.* 

1Jn 5:18 We know that *everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning*, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. 

Job 34:31-32 For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne punishment; *I will not offend any more*; ³²*teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more?*' 

These words appear to be presented as exemplary.



Ezek 14:6 Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: *Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.* 

Ezek 18:30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. *Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.*^w 

^w Or *lest iniquity be your stumbling block*

Dan 9:13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, *turning from our iniquities* and gaining insight by your truth. 

2Tim 2:19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "*Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.*" 

Do not be stubborn, like the Israelites were, resisting God and persisting in sin

In the following verses, references to having hard hearts and stiff necks refer to stubbornness.

Heb 3:7-9 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸*do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.* 

Deut 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and *be no longer stubborn.* 

Prov 28:14 Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but *whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.* 

Judg 2:19 But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. *They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.* 

2Chr 36:13 He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. *He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel.* 

Isa 46:12 Listen to me, *you stubborn of heart, you who are far from righteousness:* ... 

Isa 48:4 Because *I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass,* ... 

Jer 5:3 O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but *they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent.* 

Jer 17:23 *Yet they did not listen or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck, that they might not hear and receive instruction.* 

Jer 18:11-12 Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: "Thus says the LORD, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. *Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.*"¹²"*But they say, 'That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.'* 

Hos 4:16 *Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn; can the LORD now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture?* 

Zec 7:11-12 *But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.*^x¹²*They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.* 

^x Hebrew *and made their ears too heavy to hear*

Acts 7:51 *You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.* 

✚ **The Pharisees stubbornly resisted Jesus and his teaching:**

Mark 3:5 And *he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart,* and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 

So get rid of sin . . .

See also:

- [Gen 35:2](#) ↓

Ezek 18:31 *Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed,* and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? 



James 1:21 Therefore *put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness* and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

1Pet 2:1 So *put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander*.

Col 3:5, 8-10 *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^y sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* ... ⁸But now you must put them all away: *anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.* ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have *put off the old self^z with its practices* ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

^y Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

^z Greek *man*; also as supplied in verse 10

Rom 13:12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then *let us cast off the works of darkness* and put on the armor of light.

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, *let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ...

James 4:8b *Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

"Cleanse your hands" is a call to clean our lives of sin (cf. CEV, NCV).

Jer 4:14 O Jerusalem, *wash your heart from evil*, that you may be saved. How long shall your wicked thoughts lodge within you?

... and get rid of things involved in sinful practices

See also:

- *Expel unrepentant sinners* . . . , p. 1492
- *Get rid of sinful influences*, p. 1858

Gen 35:2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "*Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.*"

Judg 10:16 So *they put away the foreign gods from among them* and served the LORD, and he became impatient over the misery of Israel.

2Ki 23:4, 6-8, 10, 24 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the keepers of the threshold *to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel.* ... ⁶And he brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD, outside Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron and beat it to dust and cast the dust of it upon the graves of the common people. ⁷And he broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes who were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah. ⁸And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had made offerings, from Geba to Beersheba. And he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on one's left at the gate of the city. ... ¹⁰And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech.^a ... ²⁴Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

^a Hebrew *might cause his son or daughter to pass through the fire for Molech*

Verses 8, 10 speak of Josiah desecrating the places of false worship. Note that v. 8a appears to refer to priests who had been wrongly offering sacrifices to God at local shrines instead of the temple in Jerusalem (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Acts 19:18-19 Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.

✚ By destroying objects associated with its idolatry, Israel's sin would be removed:

Isa 27:9 Therefore *by this the guilt of Jacob will be atoned for, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin:^b when he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones crushed to pieces, no Asherim or incense altars will remain standing.*

^b Septuagint *and this is the blessing when I take away his sin*



Return to God

Isa 31:6 Turn to him from whom people^c have deeply revolted, O children of Israel. 

^c Hebrew *they*

Isa 44:22 I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; *return to me, for I have redeemed you.* 

"I have redeemed you" appears to primarily refer to redemption from captivity, but it may encompass the aforementioned removal of sin. As their redeemer, it is obligatory of his wayward people to return to God.

Jer 3:22 "Return, O faithless sons; I will heal your faithlessness." "Behold, we come to you, for you are the LORD our God." 

Lam 3:40 Let us test and examine our ways, and *return to the LORD!* 

Hos 12:6 "So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God." 

Hos 14:1-2 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. ²Take with you words and *return to the LORD*; say to him, "Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows^d of our lips." 

^d Septuagint, Syriac *pay the fruit*

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 

Ps 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. 

✦ Make peace with God:

Isa 27:5 Or let them lay hold of my protection, *let them make peace with me, let them make peace with me.* 

One aspect of returning to God is making peace with him.

Return to God with all your heart – not insincerely

1Sam 7:3 And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your heart to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." 

Deut 4:29 But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. 

1Ki 8:48 ... if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, ... 

Jer 4:1-2 "If you return, O Israel, declares the LORD, to me you should return. If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver, ²and if you swear, 'As the LORD lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory." 

The opening statement (v. 1a) may be implying that if the people desire to return, then indeed that is what they should do; just speaking of it is pointless. It needs to actually be done – genuinely, as reflected in the actions subsequently mentioned (vv. 1b-2a). Verse 2a is speaking of taking oaths in God's name, either truthfully or along with also acting "in truth, in justice, and in righteousness" (cf. NLT).

Joel 2:12-13 "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "*return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;* ¹³*and rend your hearts and not your garments.*" Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. 

The expression "rend your hearts" (v. 13) speaks of the heartfelt sorrow and sincerity that should characterize wayward people's return to God.

Jer 3:4-5, 10 Have you not just now called to me, 'My father, you are the friend of my youth— ⁵*will he be angry forever, will he be indignant to the end?*' Behold, you have spoken, but you have done all the evil that you could."  ... ¹⁰Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the LORD. 

Verses 4-5 demonstrate Judah's insincerity in supposedly returning to God, rendering the exercise as pointless (cf. [Hos 6:1-5](#) ↓).

Hos 6:1-5 "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. ²After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. ³Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth." [God:] ⁴What shall I do with you, O



Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.

⁵Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. 

In v. 4 God exposes the people's lack of sincerity in claiming to intend to return to him (vv. 1-3). Their failure to return wholeheartedly meant that they suffered God's judgments (v. 5).

✦ **Not turning from sinful deeds prevents one from returning to God:**

Hos 5:4 *Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not the LORD.* 

In returning from sin to God, do what God wants

2Ki 17:13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, *“Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.”* 

Ezra 10:11 Now then *make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives.* 

The first clause is indicative of turning from sin to God.

Neh 1:9 ...but if you *return to me and keep my commandments and do them*, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there. 

Jer 18:11b *Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.* 

Jer 26:13 Now therefore *mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God*, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. 

Dan 9:13 As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, *turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.* 

The last clause would appear to have in view paying attention to and obeying God's law (cf. GNT, NIV).

Hos 12:6 “So you, by the help of your God, *return, hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God.*” 

Rev 3:2-3 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³*Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.* If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. 

2Chr 30:8 Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but *yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God*, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. 

Yielding to God (cf. **James 4:7** ↓) and to his will, leads to doing what he wants. The latter of course involves serving him (cf. **Judg 10:16** ↓).

James 4:7 *Submit yourselves therefore to God.* Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 

Judg 10:16 So *they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD*, and he became impatient over the misery of Israel. 

On turning from sin, the people served God – i.e. they did what he wanted.

✦ **Do not return to sin:**

Ps 85:8 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but *let them not turn back to folly.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Addressing Sin (II): Deal with Sin before God

Subsections

- Confess your sin to God
- Be sorrowful over your sin
- Humble yourself before God over your sin – and its consequences
- Ask God for forgiveness and restoration



- In petitioning God, express your anguish over consequences of your sin – even with fasting
- Note: Accept God's discipline for sin

Confess your sin to God

See also:

- [Ezra 10:11](#) ↑
- [Ezra 9:6](#) ↓; [Ezra 10:1](#) ↓
- [Confess your sins . . .](#), p. 1035

Confessing sin is acknowledging to God that we have committed a particular action that is against his will and is indeed wrong or sinful. Such honesty and openness opens us to God's forgiveness and purification – and his help.

Lev 5:5 ... when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed, ...

This reflects that it is important to confess the particular sins we have committed, rather than merely the fact that we have sinned. Identifying particular sin engenders genuine sorrow and repentance, and enables us to be better aware of committing similar sins in the future.

2Sam 24:10 But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

Here David confesses to an act that was sinful in that it displayed trust in the strength of his own forces rather than in God. It also may have been indicative of pride.

1Ki 8:47 ... yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,' ...

Neh 1:6-7 ... let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

Neh 9:2-3 And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. ³And they stood up in their place

and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God.

Note that the confession of their fathers' sins as well, may have in view God's punishment of sins affecting subsequent generations (cf. Ex 20:5).

Ps 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Ps 51:3-5 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

In conjunction with confessing the sin that he had recently committed (vv. 3-4), David also acknowledges his sinful disposition before God (v. 5).

Ps 119:176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.

Isa 59:12-13 For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities: ¹³transgressing, and denying the LORD, and turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.

In saying "our sins testify against us" (v. 12a) Isaiah acknowledged the stark reality of his people's sin in God's sight.

Jer 14:20 We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD, and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against you.

Dan 9:4-6, 20 I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. ⁶We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. ... ²⁰While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God, ...

Hos 5:15 I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.



✦ Confess your sins to each other:

James 5:16 Therefore, *confess your sins to one another* and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.^e 

^e Or *The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power*

That the admonition to “confess your sins to one another” is immediately followed by the command to pray for one another suggests that we should confess to other believers in order for them to pray for us, in regard to our sin and condition. Further advantages are that others can help us in being: assured of forgiveness; and accountable – in both redressing the sin (where applicable) and in facing similar temptations in the future.

Be sorrowful over your sin

See also:

- [Isa 57:15](#) 
- [Return to God with all your heart – not insincerely](#), p. 1840

Ezra 9:3-6 As soon as I heard this, *I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled hair from my head and beard and sat appalled*. ⁴Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, *because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles*, gathered around me while *I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice*. ⁵And at the evening sacrifice *I rose from my fasting, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God*, ⁶saying: “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens.” 

Here Ezra expresses his intense sorrow at the unfaithfulness of his people. The tearing of clothes and pulling out of hair is an expression of intense remorse – as is the case with fasting, wearing sackcloth and the use of dust and ashes in some of the following references.

Ezra 10:1 While *Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God*, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, *for the people wept bitterly*. 

Neh 9:1-2 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month *the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads*. ²And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 

Job 42:6 ... therefore *I despise myself, and repent^f in dust and ashes*. 

^f Or *and am comforted*

Job sat in dust and ashes to express his deep sorrow – that he was “really sorry” (NirV®) – for what he had unjustly said about God.

Ps 51:17 *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart*, O God, you will not despise. 

To be “contrite” (cf. [Isa 57:15](#) ) is to be deeply remorseful and repentant of sin. God wants such “sacrifices” for sin.

Isa 22:12 In that day *the Lord GOD of hosts called for weeping and mourning, for baldness and wearing sackcloth; ...* 

Ezek 43:10-11 As for you, son of man, describe to the house of Israel the temple, *that they may be ashamed of their iniquities*; and they shall measure the plan. ¹¹And if *they are ashamed of all that they have done*, make known to them the design of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, that is, its whole design; and make known to them as well all its statutes and its whole design and all its laws, and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe all its laws and all its statutes and carry them out. 

Being ashamed of one’s sin is an integral part of being sorrowful for sin.

James 4:9 *Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom*. 

“Be wretched” means to feel very unhappy.

Matt 5:4 *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*. 

The mourning referred to does not appear to be mourning in response to troubles that occur. Quite possibly it is the mourning of godly people over sin and its consequences – both their own sin and the world’s. Such people will “be comforted”, which may well have initially in view their salvation from sin through Christ’s work; it certainly encompasses the comfort God’s people will receive in the afterlife (cf. [Rev 21:4](#)).

✦ The godly grief of the Corinthians and its beneficial effects:

2Cor 7:8-11a For *even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it*—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because *you were grieved*, but because *you were grieved into repenting*. For *you felt a godly grief*, so that you suffered no loss through us. ¹⁰*For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret*, whereas worldly grief



produces death. ¹¹*For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment!* 

Paul had previously written to the Corinthians admonishing them over sin. In v. 9 Paul appears to be saying that he was happy not simply because they were sorry, but because of the effects of such godly grief (vv. 9-11a). Note that the reference to “punishment” (v. 11b) appears to refer to taking action against the guilty amongst them.

Humble yourself before God over your sin – and its consequences

Luke 18:13-14 *But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’* ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but *the one who humbles himself* will be exalted. 

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.* 

The call for the readers to humble themselves appears to be in part for their sin of courting “friendship with the world” (v. 4).

Lev 26:40-42 But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if *then their uncircumcised heart is humbled* and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴²then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. 

2Chr 12:5-8, 12 Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, ‘You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.’” ⁶*Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD is righteous.”* ⁷When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: “*They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.*” ⁸Nevertheless, they shall be servants to him, that they may know my service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.”  ... ¹²And when

he [Rehoboam] *humbled himself* the wrath of the LORD turned from him, so as not to make a complete destruction. Moreover, conditions were good⁹ in Judah. 

⁹ Hebrew *good things were found*

2Chr 33:9-13 Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel. ¹⁰The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. ¹¹Therefore the LORD brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. ¹²And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and *humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.* ¹³He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God. 

2Chr 34:27 ... because your heart was tender and *you humbled yourself before God* when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and *you have humbled yourself before me* and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. 

✦ **God continues to abide with those who are contrite and humble:**

Isa 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “*I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.*” 

To have a “lowly spirit” is to be humble – here quite possibly a reference to responding to one’s own sin. God continues to abide with people who are contrite and humble regarding their sin.

Ask God for forgiveness and restoration

See also:

- *Ask God to forgive them and show mercy when they do sin,* p. 1325

We should ask God for forgiveness of sin and, in conjunction with this, for restoration from our unclean state before him and from other consequences of sin.



2Sam 24:10 But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But *now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of your servant*, for I have done very foolishly."

Ps 25:7, 11, 18 *Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!* ... ¹¹*For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great.* ... ¹⁸*Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.*

In asking for deliverance and forgiveness for his people, the psalmist appeals to the sake of both: God's goodness (v. 7b), so that his character will be seen for what it is, i.e. good; and God's name (v. 11a), they being God's people and identified with him (cf. [Dan 9:19](#) ↓).

Ps 39:8 *Deliver me from all my transgressions. Do not make me the scorn of the fool!*

The psalmist prays to be saved from his sin and its consequences.

Ps 41:4 As for me, I said, "*O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me,^h for I have sinned against you!*"

^h Hebrew *my soul*

Ps 51:1-2, 7-12 *Have mercy on me,ⁱ O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!* ... ⁷*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. ⁹Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right^h spirit within me. ¹¹Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*

ⁱ Or *Be gracious to me*

^h Or *steadfast*

Ps 79:9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; *deliver us, and atone for our sins*, for your name's sake!

Ps 85:4-7 *Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!* ⁵Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? ⁶Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in

you? ⁷*Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.*

Isa 64:9 *Be not so terribly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people.*

The phrase "please look" appears to be a request that God would look upon them with compassion.

Lam 5:21 *Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old—*

Dan 9:19 O Lord, hear; *O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act.* Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.

Hos 14:2 Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, "*Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows^k of our lips.*"

^k Septuagint, Syriac *pay the fruit*

Note that the request to "accept what is good" may have in view the offerings referred to in the subsequent clause.

Luke 11:4 ... and *forgive us our sins*, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.

‡ Ask for forgiveness of sins you are not aware of:

Ps 19:12 Who can discern his errors? *Declare me innocent from hidden faults.*

In petitioning God, express your anguish over consequences of your sin – even with fasting

See also:

- [Ps 25:18](#) ↑
- [Be sorrowful over your sin](#), p. 1843

Note that a number of the references in the earlier subsection *Be sorrowful over your sin*, contain expressions of anguish that may well be in part in regard to the prospect of consequences of sin.

Lam 2:18-19 Their heart *cried to the Lord.* O wall of the daughter of Zion, *let tears stream down like a torrent day and night! Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite!* ¹⁹*Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street."*



Lam 3:41-42 *Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven: ⁴²“We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven.”* 

The call to “lift up our hearts” – as well as “our hands” – calls for earnest expression of one’s anguish over sin and the consequences being endured, with God having “not forgiven.”

Dan 9:2-3 ... in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of *the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.* ³*Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.* 

The desolation of Jerusalem (v. 2) was one of the main consequences of Judah’s persistent sin. Because of it and the length of time it would last, Daniel prays to God and in doing so expresses his anguish over it (v. 3).

Joel 1:13-14 *Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. ¹⁴Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.* 

Apparently as a consequence of the people’s sin (cf. **Joel 2:12-13** ↓), an awesome plague of locusts had devastated the land, leaving neither grain nor wine even for offerings (v. 13b; cf. **Joel 2:14** ↓). Thus the prophet calls on the priests – and similarly the people (cf. vv. 5-12) – to express their anguish before God (vv. 13-14a), in conjunction with crying out to God for help (v. 14b).

Joel 2:12-17 “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, *with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;* ¹³*and rend your hearts and not your garments.*” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. ¹⁴Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? ¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion; *consecrate a fast;* call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. ¹⁷Between the vestibule and the altar *let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, “Spare your people, O LORD, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.¹ Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”* 

¹ Or *reproach, that the nations should rule over them*

Jonah 3:4-8 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!*” ⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God. *They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.* ⁶The word reached^m the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, *covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* ⁷And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: *Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water,* ⁸*but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God.* Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 

^m Or *had reached*

Note that this speaks of the repentance and anguish of the pagan Ninevites rather than wayward people of God. Nevertheless their response is exemplary to all.

Note: Accept God’s discipline for sin

See also:

- [Accept hard times from God](#), p. 1948

The consequences of our sin are often the product of God’s discipline. So even though we should ask God for restoration from these consequences – and even express anguish over them – we are nevertheless to also accept such discipline for sin.

Job 5:17-18 Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore *despise not the discipline of the Almighty.* ¹⁸*For he wounds, but he binds up; he shatters, but his hands heal.* 

Verse 18 points to the restoration that God brings for those who do not despise and so accept his discipline (v. 17).

Prov 3:11-12 My son, *do not despise the LORD’s discipline or be weary of his reproof,* ¹²for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights. 

Judg 10:15 And the people of Israel said to the LORD, “*We have sinned; do to us whatever seems good to you.* Only please deliver us this day.” 

The people indicate their willingness to submit to whatever discipline God thought best, if only he would deliver them from the ultimate punishment of devastation at the hands of enemies.



1Sam 3:18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is the LORD. Let him do what seems good to him.”

Here Eli acknowledges God’s sovereignty – “He is the LORD” – and possibly also God’s righteousness. In conjunction with this Eli shows his submissiveness to God and acceptance of God’s discipline or punishment, horrific as it was (cf. vv. 11-14).

2Sam 15:25-26 Then the king said to Zadok, “Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place. ²⁶But if he says, ‘I have no pleasure in you,’ behold, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him.”

1Chr 21:8-13 And David said to God, “I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have acted very foolishly.” ⁹And the LORD spoke to Gad, David’s seer, saying, ¹⁰“Go and say to David, ‘Thus says the LORD, Three things I offer you; choose one of them, that I may do it to you.’” ¹¹So Gad came to David and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Choose what you will: ¹²either three years of famine, or three months of devastation by your foes while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three days of the sword of the LORD, pestilence on the land, with the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.’ Now decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me.” ¹³Then David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is very great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man.”

David shows his acceptance of God’s discipline in making a choice as God had directed. He chooses one of the punishments which entail punishment direct from God’s hand, rather than “fall into the hand of man” (v. 13).

2Chr 12:5-6 Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, ‘You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.’” ⁶Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD is righteous.”

Ps 39:9 I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it.

Here David prays to God during a time of illness, which David appears to see as discipline for sin (cf. vv. 8, 11). Note that after demonstrating here his acceptance of God’s discipline, David also asks for relief from it (cf. vv. 10, 12-13). One can accept God’s discipline while also asking to be delivered from it, being ready to accept whatever is God’s response.

Lam 3:27-30, 39 It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. ²⁸Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; ²⁹let him put his mouth in the dust— there may yet be hope; ³⁰let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults. ... ³⁹Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins?

The phrase “bear the yoke” (v. 27) refers to discipline and may also be speaking of willingly accepting it. “Let him sit alone in silence” (v. 28) certainly implies willing acceptance of the discipline that God “laid on him”. In v. 29, “let him put his mouth in the dust” means to bow face down on the ground as an expression of complete submission – “bow in submission” (GNT, cf. NCV). In v. 30, “let him give his cheek to the one who strikes” is another expression of submission; although “one” is probably referring to another person rather than to God, the thought being that the people should accept such ill treatment where God is using it to discipline them.

✦ **Not accepting God’s correction for sin brings dire consequences:**

Zeph 3:1-2, 7 Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! ²She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God. ... ⁷I said, ‘Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your^a dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.’^o But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.

^a Hebrew *her*

^o Hebrew *her*

The implication of v. 7 is that because they would not accept correction, their dwelling would be cut off. Note that Leviticus 26:23-24 somewhat similarly speaks of how not responding to God’s discipline for sin brings dire consequences: “And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, ²⁴then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins.”

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) God’s Response to Repentance

Note that there are also a number of examples in the preceding two sections of God’s response to various aspects of repentance.



Subsections

- Prelude: God seeks to draw his wayward people back to him
- When we repent God forgives our sins . . .
- . . . Further references to God forgiving sin
- Being merciful and compassionate, God saves us from the consequences of our sin
- When we repent God restores our relationship with him
- Note: Not repenting and returning to God brings judgment . . .
- . . . Unrepentant churches face Jesus Christ's judgment

Prelude: God seeks to draw his wayward people back to him

See also:

- *Many times God called and warned his wayward people, through his prophets*, p. 469
- *. . . By punishment and discipline God causes his people to seek him again*, p. 870

2Chr 36:15 *The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place.* 

Isa 65:2 *I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; ...* 

Jer 7:13 And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and when *I spoke to you persistently* you did not listen, and when *I called you*, you did not answer, ... 

Jer 35:14b-15 *I have spoken to you persistently, but you have not listened to me. ¹⁵I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, "Turn now every one of you from his evil way, and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers."* But you did not incline your ear or listen to me. 

Matt 18:12-14 What do you think? *If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?* ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went

astray. ¹⁴*So it is not the will of my^P Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.* 

^P Some manuscripts *your*

With v. 14 likening God's attitude to that of the shepherd, the suggestion may well be that like the shepherd in v. 12, God seeks to retrieve any of his people who wander away from him.

✦ Elijah's desire that God would turn his people back:

1Ki 18:37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that *you have turned their hearts back.* 

When we repent God forgives our sins . . .

See also:

- *Repentance is required for the forgiveness of sins*, p. 1036

1Jn 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 

2Chr 7:13-14 When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴*if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin* and heal their land. 

Ps 32:5 *I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.* Selah 

Isa 1:16-18 *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. ¹⁸"Come now, let us reason⁴ together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.* 

⁴ Or dispute

The repentant actions (vv. 16-17) were critical to God forgiving the people's sins (v. 18b).

Jer 36:3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so *that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.* 



Luke 18:13-14 But the tax collector, standing far off, *would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'* ¹⁴*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*

... Further references to God forgiving sin

See also:

- ... *and God is forgiving*, p. 79

Ex 34:6-7 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands,^r *forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

^r Or *to the thousandth generation*

Ps 32:1-2 *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ²Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

Ps 65:3 *When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.*

Note that the first clause appears to be speaking either of being overcome by the results of sin or of substantial guilt for sin.

Ps 85:2-3 *You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. Selah ³You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.*

Ps 86:5 *For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.*

Ps 103:2-3, 11-12 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³*who forgives all your iniquity*, who heals all your diseases, ... ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²*as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

Ps 130:4, 8 *But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.* ... ⁸*And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

In regard to v. 4, without God's forgiveness the fear of God that the Bible speaks of would not be possible – it being a fear which encompasses (among other things) worship, service and even longing for God. In place of it there would only be terror.

Isa 43:25 *I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.*

James 5:14-15 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. *And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

Presumably this assumes a preparedness to repent (as with the above references) in the person being prayed for, should sin be the issue at hand.

✦ God heals repentant people of faithlessness:

Jer 3:22 *"Return, O faithless sons; I will heal your faithlessness."* "Behold, we come to you, for you are the LORD our God.

This is also referred to in Hosea 14:4a in the previous subsection – "I will heal their apostasy ..."

Being merciful and compassionate, God saves us from the consequences of our sin

See also:

- ... *Due to his mercy and compassion, God limits his people's punishment*, p. 877

Deut 4:30-31 *When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice. ³¹For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.*

In his mercy and also his faithfulness to his covenant with Israel, God would not abandon or destroy them (v. 31). The implication is that he would save them from their distress and the terrible things that beset them (v. 30a) as consequences of their sin.

Prov 28:13 *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.*

Rather than "not prosper", those who repent receive God's mercy. This suggests that in his mercy God saves them from the consequences of their sin.



Jer 3:12 Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, “Return, faithless Israel, declares the LORD. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever. 

God appears to tell Jeremiah to proclaim this message to the remnant in the northern state of Israel, or perhaps to those in exile, further to the north. That God would save them from the consequences of their sin, if they returned to him, is underlined shortly afterwards by a wonderful promise of restoration that appears to have a renewed Israel of the end time in view (cf. vv. 14-18).

Deut 30:2-3 ... and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 

2Chr 30:9 For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him. 

Note that God’s graciousness is associated with his mercy (cf. Joel 2:13b ↓).

Jer 31:16-20 Thus says the LORD: “Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country. ¹⁸I have heard Ephraim grieving, ‘You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the LORD my God. ¹⁹For after I had turned away, I relented, and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth.’ ²⁰Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD. 

^s Hebrew *bowels*

“I struck my thigh” (v. 19) appears to be an expression of remorse. Ephraim’s repentance (vv. 18-19) would lead to God’s mercy (v. 20), and her restoration (vv. 16-17) as reflected in much of the remainder of Jeremiah 31.

Joel 2:13b Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. 

Hos 14:1-5 Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. ²Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, “Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows^t of our lips. ³Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, ‘Our God,’ to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy.” [God:] ⁴I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. ⁵I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; ... 

^t Septuagint, Syriac *pay the fruit*

The reference to orphans finding mercy in God (v. 3b) appears to allude to their need for God’s help and mercy.

Luke 15:18-24 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” ²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²²But the father said to his servants, ^v ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate. 

^u Some manuscripts add *treat me as one of your hired servants*

^v Greek *bondservants*

This portrays God’s compassionate response to repentant sinners.

† Some consequences of David’s sin remained:

2Sam 12:9-14 Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. ¹¹Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this



sun. ¹²For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.” ¹³David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD,^w the child who is born to you shall die.”

^w Masoretic Text *the enemies of the LORD*; Dead Sea Scroll *the word of the LORD*

David acknowledged his sin (v. 13a) and – presumably in response – God took it away and David did not die for it (v. 13b). Nevertheless a number of consequences of his sin remained (vv. 10-12, 14) – the reasons given being that he had: in effect despised God (v. 10b); and scorned God in the sight of others (v. 14a; cf. AMP, NASB, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT). Regarding the second reason, Nathan may have meant that in David suffering these consequences, God’s enemies would see that such sin would not go unpunished and so would no longer be contemptuous of God due to David’s sin. As such David’s punishment would help redress this serious ill effect of his sin.

When we repent God restores our relationship with him

Lev 26:40-42 But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, ⁴¹so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴²then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

Note that “make amends for their iniquity” (v. 41b) appears to refer to the people paying for their sin (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

2Chr 30:6, 9b So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his princes, as the king had commanded, saying, “O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. ... ⁹ ... For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.”

Jer 24:7 I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

God in effect promises the unfaithful people that if they returned to him wholeheartedly he would restore his relationship with them to what it should be, the crux of which is that they would be his people and he would be their God. Note that the first clause points to God not only restoring his people’s relationship with him, but enriching it.

Hos 14:2, 4, 8 Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, “Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows^x of our lips. ... ⁴I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. ... ⁸O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you.^y I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit.

^x Septuagint, Syriac *pay the fruit*

^y Hebrew *him*

As in v. 4, in v. 8 God is speaking of the kingdom of Israel as a whole.

Zec 1:3 Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Rev 3:19-20 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Verse 20 is often used as depicting Christ reaching out to unbelievers, but in actual fact it is the lukewarm members of the church in Laodicea that are in view.

Jer 15:19 Therefore thus says the LORD: “If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them.

God’s promised Jeremiah that if he repented he would again serve God.

‡ If after sinning we seek God wholeheartedly, we will find him:

Deut 4:29 But from there [after forsaking him] you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.



Note: Not repenting and returning to God brings judgment . . .

See also:

- *Not repenting will result in judgment and eternal punishment*, p. 1038
- *God turns away from those who persist in sin . . .*, p. 1835
- *. . . God rejects them and thrusts them from his presence*, p. 1835
- *Further implications of deliberately or habitually continuing to sin*, p. 1836

2Ki 17:22-23 *The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them,²³ until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.* 📖

Job 36:10-12 He opens their ears to instruction and commands that they return from iniquity.¹¹ If they listen and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness.¹² *But if they do not listen, they perish by the sword and die without knowledge.* 📖

Isa 9:13-15 *The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of the LORD of hosts.¹⁴ So the LORD cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day—¹⁵ the elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail; . . .* 📖

Jer 15:6-7 *You have rejected me, declares the LORD; you keep going backward, so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you— I am weary of relenting.⁷ I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork in the gates of the land; I have bereaved them; I have destroyed my people; they did not turn from their ways.* 📖

Jer 44:5-6 *But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their evil and make no offerings to other gods.⁶ Therefore my wrath and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they became a waste and a desolation, as at this day.* 📖

Hos 11:5-7 They shall not^z return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me.⁶ *The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels.⁷ My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.* 📖

^z Or surely

Amos 4:6-12 *"I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.⁷ "I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither;⁸ so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.⁹ "I struck you with blight and mildew; your many gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.¹⁰ "I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses,^a and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.¹¹ "I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand^b plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.¹² "Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" 📖*

^a Hebrew along with the captivity of your horses

^b That is, a burning stick

The persistent refusal of Israel to return despite God's punishment resulted in more punishments (cf. Lev 26:14-39). Verse 12 indicates that God would further punish Israel for not returning to him. The punishment is not actually specified; instead in an ominous tone Israel is told to ready itself to meet God "as he comes in judgment" (NLT). Note that "cleanness of teeth" (v. 6) appears to allude to a lack of food to eat.

. . . Unrepentant churches face Jesus Christ's judgment

Jesus Christ is the speaker in the following verses from Revelation.

Rev 2:4-5 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; *repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.* 📖

The phrase "remove your lampstand" implies judgment, possibly in particular the removal of the church in Ephesus as a light of testimony for Christ.



Rev 2:16 Therefore *repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.* 📖

This speaks of Christ's judgment of unrepentant church members in Pergamum. The reference to "the sword of my mouth" possibly means that the judgment would be in accordance with his words or pronounced by his word/s and thus come into being. As such, his words would in effect "cut like a sword" (CEV).

Rev 2:20-23 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants^c to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹*I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.* ²²*Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,* ²³*and I will strike her children dead.* And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. 📖

^c Greek *bondservants*

The phrase "her children" refers to those who followed this self-proclaimed prophetess Jezebel in practicing immorality – her "spiritual" children.

Rev 3:3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. *Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.*

📖

If the church in Sardis did not obey and repent, Christ would come to them in judgment without warning. Note that here the phrase "like a thief" is not necessarily referring to Christ's second coming.

✚ **Failure to repent means that sin is not atoned for:**

Isa 22:12-14 *In that day the Lord GOD of hosts called for weeping and mourning, for baldness and wearing sackcloth; ¹³and behold, joy and gladness, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."* ¹⁴*The LORD of hosts has revealed himself in my ears: "Surely this iniquity will not be atoned for you until you die," says the Lord GOD of hosts.* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

The Bible does not merely tell us not to sin. It also helps us not to do so by giving sound instructions and alternatives to sin. In conjunction with this, the Bible calls us to be holy – i.e. to live pure lives, set apart from all that is ungodly.

a) Avoiding Sin

See also:

- *Faith produces obedience to God*, p. 1096
- *Fearing God compels one to avoid sin and evil*, p. 1155
- *II. Spiritual Warfare*, p. 1810
- *d) Be Holy (II): Being Set Apart*, p. 1875
- *e) Epilogue: Be Wary*, p. 1927

Subsections

- Take care not to sin
- Ask God for help to avoid sin . . .
- . . . For God and Jesus Christ are willing and able to help us withstand temptation
- Use God's word to avoid sin and counter evil
- Avoid sinful passions and desires . . .
- . . . Sinful passions and desires lead to sin
- Renew your mind and take care of your "heart"
- Get rid of sinful influences
- Avoid all evil
- Hate evil and sin
- Along with hating evil, love what is good

Take care not to sin

See also:

- *Be careful to obey God*, p. 1181
- *Be careful not to turn away from God . . .*, p. 1800
- . . . *Watch and guard yourself against sinning*, p. 1928

Deut 4:23 *Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you.* 

For the people to forget their covenant with God would necessarily involve sin, so in a real sense Moses is effectively urging the people not to sin.

Deut 11:16 *Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; ...* 

Deut 15:9 *Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near,' and your eye look grudgingly^a on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin.* 

^a Or be evil; also verse 10

We should be careful not to harbor any "unworthy" thought, which can lead to sin – and moreover is sinful in itself.

Job 36:18 *Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing, and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside.* 

Jer 17:21 Thus says the LORD: *Take care for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem.* 

This is an exhortation to be careful not to work on the Sabbath.

Luke 12:15 And he said to them, *"Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* 

1Cor 10:12 Therefore *let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.* 

✚ **Watch yourself so that you do not cause others to sin:**

Luke 17:1-3 And he said to his disciples, *"Temptations to sin^b are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! ²It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.^c ³Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ...* 

^b Greek *Stumbling blocks*

^c Greek *stumble*

Note that 1 Corinthians 8:9 similarly speaks of being careful not to inadvertently lead others into sin – "But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak."



Ask God for help to avoid sin . . .

See also:

- *Ask God to help you follow his ways and commands*, p. 1178

Job 34:31-32 For has anyone said to God, ‘I have borne punishment; I will not offend any more; ³²*teach me what I do not see*; if I have done iniquity, I will do it no more?’

The first part of v. 32 is speaking of any sin of one’s own that one cannot see (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NlrV, NLT). We should ask God to show us any wrong that we do, so as to not do it again (cf. [Ps 139:23-24](#) ↓).

Ps 19:13 *Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!* Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

Ps 119:10, 29, 37, 80, 133 With my whole heart I seek you; *let me not wander from your commandments!* ... ²⁹*Put false ways far from me* and graciously teach me your law! ... ³⁷*Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things*; and give me life in your ways. ... ⁸⁰*May my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame!* ... ¹³³*Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.*

In v. 37, “worthless things” quite possibly refers primarily to idols (cf. AMP).

Ps 139:23-24 *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!*^d ²⁴*And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*^e

^d Or *cares*

^e Or *in the ancient way* (compare Jeremiah 6:16)

The psalmist asks God to examine him, and if there is any sinful way in him, to turn him from it to God’s way. Note that similar to v. 23, Psalm 26:2 says, “Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind.”

Ps 141:3-4 *Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!* ⁴*Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity, and let me not eat of their delicacies!*

Prov 30:8 *Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ...*

Matt 6:13 *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*^f

^f Or *the evil one*; some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*

Particularly as James 1:13 says that God does not tempt anyone, “lead us not into temptation” may have the sense “don’t let us yield to temptation” (NLT; cf. NlrV). Alternatively “temptation” may have a more general sense, referring to “hard testing” (GNT; cf. NRSV).

Luke 22:40, 45-46 And when he came to the place, he said to them, *“Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”* ... ⁴⁵And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶and he said to them, *“Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”*

The “temptation” spoken of here is probably primarily being unfaithful in the face of imminent danger, rather than only referring to the temptation of sleep.

Jer 10:24 *Correct me, O LORD, but in justice; not in your anger, lest you bring me to nothing.*

We ought to ask God to “correct, instruct, and chastise” (AMP) ourselves.

. . . For God and Jesus Christ are willing and able to help us withstand temptation

See also:

- *By grace God’s people avoid sin*, p. 829

1Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. *God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Heb 2:18 *For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

In saying that Jesus “suffered when tempted” the writer may primarily have in view Jesus’ suffering leading up to and during his resurrection and the temptation to opt out of such an ordeal. His temptation by Satan in the desert after fasting for forty days and nights may also be in view. Amidst such hardship these temptations would have been all the harder to resist, making Jesus’ experience of temptation the equal of any we might face. Thus he understands our plight and knows how to help.



Heb 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* ¹⁶*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

2Pet 2:9 ... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,⁹ and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ...

⁹ Or *temptations*

In this verse the Greek for “trials” can also been translated as “temptation” (ESV text note, NASB, cf. NKJV) making it pertinent to this subsection. It may well be inclusive of – it is at least applicable to – both “temptations and trials” (AMP).

Jude 1:24 Now to *him who is able to keep you from stumbling* and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ...

The term “stumbling” would appear to mean falling into sin or error – both of which are grave dangers of false teachers who are so prominent in Jude’s letter. The term could alternatively, or additionally, allude to actually falling away from the faith, the result of unchecked sin or error.

Use God’s word to avoid sin and counter evil

See also:

- *God’s word helps people avoid sin*, p. 313

Ps 17:4 With regard to the works of man, *by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent.*

Ps 37:31 *The law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip.*

The last clause quite probably refers to not committing sin.

Ps 119:9, 11, 165 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.* ... ¹¹*I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.* ... ¹⁶⁵*Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.*

We should use God’s word to avoid sin by: following its instructions (v. 9); meditating on it or bearing it in mind (v. 11); and loving it (v. 165).

Matt 4:3-11 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴*But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* ⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him

on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,” and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” ⁷*Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰*Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”* ¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Jesus counters each of Satan’s three temptations by quoting from Scripture, exposing the faults of what Satan had said.

Eph 6:17 ... and *take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God, ...

This is said in the context of standing against the devil’s schemes (cf. v. 11) and struggling against evil forces (cf. v. 12-13).

James 1:21 Therefore *put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

2Pet 1:4 ... by which *he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

The use of the phrase “through them” may be pointing to the fact that as we take God’s promises to heart and set our hope on them, they will have a purifying effect on us. For the hope given by God’s promises leads and spurs us on in the Christian life. Alternatively, “through them” may instead be speaking of their fulfillment, by which we will come to participate in God’s nature. The first alternative seems the most likely and as such the verse is pertinent to this subsection.

1Jn 2:1 My little children, *I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.* But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

One of the prime aims of John writing his letter was to enlighten and encourage his readers so that they would not sin. Still today his letters and Scripture generally provide enlightenment and encouragement which help us avoid sin.



Avoid sinful passions and desires . . .

Rom 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

1Cor 10:5-6 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, *that we might not desire evil as they did.*

Gal 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus *have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:*^h sexual immorality, impurity, *passion, evil desire,* and covetousness, which is idolatry.

^h Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

2Tim 2:22 So *flee youthful passions* and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

1Pet 1:14 As obedient children, *do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,* ...

In keeping with not indulging sinful passions and desires, we should not conform to them.

1Pet 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to *abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

1Pet 4:1-2 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,ⁱ arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,²so as to *live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions* but for the will of God.

ⁱ Some manuscripts add *for us; some for you*

. . . Sinful passions and desires lead to sin

See also:

- [1Pet 1:14](#) ↑
- [Eph 4:22](#) ↓

James 1:14-15 But *each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.* ¹⁵*Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin,* and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Indulging sinful desires leads to temptation and then to sin – and ultimately spiritual death (cf. [1Tim 6:9](#) ↓).

Matt 15:18-19 But *what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.* ¹⁹*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.*

The heart – with its passions and desires – greatly influences what comes out of one's mouth, and indeed all that one produces. Thus it is the source of what defiles a person (v. 18).

Luke 6:45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and *the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

Similar to Matthew 15:18-19 above, here Jesus makes the point that the thoughts and desires of one's heart are manifested in one's speech (as well as actions). As such, evil desires lead to sin – in word and action.

Rom 6:12 *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.*

This points to the fact that sin involves the gratifying of evil or sinful passions.

2Tim 3:6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and *led astray by various passions,* ...

James 3:16 For *where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.*

Jealousy and selfish ambition are examples of evil passions or desires that lead to sin – as is coveting below in 4:1-2.

James 4:1-2 *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passionsⁱ are at war within you?*^k ²*You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.* You do not have, because you do not ask.

ⁱ Greek *pleasures*; also verse 3

^k Greek *in your members*

Note that the use of "murder" (v. 2a) may well be figurative, indicating intense hostility towards others.

2Pet 1:4 ... by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from *the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*



‡ Sinful desires ultimately lead to ruin and destruction:

1Tim 6:9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many *senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.* 

James 1:14-15 above makes a similar point (as noted there).

Renew your mind and take care of your “heart”

See also:

- . . . *People are led into sin by their corrupt hearts and minds,* p. 369

In accordance with the need to avoid and not indulge sinful desires, and in view of the fact that sinful desires lead to sin, we should renew our minds and take care of our “hearts”.

The first three references below speak of renewing our minds, with the latter references speaking of taking care of our “hearts”. In renewing our minds we should look to God, asking him to effect such a change. We assist this spiritual renewal by assimilating and applying God’s word, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Rom 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world,^l but *be transformed by the renewal of your mind*, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.^m 

^l Greek *age*

^m Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

Eph 4:22-23 . . . to put off your old self,ⁿ which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,²³ and to *be renewed in the spirit of your minds*, . . . 

ⁿ Greek *man*; also verse 24

The minds of God’s people are to be renewed, meaning a spiritual renewal of their attitudes and thoughts (cf. NLT).

Ps 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right^o spirit within me.* 

^o Or *steadfast*

We must ask God to renew our spirit (which is closely associated with our mind) as ultimately it is he who accomplishes this.

Prov 4:23 *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.* 

We must be careful what and how we think (cf. GNT, NCV), because our hearts determine what we do (cf. NLT) and shape our lives (cf. GNT).

Prov 23:19 Hear, my son, and be wise, and *direct your heart in the way.* 

Ps 19:14 *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.* 

In taking care of our hearts, we need to ask God to help make our thoughts pleasing to him.

‡ A person’s heart is indicative of the person:

Prov 27:19 *As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man.* 

Allied with the fact that one’s heart greatly influences oneself, one’s heart reflects what one is like – “what kind of person you are” (NCV™).

Get rid of sinful influences

See also:

- *Expel unrepentant sinners . . .*, p. 1492
- *So get rid of sin . . .*, p. 1838
- . . . *and get rid of things involved in sinful practices*, p. 1839

Matt 18:8-9 And *if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.* It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹*And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.* It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell^p of fire. 

^p Greek *Gehenna*

These instructions are not meant to be taken literally. They are hyperbole, emphasizing that one should do whatever is needed to get rid of sinful influences and avoid sin.

Deut 12:2-3 *You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place.* 

In v. 3b, “their name” refers to the names of the Canaanite nations’ gods (cf. Nlrv, NLT).

Deut 13:5-11 *But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt*



and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil^a from your midst. ⁶“If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace^r or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which neither you nor your fathers have known, ⁷some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, ⁸you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him. ⁹But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. ¹⁰You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹¹And all Israel shall hear and fear and never again do any such wickedness as this among you.

^a Or *evil person*

^r Hebrew *the wife of your bosom*

The Israelites were to destroy all corruptive influences, even wicked people (cf. [Deut 20:16-18 ↓](#); [2Ki 23:5 ↓](#)), which was a form of God’s judgment on such people. The importance of the command, “So you shall purge the evil from your midst,” (v. 5) is underlined by it being repeated a further eight times in Deuteronomy (cf. [Deut 19:19 ↓](#); [Deut 24:7 ↓](#)), mostly verbatim. It is also referred to in Judges 20:13 and quoted in 1 Corinthians 5:13.

Deut 19:19 ... then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deut 20:16-18 But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, ¹⁷but you shall devote them to complete destruction,^s the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, ¹⁸that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God.

^s That is, set apart (devote) as an offering to the Lord (for destruction)

Deut 24:7 If a man is found stealing one of his brothers of the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

2Ki 23:5, 24 And he deposed the priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places at the

cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and the moon and the constellations and all the host of the heavens. ... ²⁴Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

Avoid all evil

See also:

▪ [Avoid bad company . . .](#), p. 1879

1Thes 5:22 Abstain from every form of evil.

3Jn 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

Deut 23:9 When you are encamped against your enemies, then you shall keep yourself from every evil thing.

1Sam 25:28b For the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live.

Ps 101:3, 4 I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. ... ⁴A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.

Ps 119:101 I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.

Prov 1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

Prov 4:27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

Prov 16:17 The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life.

Rom 16:19 For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.

Presumably the sense of the last clause is that in regard to evil we are to be blameless, rather than naive (cf. [Heb 5:14 ↓](#)).

1Cor 14:20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.



In regard to doing evil we are to be “innocent as babies” (NLT; cf. NCV).

2Cor 6:17 *Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ...*

Paul uses this quotation from Isaiah 52:11 to urge his readers to avoid compromising partnerships with ungodly people, with their sinful principles and practices.

Eph 5:11 *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.*

2Tim 2:16 *But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ...*

Note that in the context “irreverent babble” – “foolish discussions” (GNT, NLT) – primarily refers to heretical ideas and teaching.

Heb 5:14 *But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

To avoid evil, we need to learn to distinguish good from evil. By constant use or application of solid spiritual teaching (cf. v. 13), mature believers train their “senses and mental faculties” (AMP) to distinguish good from evil.

✦ Evil deeds are done by evil people:

1Sam 24:13 *As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes wickedness.’ But my hand shall not be against you.*

Bear in mind that those who commit evil deeds are in fact evil themselves – which should be a sole reason for us to avoid committing evil deeds.

Hate evil and sin

Ps 97:10 *O you who love the LORD, hate evil!* He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Prov 8:13 *The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.*

Ex 18:21 *Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.*

Deut 7:26 *And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction^t like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction.*

^t That is, set apart (devoted) as an offering to the Lord (for destruction); twice in this verse

Ps 101:3 *I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.*

Ps 119:104 *Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*

The psalmist says that he gained understanding from God’s laws and obeying them; thus he hated everything that was contrary to them.

Ps 139:21-22 *Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? ²²I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.*

Bare in mind regarding David’s hatred of such people, that: it is consistent with descriptions of God’s hatred of them (cf. *Sin is hated by God*, p. 365); and it proceeds from David’s devotion to God rather than evil motives or feelings. Furthermore, note that David may more precisely be referring to disassociation (cf. BKC).

Jude 1:23 *... save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment^u stained by the flesh.*

^u Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin

Some commentators think the final clause has in view the infectious nature of sin, with the infectiousness of the clothing of a leper being alluded to in illustrating the point. In any case it illustrates the need to hate evil, being in essence an exhortation to hate anything that is associated with sin.

Rev 2:6 *Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

The practices of the Nicolaitans apparently included sexual sin and possibly also idolatry.

✦ Oppose the wicked:

Prov 28:4 *Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them.*

We should oppose the wicked (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV). In doing so we should expose them, as Ephesians 5:11 says: “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”



Along with hating evil, love what is good

Ps 45:7 ...you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; ...

Ps 119:127-128, 163 Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. ¹²⁸Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way. ... ¹⁶³I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law.

Amos 5:14-15 Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. ¹⁵Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Rom 12:9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

1Thes 5:21-22 ... but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²²Abstain from every form of evil.

In loving what is good and hating evil, we should hold on to what is good (cf. **Rom 12:9** ↑) and avoid evil.

Titus 1:8 ... but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.

✦ Do no imitate evil but imitate good – as do those who are of God:

3Jn 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Alternatives to Sin

See also:

- c) *Be Holy (I): General*, p. 1868

Note that the following two sections in this chapter, which deal with being holy, speak further of alternative actions to sin.

Subsections

- Instead of living by the sinful nature, live by the Holy Spirit
- Instead of living in darkness, live according to the light and truth . . .
- . . . Insights on living in darkness and living in God's light and truth
- Instead of living as a slave to sin, live as a slave to God and righteousness . . .
- . . . In avoiding sin be focused on doing what is right
- Pursue righteousness . . .
- . . . Be righteous and upright
- Be good
- Note: Further actions that counter sin and evil

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

See also:

- c) *Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit*, p. 1072

Living by the Holy Spirit involves: being both alert to and responsive to the Spirit's promptings; and being reliant on his power, to enable and transform us. In conjunction with this, our minds should be set on "the things of the Spirit" (cf. **Rom 8:5** ↓).

Rom 8:3b-5, 8-9, 12 By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^v he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ... ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ... ¹²So then, brothers,^w we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

^v Or and as a sin offering

^w Or brothers and sisters; also verse 29

In v. 9, "not in the flesh but in the Spirit" refers to living life in and in accordance with the Spirit rather than the flesh (cf. AMP), effectively under the control of the Spirit (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV, NLT).



Gal 5:13, 16-25 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only *do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.* ¶ ... ¹⁶But I say, *walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,* ²⁰*idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,* ²¹*envy,^x drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.* ²²*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³*gentleness, self-control;* against such things there is no law. ²⁴*And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* ²⁵*If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.* ¶

^x Some manuscripts add *murder*

In v. 17, “to keep you from doing the things you want to do” is probably speaking of the influence of the sinful nature in hindering one from doing the right things one wants to do. Alternatively it possibly could be speaking of the Spirit helping us to not indulge the desires that we naturally want to fulfill. Verses 22-23 indicate that a life led by the Spirit is evidenced by the presence of such spiritual “fruit”.

Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but *be filled with the Spirit, ...* ¶

Believers are to keep on being replenished with the Holy Spirit. This is not a contrived experience, but one in which we are passively involved – we are to “let” (CEV, NLT) the Holy Spirit fill us (cf. ZBC). One who is filled by the Holy Spirit, cannot but live by the Holy Spirit.

✦ **Further contrasts between living by the sinful nature and living by the Spirit:**

Rom 8:6, 13-14 For *to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.* ¶ ... ¹³For *if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* ¹⁴*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons^y of God.* ¶

^y See discussion on “sons” in the Preface

In v. 14, to be “led by the Spirit” speaks of living under the Spirit’s influence.

Instead of living in darkness, live according to the light and truth . . .

See also:

- [God’s word helps people avoid sin](#), p. 313
- [Use God’s word to avoid sin and counter evil](#), p. 1856

When used figuratively in the NT, “darkness” represents evil and falseness, and is associated with spiritual ignorance – while “light” is usually a metaphor for holiness and truth. This is also the case in some OT verses, although in the OT “light” is more often used to symbolize well-being or God’s favor.

Believers are called to live in God’s light and truth. This consists primarily of living according to the spiritual light and truth that we have: from God’s word, including his commands; and through our relationship with God (cf. [1Jn 1:5-7](#) ↓).

Rom 13:12-14 *The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.* ¹³*Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.* ¹⁴*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.* ¶

Verse 12a speaks of the “night” of this dark age making way for the age to come, with the “day” quite possibly referring specifically to the day of Christ’s return. The “armor of light” (v. 12; [1Thes 5:8](#) ↓) is explained to some degree in the subsequent verses (vv. 13-14) – as indicated by the reference to “the daytime” (v. 13a) and the instruction to “put on” Christ (v. 14a). The latter is probably an allusion to the Christian’s union with Christ, and is often interpreted to imply that we should take on his characteristics.

Eph 5:8-11 ... for *at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light* ⁹*(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),* ¹⁰*and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.* ¹¹*Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.* ¶

Believers once lived in the darkness, in a sense being “full of darkness” (NCV™, NLT). But now they have God’s light and so should live accordingly, manifesting the light.

1Thes 5:5-8 For *you are all children^z of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.* ⁶*So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.* ⁷*For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.* ⁸*But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.* ¶

^z Or sons; twice in this verse



The references to being asleep (vv. 6-7) allude to being spiritually asleep – unaware or indifferent of the need to live in accordance with the light (and “day”) and/or of what this requires.

Eph 6:12, 14 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, *against the cosmic powers over this present darkness*, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ... ¹⁴*Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth*, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ...

Living in accordance with truth is a key element against succumbing to the powers of darkness, which seek to draw us into living in darkness.

2Jn 1:4 I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children *walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father*.

3Jn 1:3-4, 12 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers^a came and *testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth*. ⁴*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth*. ... ¹²*Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself*. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

^a Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verses 5, 10

In v. 3a, “your truth” refers to their integrity and “faithfulness to the truth” (NIV®, NRSV; cf. GNT), as per their life of “walking in the truth” (v. 3b). In v. 12, John indicates that God’s truth or word reflects well on Demetrius’ life, him living in a way that is consistent with the truth.

Isa 2:5 O house of Jacob, come, let us *walk in the light of the LORD*.

The use of “light” here probably refers to God’s truth (cf. NCV, NIV).

... Insights on living in darkness and living in God’s light and truth

See also:

- *Believers are to be light for the world*, p. 1774

John 3:19-21 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and *people loved the darkness rather than the*

light because their works were evil. ²⁰*For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed*. ²¹*But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God*.

The phrase “comes to the light” (v. 21; cf. v. 20) in this context means to come to Jesus Christ and/or the light that he brought. In the light given by Jesus Christ, all that one does in living by the truth is shown to have been carried out in or through God (v. 21) – “divinely prompted, done with God’s help, in dependence upon Him” (AMP). In contrast to those who live by God’s truth, unrepentant evil doers will not come to Jesus Christ for their deeds will be shown for what they are (vv. 19-20).

John 11:8-10 The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? *If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world*. ¹⁰*But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him*.”

Jesus appears to draw a parallel between this world’s natural daylight and God’s light – with the implication that we should live in accordance with God’s light. In view of v. 8, Jesus may be alluding to God’s light giving spiritual protection to those who live in it.

John 12:35-36 So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. *Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going*. ³⁶*While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light*.” When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Jesus’ second statement in v. 35 probably means that the disciples should walk in Jesus’ light so that when he was taken away the darkness would not overtake them (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NKJV, NRSV). People need to walk in Jesus’ light while they have the opportunity, for otherwise darkness will overtake them.

1Jn 1:5-7 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*. ⁶*If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth*. ⁷*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin*.

1Jn 2:9-11 *Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness*. ¹⁰*Whoever loves his brother abides in the*



light, and in him^b there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 

^b Or it

Job 24:13 *There are those who rebel against the light, who are not acquainted with its ways, and do not stay in its paths.*



This associates living in darkness with ignorance of God's ways.

✦ Have good "eyes" so as to be full of light:

Luke 11:34-36 *Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. ³⁶If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.* 

We need to ensure that we are "full of light" (vv. 34, 36), not spiritually blind. For this we need good eyes (v. 34) – openness to spiritual truth – which will enlighten us.

Instead of living as a slave to sin, live as a slave to God and righteousness . . .

See also:

- [Jesus Christ's death sets us free from sin's control . . .](#), p. 598
- ["In" Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .](#), p. 783

Rom 6:6-14, 22 We know that *our old self^c was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For one who has died has been set free^d from sin. ⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*  ... ²²But now

that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 

^c Greek *man*

^d Greek *has been justified*

Because of their relationship with Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection believers have died to sin, freed from it, and are now alive to God. As such, instead of living as a slave to sin, believers should live as slaves to God and righteousness. To have "died to sin" (v. 10) or be "dead to sin" (v. 11) does not mean that one is immune to its allure. Rather it means that one has been set free from sin (vv. 7, 22; v. 18 ↓) with its controlling power or "reign" (v. 12), no longer a slave to it (v. 6; cf. vv. 16-19 ↓, v. 14). This is a reality for the believer, who through being united with Christ has participated in his death to sin (vv. 3-11). Verse 14 speaks of the fact that sin should not be our master now that we are under God's grace rather than the law, which gives sin its power (cf. 1Cor 15:56).

Rom 6:16-19 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^e *you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?* ¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. *For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.*



^e Greek *bondservants*. Twice in this verse and verse 19; also once in verses 17, 20

1Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might *die to sin and live to righteousness*. By his wounds you have been healed. 

. . . In avoiding sin be focused on doing what is right

One of the most effective preventative measures against sinning is to be preoccupied with doing good. This is implied or suggested by the exhortations in this subsection and can also be inferred from the adjacent subsections.

Amos 5:14 *Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said.*



In seeking good and not evil, the people were to concern themselves with doing what was good and right (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

2Tim 2:22 *So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

2Chr 12:14 *And he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.*

King Rehoboam did evil because he did not focus on seeking God. For in not focusing on seeking God he did not look to do God's will and obey (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) and so he sinned.

Psa 119:9 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.*

Prov 4:25-27 *Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. ²⁶Ponder^f the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. ²⁷Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.*

^f Or *Make level*

God's people should be fully focused on God's way (v. 25), ensuring that their path is compatible with this (v. 26) and not being distracted or diverted by anything else (v. 27).

1Jn 2:10 *Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him^g there is no cause for stumbling.*

^g Or *it*

Loving each other is a key aspect of doing what is right. As such this verse shows how doing what is right leads us to avoid sin, with the term "stumbling" encompassing committing sin (cf. AMP, GNT).

Gen 4:7 *If you do well, will you not be accepted?^h And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is forⁱ you, but you must rule over it.*

^h Hebrew *will there not be a lifting up [of your face]?*

ⁱ Or *against*

To "do well" here is akin to doing "what is right" (NIV®; cf. CEV, GNT, NLT). Doing the right thing leads to God's acceptance. In contrast, failing to do what is right or to not do well – here quite possibly referring to doing less than what one should (cf. vv. 3-5) – leaves one exposed to sin. We must instead "subdue" (NLT) sin. One can infer from this verse that striving to do the best one can is vital for avoiding or subduing sin.

‡ **One must fill the "vacuum" left by evil:**

Matt 12:43-45 *"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but*

finds none. ⁴⁴Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

On being freed from evil, one must fill the "vacuum" left by sin and evil – i.e. one should respond to Jesus Christ and live a life fully focused on doing what is right in God's sight.

Pursue righteousness . . .

See also:

- [2Tim 2:22](#)
- [Practice righteousness along with justice . . .](#), p. 1580
- [. . . Do what is right](#), p. 1581

In most if not all of the following verses, "righteousness" refers to righteous living – doing what God wants, living in a way that is right according to his ways.

1Tim 6:11 *But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.*

Prov 21:21 *Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor.*

Isa 51:1 *Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.*

Zeph 2:3 *Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands;^j seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.*

^j Or *who carry out his judgment*

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

Matt 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

James 3:18 *And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

This appears to be saying that making peace produces righteousness – in the lives of ourselves and others, notably in church life as per the context. As such making peace is shown to be one way that we can pursue righteousness.



... Be righteous and upright

See also:

- Eph 5:8b-9 ↴

Dan 4:27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: *break off your sins by practicing righteousness*, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity. 📖

Hos 10:12 *Sow for yourselves righteousness*; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. 📖

Note that the latter part of the verse is most likely speaking of God in righteousness granting his blessings (cf. GNT, Nlrv) on those who act righteously (as per the first clause/instruction) and seek him. Alternatively it may have in view God bestowing righteousness (cf. AMP), God being the ultimate source of it.

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having *put on the breastplate of righteousness*, ... 📖

Prov 16:13 *Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right.* 📖

Matt 5:20 For I tell you, *unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* 📖

Matt 22:11-13 But when the king came in to look at the guests, *he saw there a man who had no wedding garment.* ¹²*And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.* ¹³*Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'* 📖

The wedding clothes probably symbolize righteousness (and possibly good fruit). As such, the point being made is that those who respond to God's invitation must come appropriately prepared, clothed in righteousness.

Rom 14:17 For *the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* 📖

Righteousness is a key aspect of the kingdom of God. Accordingly, one must be righteous in order to participate in the kingdom (cf. Matt 5:20 †; Matt 22:11-13 †).

1Ki 9:4 And as for you, if you will *walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness*, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, ... 📖

1Chr 29:17 *I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things*, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you. 📖

Ps 78:72 *With upright heart he shepherded them* and guided them with his skillful hand. 📖

Ps 111:7-8 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy; ⁸*they are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.* 📖

Prov 14:9 Fools mock at the guilt offering, but *the upright enjoy acceptance.*^k 📖

^k Hebrew *but among the upright is acceptance*

Note that there is some doubt about the meaning of the Hebrew in the second clause. Most likely it is speaking of the upright either having God's acceptance or doing what is good (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

✚ Try to live honorably in everything you do:

Heb 13:18 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, *desiring to act honorably in all things.* 📖

Always try "to do the right thing" (GNT, NCV; cf. CEV).

Be good

3Jn 1:11 Beloved, *do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.* 📖

Gal 5:22 But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ...* 📖

Eph 5:8b-9 *Walk as children of light* ⁹*(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ...* 📖

Luke 6:45 *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good*, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. 📖



Luke 8:15 As for *that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.* 📖

Acts 11:24 ... for *he [Barnabas] was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.* 📖

Rom 15:14 I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers,¹ that *you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.* 📖

¹ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 30

Prov 11:27 *Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor,^m but evil comes to him who searches for it.* 📖

^mOr *acceptance*

Here “seeks good” may well be speaking of trying to do what is good and right (cf. CEV) – hence its inclusion here. The term “favor” may refer to favor from God (cf. [Prov 12:2](#) ↓) but favor from people – or both – may be in view.

Prov 12:2 *A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of evil devices he condemns.* 📖

Prov 14:14, 19, 22 The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and *a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways.* 📖 ... ¹⁹*The evil bow down before the good, the wicked at the gates of the righteous.* 📖 ... ²²*Do they not go astray who devise evil? Those who devise good meetⁿ steadfast love and faithfulness.* 📖

ⁿ Or *show*

✦ Supplement your faith with virtue:

2Pet 1:5 For this very reason, *make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,^o and virtue with knowledge, ...* 📖

^o Or *excellence*; twice in this verse

The Greek translated here as “virtue” is often translated as “goodness” (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NRSV). It is a general term that speaks of all good character traits (cf. ESB).

Note: Further actions that counter sin and evil

See also:

- [b\) Engaging in Spiritual Warfare](#), p. 1813
- [Things that lead to holiness](#), p. 1871
- [Things that lead to purity](#), p. 1872

Dan 11:32 *He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.* 📖

Knowing God enables one to resist corruptive influences, in part by enabling one to recognize them for what they are.

Eph 6:11-18a *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. 📖

For comment, see the comment on [Eph 6:10-15](#) – under [Use spiritual weapons and armor](#), p. 1814.

1Pet 4:1-2 *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,^p arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ²so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.* 📖

^p Some manuscripts add *for us; some for you*

One effect of willingly enduring suffering as Jesus Christ did is that one is finished with sin – “no longer involved with sin” (GNT). Such suffering causes sin to be seen to be more unpalatable and pointless than before.

Ps 17:3 *You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night, you have tested me, and you will find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.* 📖

A strong resolve to abstain from sin – as is evident here – is important in avoiding sin. Daniel 1:8a similarly speaks of Daniel resolving not to defile himself – “But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food, or with the wine that he drank.”

[Pray for persecuted Christians](#)



c) Be Holy (I): General

See also:

- *b) God Makes His People Holy*, p. 859

To be holy involves being separated from corruptive influences and totally dedicated to God. As such it includes moral purity and obedience to God. The process of becoming holy is largely facilitated by God, but in accordance believers are called upon to be holy. For a more in-depth discussion regarding this last point, see the introductory comment on *b) God Makes His People Holy*, p. 859.

Subsections

- Be holy
- Be holy because God is holy
- Be godly
- Be pure . . .
- . . . Be blameless
- Make every effort to be holy and godly, particularly in view of what is to come
- Things that lead to holiness
- Things that lead to purity
- We should be holy and pleasing to God because of the things he has done for us
- The godly, blameless and pure are accepted by God and Jesus Christ
- The godly, blameless and pure are cared for and blessed by God

Be holy

Lev 20:7 Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and *be holy*, for I am the LORD your God.

Num 15:40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and *be holy to your God*.

Rom 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^q by the mercies of God, to *present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God*, which is your spiritual worship.^r

^q Or *brothers and sisters*

^r Or *your rational service*

Here “bodies” signifies our whole selves, encompassing our entire lives (cf. NCV).

1Cor 7:34b And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to *be holy in body and spirit*. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.

Eph 1:4a ... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should *be holy and blameless before him*.

1Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, and God also, *how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers*.

2Tim 1:8-9 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of *God, ⁹who saved us and called us to^s a holy calling*, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,^t ...

^s Or *with*

^t Greek *before times eternal*

That God has “called us to a holy calling” indicates that we ought to “live a holy life” (NLT; cf. NIV).

1Thes 4:3-4 For *this is the will of God, your sanctification:^u that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body^v in holiness and honor, ...*

^u Or *your holiness*

^v Or *how to take a wife for himself*; Greek *how to possess his own vessel*

1Cor 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, *to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints* together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ...

The terms “sanctified” and “saints” both speak of being holy, with the latter basically meaning “holy people” (GNT, NCV, NLT).

Be holy because God is holy

See also:

- ... *and God only dwells with those who are holy*, p. 57
- ... *and imitate God, as children of God*, p. 1194

If we are to be God’s people, acceptable to him, we need to be holy because God is holy and as such does not accept anything that is not holy (cf. [Deut 23:14](#) ↓). So we should aspire to be holy, imitating God.



Lev 11:45 For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. *You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.* 

Lev 19:2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, *You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.* 

1Pet 1:14-16 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵but *as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*, ¹⁶since it is written, *“You shall be holy, for I am holy.”* 

Eph 4:24 ... and to *put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.* 

Heb 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may *share his holiness.* 

It can be inferred from this verse that we ourselves should strive to share in God’s holiness.

1Jn 1:7 But if we *walk in the light, as he is in the light*, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 

Matt 5:48 *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* 

1Jn 3:3 And everyone who thus hopes in him *purifies himself as he is pure.* 

‡ The camp of Israel’s army had to be holy so that God would not turn away from them:

Deut 23:14 Because *the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp*, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, *therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.* 

This reflects that to know God’s presence we need to be holy, because he is holy and as such does not tolerate anything that is not holy and so repulsive to him.

Be godly

1Tim 2:2 ... for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may *lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.* 

1Tim 5:4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first *learn to show godliness to their own household* and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 

1Tim 6:11b *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.* 

2Tim 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to *live a godly life in Christ Jesus* will be persecuted, ... 

Titus 2:11-12 For *the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people*, ¹²*training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ...* 

2Cor 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that *we behaved in the world with simplicity^w and godly sincerity*, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. 

^w Some manuscripts *holiness*

‡ God has given us everything we need for a godly life:

2Pet 1:3 *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*, through the knowledge of him who called us to^x his own glory and excellence,^y ... 

^x Or by

^y Or virtue

Be pure . . .

See also:

- [1Tim 6:14](#) ↴

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. *Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* 

The “double-minded” appear to be those whose hearts and interests are divided between God and the world (cf. v. 4).

Isa 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; *purify yourselves*, you who bear the vessels of the LORD. 

2Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, *let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body^z and spirit*, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. 

^z Greek *flesh*



Eph 5:3 But *sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.* 

Col 3:5 *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^a sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* 

^a Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

1Thes 4:7 *For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.* 

1Tim 5:1-2, 22 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, *younger women as sisters, in all purity.*  ... ²²Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; *keep yourself pure.* 

Titus 2:5 ... *to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.* 

Heb 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and *let the marriage bed be undefiled*, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. 

James 3:17 But *the wisdom from above is first pure*, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 

Purity is the primary aspect of godly wisdom.

1Pet 3:1-2 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ²when they see *your respectful and pure conduct.* 

1Jn 3:3 *And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.* 

Believers ought to be pure just as Jesus Christ is pure.

Neh 13:30 Thus *I cleansed them from everything foreign*, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work; ... 

Here Nehemiah speaks of cleansing the priests of foreign defilement and influence through intermarriage. Believers should likewise cleanse or purify themselves of everything "foreign" to or incompatible with godliness.

Titus 1:15 *To the pure, all things are pure*, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. 

This points out one blessing of being pure: those who are pure do not mistakenly see things as impure. Paul is speaking against false teachers who were apparently advocating various ascetic regulations such as prohibitions of certain foods. Paul states that for those who were spiritually pure, all non-moral things such as food are pure. In contrast, those whose "minds and ... consciences are defiled" do not have a clear perspective on what is and is not pure, leading them to mistakenly deem some things as impure.

... Be blameless

Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty;^b walk before me, and *be blameless*, ... 

^b Hebrew *El Shaddai*

Deut 18:13 *You shall be blameless before the LORD your God, ...* 

Eph 1:4a ... even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should *be holy and blameless before him.* 

1Tim 5:7 Command these things as well, so that they may *be without reproach.* 

1Tim 6:14 ... *to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach* until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 

Ps 18:23 *I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt.* 

Ps 101:2a *I will ponder the way that is blameless.* 

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and *that man was blameless and upright*, one who feared God and turned away from evil. 

Luke 1:6 And they were both righteous before God, *walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.* 

1Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, and God also, *how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.* 

Ps 26:6 *I wash my hands in innocence* and go around your altar, O LORD, ... 

David speaks of washing his hands to signify his innocence.



2Cor 7:11b *At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.* 📖

The Corinthians had demonstrated that they were innocent or blameless in every aspect of the matter in question.

Make every effort to be holy and godly, particularly in view of what is to come

See also:

- *To be ready for Jesus Christ's return, live a godly life . . .*, p. 1806
- *Do not live an ungodly life, leaving you unprepared for Jesus Christ's return*, p. 1807

Heb 12:14 *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* 📖

2Pet 3:11-14 *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.* 📖

1Tim 4:7-8 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather *train yourself for godliness*; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, *godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.* 📖

The demands of athletic training are referred to in order to underscore the self-discipline and effort needed to be godly.

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us *to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age*, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, *the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ...* 📖

2Pet 1:5-7, 10-11 For this very reason, *make every effort to supplement* your faith with virtue,^c and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and *steadfastness with godliness*, ⁷and *godliness with brotherly affection*, and brotherly affection with love. 📖 ... ¹⁰Therefore, brothers,^d *be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.* ¹¹*For in this way*

there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 📖

^c Or *excellence*; twice in this verse

^d Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

In v. 10 "these things" refers to the things listed in vv. 5-7, which include obtaining godliness.

1Tim 6:11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.* 📖

Things that lead to holiness

See also:

- *b) God Makes His People Holy*, p. 859
- *Obedience leads to holiness and purity*, p. 1063

Num 15:39-40 And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember *all the commandments of the LORD, to do them*, not to follow^e after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. ⁴⁰*So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God.* 📖

^e Hebrew *to spy out*

Obeying God's commands is fundamental to being holy.

Rom 6:19b, 22 For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, *so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.* 📖 ... ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have *become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification* and its end, eternal life. 📖

2Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body^f and spirit, *bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.* 📖

^f Greek *flesh*

2Tim 2:20-21 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹Therefore, *if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable,^g he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.* 📖



g Greek *from these things*

The “dishonorable” articles probably are a reference to the unfaithful members of God’s household, foremost of which would be the false teachers mentioned earlier in the chapter. Timothy was to cleanse himself from these – including their teachings and practices – in order to be holy. Likewise, to be holy we need to cleanse ourselves from corruptive influences.

Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant^h of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their *knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ...* [B]

^h Or *slave*; Greek *bondservant*

A good knowledge of the truth is fundamental to becoming godly, and holy.

1Tim 3:16 Great indeed, we confess, is *the mystery of godliness: Heⁱ was manifested in the flesh, vindicated^d by the Spirit,^k seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.* [B]

ⁱ Greek *Who*; some manuscripts *God*; others *Which*

^j Or *justified*

^k Or *vindicated in spirit*

The phrase “the mystery of godliness” may mean the mystery of “our religion” (CEV, GNT, NRSV; cf. NCV), or similarly the mystery of “our faith” (NLT). It appears to speak of the mystery that produces godliness – that being Jesus Christ and what was accomplished in his mission. This “mystery” produces godliness (cf. **Titus 1:1** ↑) as its significance is applied to one’s life.

James 3:2 For we all stumble in many ways. And *if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.* [B]

This links keeping one’s tongue under control with being perfect. It can thus be inferred that the more one does so, the more perfect and holy one becomes.

1Pet 4:1 *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,^l arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ...* [B]

^l Some manuscripts add *for us*; some *for you*

As referred to earlier, this speaks of the willing endurance of suffering leading one to be finished with sin, and thus leading to holiness.

Things that lead to purity

See also:

- *Obedience leads to holiness and purity*, p. 1063

Ps 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right^m spirit within me.* [B]

^mOr *steadfast*

We ought to ask God to purify ourselves (cf. **1Jn 1:9** ↓). Note that God and Jesus Christ’s prime role in the sanctification of believers is discussed in detail in *b) God Makes His People Holy*, p. 859.

Ps 119:9 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.* [B]

Living according to God’s word enables us to keep our way pure; as such it likewise leads to purity.

Phil 1:9-10 And it is my prayer *that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless* for the day of Christ, ... [B]

This appears to indicate that love (cf. **1Pet 1:22** ↓), along with knowledge and discernment, produces purity and blamelessness.

Phil 2:14-15 *Do all things without grumbling or questioning,¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish* in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ... [B]

The use of “questioning” (v. 14) has in view being argumentative. Learning to abstain from such things as grumbling and arguing is critical to becoming blameless and pure.

2Tim 2:22 *So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.* [B]

The latter part of the verse implies that the aforementioned things lead to – or are associated with – “a pure heart”. Thus we should pursue such things in order to become pure and holy.

1Pet 1:22 *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ...* [B]

1Jn 1:7-9 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.* ⁸If we say we have no sin, we



deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* ☞

1Jn 3:2-3 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appearsⁿ we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³*And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.* ☞

ⁿ Or *when it appears*

The "hope" of Jesus Christ's return and of being like him (v. 2) leads one to make or keep themselves pure (v. 3). For focusing on such a hope makes anything that it is not pleasing to Christ incompatible with one's own goals and desires. Additionally one would not want to do anything that would bring Christ's disapproval on his return.

✦ Religion that God accepts as pure:

James 1:27 *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.* ☞

Religious practice that is "pure and undefiled" includes keeping oneself "unstained" from/by the world".

We should be holy and pleasing to God because of the things he has done for us

See also:

- *We should obey God and Jesus Christ because of the great things they have done for us*, p. 1168

Rom 8:11-12 *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* ¹²*So then, brothers,^o we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.* ☞

^o Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 29

Because of what God has done for us (v. 11) we have an obligation to him – to be holy, as opposed to living according to our sinful nature (v. 12).

Rom 12:1 *I appeal to you therefore, brothers,^p by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*^q ☞

^p Or *brothers and sisters*

^q Or *your rational service*

The phrase "by the mercies of God" likely means in view of or because of God's acts of mercy towards us (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

1Cor 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? *You are not your own,* ²⁰*for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* ☞

Eph 4:22-24 ... *to put off your old self;^r which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,* ²³*and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,* ²⁴*and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.* ☞

^r Greek *man*; also verse 24

We ought to get rid of our old corrupted ways and to grow into the new nature, for God has created our new nature to be like himself (cf. **Col 3:8-10** ↓) – righteous and holy.

Col 3:8-10, 12 *But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.* ⁹*Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self^s with its practices* ¹⁰*and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.* ☞ ... ¹²*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ...* ☞

^s Greek *man*; also as supplied in verse 10

In addition to reflecting the reasoning of Ephesians 4:22-24 above, it can be inferred from v. 12 that we ought to be holy because God has chosen us and loves us.

Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,* ¹²*training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,* ¹³*waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,* ¹⁴*who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.* ☞

Along with Jesus Christ's coming appearance (v. 13), his sacrifice on our behalf to redeem us from wickedness and purify us to be "a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (v. 14) is a very important reason as to why we should live a godly life.

1Pet 1:15-16 ... *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,* ¹⁶*since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."* ☞

It can be inferred from this that as God graciously called us, we should be holy in keeping both with God's holy character and his command to be holy.



The godly, blameless and pure are accepted by God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- *Seeking God should be accompanied by obedience to him*, p. 1197

Job 8:20 Behold, *God will not reject a blameless man*, nor take the hand of evildoers.

Ps 15:1-2 *O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? ²He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; ...*

Ps 24:3-5 *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. ⁵He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

Prov 14:9 Fools mock at the guilt offering, but *the upright enjoy acceptance.*^t

^t Hebrew *but among the upright is acceptance*

Rev 3:4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, *people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.*

The second half of the verse probably refers to being with Jesus Christ in the afterlife (cf. [Rev 14:4](#) ↓), although it has an application to the present. The reference to being dressed “in white” appears to refer to their sanctified state in the afterlife, reflective of them not having “soiled their garments”, i.e. reflective of them being pure.

Rev 14:3-5 ... and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except *the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.* ⁴*It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,* ⁵*and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless.*

The 144,000 most likely symbolize the faithful believers who had come out of “the great tribulation” (7:14) and at this point are probably in heaven, though not all commentators would agree. The expression “have not defiled themselves with women” (v. 4) probably refers to either abstaining from sexual sin or from defiling relationships with the world. The subsequent clause – “for they are virgins” – refers to their purity (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). The fact that they follow

the Lamb wherever he goes and have been redeemed and offered to God and the Lamb (v. 4), shows them to have been accepted by God and Jesus Christ.

Matt 5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

The final phrase may have an application to the believer’s life of faith, but it would appear that seeing God in the age to come – being accepted into his presence – is the primary reference.

Ps 4:3 But *know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself*; the LORD hears when I call to him.

In conjunction with being accepted by him, the godly are set apart by God for himself.

‡ The blameless are God’s delight:

Prov 11:20 Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the LORD, but *those of blameless ways are his delight.*

The godly, blameless and pure are cared for and blessed by God

See also:

- [Ps 24:5](#) ↑; [Ps 4:3](#) ↑

2Chr 16:9a *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.*

Ps 18:19, 23-26 *He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.* ... ²³*I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from my guilt.* ²⁴*So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.* ²⁵*With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;* ²⁶*with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.*

Here David sings of God delivering him, because God delighted in him (v. 19; cf. [Prov 1:20](#) ↑), due in no small part to David’s ways being blameless and pure (vv. 23-26). Verses 25-26 speak of God being merciful, blameless and pure largely in reference to his care of his godly people.

Ps 32:6 Therefore *let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.*



Ps 37:18-19 *The LORD knows the days of the blameless, and their heritage will remain forever; ¹⁹they are not put to shame in evil times; in the days of famine they have abundance.* 

Verse 18a speaks of God having the futures of the blameless under his control, as reflected in the subsequent teaching.

Dan 6:22 *My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.* 

2Pet 2:9 ... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^u and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ... 

^u Or *temptations*

Ps 73:1 *Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.* 

Note that this and the following references speak of the godly, blameless or pure being blessed by God.

Ps 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. *No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.* 

Ps 119:1 ^v *Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!* 

^v This psalm is an acrostic poem of twenty-two stanzas, following the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; within a stanza, each verse begins with the same Hebrew letter

1Tim 6:6 *Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ...* 

Godliness is great gain “when accompanied by contentment” (NASB). Note that while this is not speaking expressly of such “great gain” as being of God, presumably God’s blessings for the godly are partially in view.

Prov 13:6 *Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but sin overthrows the wicked.* 

Rev 22:14 *Blessed are those who wash their robes,^w so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.* 

^w Some manuscripts *do his commandments*

The phrase “wash their robes” alludes to purification, through belief in Jesus and consequent forgiveness of sins (cf. NCV text note).

✦ The “Way of Holiness”, for those who walk on the way:

Isa 35:8 *And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.^x* 

^x Or *if they are fools, they shall not wander in it*

This probably initially refers to the exiles returning from Babylon to Jerusalem, but it may well have a final fulfillment in the future. The latter would involve God’s holy people having access to his holy Jerusalem – a millennial one or the new Jerusalem of the afterlife.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Be Holy (II): Being Set Apart

See also:

- *Expel unrepentant sinners . . .*, p. 1492
- *Do not marry outside of God’s people – particularly as it can result in being led astray*, p. 1691
- *II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy*, p. 1854

Being holy involves being set apart for God from worldly things. Such things include: compromising associations with the people of this world; and the ways of the world.

Subsections

- **Prelude: The world is basically evil**
- **Be set apart for God**
- **Do not love this world**
- **Do not conform to this world**
- **Do not live as other people do . . .**
- **. . . Worldly and human behavior to be avoided**
- **Avoid bad company . . .**
- **. . . Bad company is corruptive and harmful**
- **Avoid compromising alliances with unbelievers and the wicked**
- **Note: God’s people are not of this world . . .**
- **. . . God’s people are in effect exiles and temporary residents in this world – even homeless in it**



Prelude: The world is basically evil

See also:

- [Satan has great power and authority in the world](#), p. 184
- [The ungodly do not know God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit](#), p. 1675

In the NT the “world” often refers to the system of values, attitudes and behaviour commonplace in society – along with the people and social structures that conform to this system. This system is largely antagonistic towards or dismissive of God. As such, the “world” is essentially evil.

John 7:7 *The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.*

Isa 13:11 *I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.*

John 12:31 *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*

The “judgment of this world” points to the world being evil. Regarding the meaning of the phrase, see the comment on [John 12:31-33](#) under [Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil](#), p. 605.

John 15:18-19 *If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

John 17:14 *I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

1Cor 11:32 *But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined^y so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

^y Or *when we are judged we are being disciplined by the Lord*

Eph 6:12 *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

The term “this present darkness” refers to the spiritual darkness that pervades this world – indicative of the world’s evil or ungodly condition.

✦ **The world does not know God:**

John 17:25 *O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.*

That the world does not know God shows that it is ungodly and reflects that it is evil. Moreover, John 1:10, 14:17 and 1 John 3:1 (cf. [The ungodly do not know God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit](#), p. 1675) show that in addition to not knowing God, the world does not know Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit.

Be set apart for God

Ex 22:31a *“You shall be consecrated to me.*

“Consecrate” means to set apart for God or dedicate as sacred to him.

Lev 20:26 *You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.*

As God had separated Israel from the other peoples, they were to remain as such, holy to him.

Ezra 6:21 *It was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from exile, and also by every one who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel.*

Neh 10:28 *The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, ...*

Isa 52:11 *Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the LORD.*

The return from Babylonian exile appears to be primarily in view. God’s people – in particular those who would carry the holy vessels which belonged to God’s temple – were to depart from ungodly Babylonia and be pure, avoiding any “unclean thing”. This term here quite possibly refers figuratively to sinful things rather than simply unclean things.

2Cor 6:17 *Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ...*



2Tim 2:21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable,^z he will be a vessel for honorable use, *set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.* 📖

^z Greek *from these things*

Rev 18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, *“Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; ...* 📖

The reference is to the figurative “Babylon”, symbolic of a great but corrupt world power, probably of the end times.

Num 23:9 For from the top of the crags I see him, from the hills I behold him; behold, *a people dwelling alone, and not counting itself among the nations!* 📖

The Israelites were to live apart from the other nations.

Do not love this world

1Jn 2:15, 17 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* 📖 ... ¹⁷*And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.* 📖

The fact that the world and the desires associated with it are passing away (v. 17; cf. **1Cor 7:31b** ↕) – in contrast to godly people – is good reason to not love the world or anything in it (v. 15).

2Tim 4:9-10a Do your best to come to me soon. ¹⁰*For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.* 📖

James 4:4 You adulterous people!^a *Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* 📖

^a Greek *You adulteresses!*

Being a friend of the world (v. 4) involves conforming to the norms of the world – taking on its values and viewing things from its perspective – and implies a love for the things of this world. James indicates that this must be avoided.

✦ **Set your minds on things above, not on worldly things:**

Col 3:2 *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* 📖

The phrase “things that are on earth” is inclusive of sinful worldly things.

Do not conform to this world

Rom 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world,^b but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.^c* 📖

^b Greek *age*

^c Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

1Cor 7:31 ... and [let] *those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it.* For the present form of this world is passing away. 📖

Paul appears to be meaning that when dealing with the world or things of the world, we should not be influenced by it/them – e.g. through becoming attached to or engrossed in it/them (cf. AMP, GNT, NIV, NLT). For doing so would lead to conforming to the pattern of the world.

2Cor 10:2-4 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some *who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.* ³*For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.* ⁴*For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh* but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 📖

In speaking of acting “according to the flesh” (vv. 2b, 3) Paul is speaking of acting “according to human standards” (NRSV) – “by the standards of this world” (NIV®; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV). We should avoid acting as such, and so we should avoid the use of worldly “weapons” (v. 4) – such as deceit and coercion. We should not resort to using such things, conforming to this world’s ways, even if what we are trying to achieve is honorable.

Eph 2:1-2 And you were dead in *the trespasses and sins* ²*in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—* 📖

For believers, following the ways of this world should be a thing of the past.

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to *keep oneself unstained from the world.* 📖

1Jn 5:3-5 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* ⁵*Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* 📖



To “overcome the world” means to rise above its sinful way of life, obeying God (v. 3). It is possible “by means of our faith” (GNT).

Acts 2:40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “*Save yourselves from this crooked generation.*”

Here Peter exhorts his listeners to save themselves “from the evil of today’s people” (NCV™), i.e. to avoid conforming to it – and suffering the consequences of such corruption (cf. CEV, GNT).

Do not live as other people do . . .

Lev 18:3 *You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes.*

Lev 20:23 *And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them.*

Deut 18:9 When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, *you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations.*

Isa 8:11-12 For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and *warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying:* ¹²“*Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.*”

One aspect of not living like the people of this world (v. 11) is that we should not think like them (cf. **Eph 4:17** ↓), being fearful of what they fear (v. 12). Somewhat similarly Mark 4:18-19 says that we should not be concerned with “the cares of the world”.

Ezek 11:11b-12 *I will judge you at the border of Israel,* ¹²*and you shall know that I am the LORD. For you have not walked in my statutes, nor obeyed my rules, but have acted according to the rules of the nations that are around you.*

Eph 4:17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that *you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.*

In this context “Gentiles” refers to ungodly heathens.

1Tim 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, *nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.*

1Pet 4:3 For *the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.*

. . . Worldly and human behavior to be avoided

See also:

- **Isa 8:12** ↑; **1Pet 4:3** ↑

Note that the references to “flesh” in the following verses speak of the unspiritual human nature, manifested in ungodly behavior characteristic of humans and this world.

1Cor 3:3b For *while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?*

2Cor 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity^d and godly sincerity, *not by earthly wisdom* but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.

^d Some manuscripts *holiness*

Earthly or worldly “wisdom” is based on human thinking and as such is limited and flawed – both morally and intellectually. One should strive to reason in line with God’s wisdom and teaching – by his grace – rather than that of the world.

2Cor 1:17 Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? *Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time?*

A number of commentators interpret Paul to be speaking of acting in a way that served his own interests, so that he would be inclined to easily change his mind to suit himself – almost as if he was saying “Yes” and “No” in the one breath.

2Cor 5:16 From now on, therefore, *we regard no one according to the flesh.* Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

Do not view people from a mere human perspective, based on such things as appearances (cf. v. 12), people’s background and worldly credentials.

2Cor 7:10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas *worldly grief produces death.*

Worldly grief can be devoid of hope and so negative, directionless and even perpetual. Thus it tends to be destructive.



2Cor 11:17-18 *What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool.* ¹⁸Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. 📖

As a rule, such human boasting should be avoided. Here Paul felt obliged to do it in order to defend his ministry.

Phil 3:19 Their end is destruction, *their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.* 📖

The clause "their god is their belly" suggests that their stomach was their top priority. However the reference may be more general, with "belly" possibly being used as a metaphor for "their bodily desires" (GNT, cf. NCV) – particularly in light of the following clause "they glory in their shame". Both possibilities involve a mindset focused on earthly or worldly things – and should be avoided.

Col 2:20-22 *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—* ²¹*Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch* ²²*(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?* 📖

Here Paul has primarily in view the heresy of asceticism – which involved the observance of strict rules to supposedly gain God's approval. They refer to things that perish with use (v. 22a) and were based on a strain of human wisdom rather than being of God. Likewise we should be wary of and avoid teaching based on worldly wisdom.

Titus 2:12 ... training us to *renounce ungodliness and worldly passions*, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ... 📖

1Jn 2:16 *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.* 📖

✦ **Spiritual immaturity is a product of unspiritual human nature:**

1Cor 3:1-3a *But I, brothers,^e could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.* ²*I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,* ³*for you are still of the flesh.* 📖

^e Or *brothers and sisters*

Avoid bad company . . .

Ps 26:4-5 *I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites.* ⁵*I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.* 📖

See Psalms 1:1 and comment in the following subsection.

Ps 101:4, 7 *A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.* 📖 ... ⁷*No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes.* 📖

"A perverse heart" (v. 4) refers to perverse people.

Ps 119:115 *Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God.* 📖

Prov 1:10-11, 14-16 *My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.* ¹¹*If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; ...* ¹⁴*throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse"—* ¹⁵*my son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths,* ¹⁶*for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.* 📖

Prov 24:1-2 Be not envious of evil men, *nor desire to be with them,* ²*for their hearts devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble.* 📖

Jer 15:17 *I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation.* 📖

Here "revelers" probably refers to sinful carousers.

Rom 16:17 I appeal to you, brothers, to *watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.* 📖

Eph 5:6-7 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon *the sons of disobedience.* ⁷*Therefore do not become partners with them; ...* 📖

Verse 7 probably means that we should "not be associated" (NRSV, cf. CEV, GNT, NCV) with such people, rather than simply to not doing the things that they do.

2Tim 3:2-5 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. *Avoid such people.* 📖



... Bad company is corruptive and harmful

See also:

- Ex 23:32-33 ↴; Ex 34:15 ↴; Josh 23:12-13 ↴

The corruptive nature of bad company is also implied in some of the references in the previous subsection.

1Cor 15:33 Do not be deceived: *“Bad company ruins good morals.”*^f 📖

^f Probably from Menander’s comedy *Thais*

Prov 22:24-25 *Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, ²⁵lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.* 📖

Ps 1:1 *Blessed is the man^g who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ...* 📖

^g The singular Hebrew word for *man* (*ish*) is used here to portray a representative example of a godly person; see Preface

To walk “in the counsel of the wicked” is to follow their advice. To stand “in the way of sinners” probably refers to following their ways (cf. CEV, GNT), but could be speaking of keeping company with them (cf. NLT). Some commentators point out that this verse speaks of being progressively or increasingly influenced by the wicked, culminating with joining in with them – in effect becoming one of them.

Ps 106:34-36 They did not destroy the peoples, as the LORD commanded them, ³⁵but *they mixed with the nations and learned to do as they did. ³⁶They served their idols, which became a snare to them.* 📖

Prov 13:20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but *the companion of fools will suffer harm.* 📖

The phrase “suffer harm” probably means such a person will be harmed by trouble. However in the light of the first part of the verse, it may instead be referring to their character suffering harm by becoming foolish in accordance with the foolish company they keep.

Prov 16:29 *A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good.* 📖

Being enticed into the company and ways of a violent person leads one into trouble.

Prov 28:7 The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but *a companion of gluttons shames his father.* 📖

Rev 18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, *“Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; ...* 📖

Avoid compromising alliances with unbelievers and the wicked

2Cor 6:14-17 *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵What accord has Christ with Belial?^h Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ...* 📖

^h Greek *Beliar*

“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers” (v. 14a) appears to be speaking against forming close, binding associations with unbelievers that would risk leading a believer to compromise aspects of their faith and/or inhibit their service and witness to Christ. Additionally, basic differences between believers and unbelievers mean that such relationships lack: fellowship (v. 14); things in common (v. 15); harmony (v. 15); and agreement (v. 16). Probably Paul had primarily in mind affiliations either with the false teachers who had appeared in the Corinthian church or pagan idolaters (vv. 15a, 16a). Note that “Belial” (v. 15a) is Satan.

Ex 23:32-33 *You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. ³³They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.* 📖

Ex 34:12-15 *Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. ¹³You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim ¹⁴(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), ¹⁵lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, ...* 📖

Such a covenant “or mutual agreement” (AMP, v. 12; cf. Ex 23:32 ↑) would make way for participation in each other’s practices, including corruptive ones.



Josh 23:12-13 For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, ¹³know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but *they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the LORD your God has given you.*

In speaking of the destructive results of alliances with the former occupants of the land (v. 13b), Joshua quite probably had primarily in mind the lure of worshipping their gods and the consequences this would bring.

Ezra 9:11b-12 “The land that you are entering, to take possession of it, is a land impure with the impurity of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations that have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness. ¹²*Therefore do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons, and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.*’

2Chr 20:35-37 After this *Jehoshaphat king of Judah joined with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted wickedly.* ³⁶*He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish, and they built the ships in Ezion-geber.* ³⁷Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, “*Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made.*” *And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.*

God emphatically showed his disapproval of Jehoshaphat’s alliance with the wicked Ahaziah, by destroying a prime focus of the alliance.

Isa 30:1-2 “Ah, stubborn children,” declares the LORD, “who carry out a plan, but not mine, and *who make an alliance,¹ but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; ²who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!*

¹ Hebrew *who weave a web*

Gen 14:21-24 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but *take the goods for yourself.*” ²²*But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand¹ to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ ²⁴I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share*

of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share.”

ⁱ Or *I have taken a solemn oath*

The king of Sodom was not proposing a formal alliance, but Abram avoided even being obligated in any way to such an ungodly figure.

‡ **We are not to try to completely disassociate with unbelievers:**

1Cor 5:9-10 *I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.*

Note that immoral people within the church are the object of the instruction mentioned in v. 9.

Note: God’s people are not of this world . . .

See also:

▪ [Col 2:20](#) ↑

John 8:23 He said to them, “You are from below; *I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.*

In contrast to the Pharisees, Jesus himself was not of this world. The same is true of his followers, as the following verses show.

John 15:19 *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

John 17:14-16 I have given them your word, and *the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.* ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.^k ¹⁶*They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

^k Or *from evil*

Gal 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which¹ the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

¹ Or *through whom*

Heb 11:37-38 They were stoned, they were sawn in two,^m they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸*of whom the world was not worthy*—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

^mSome manuscripts add *they were tempted*



1Jn 3:1, 13 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, *that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.* 📖 ... ¹³*Do not be surprised, brothers,ⁿ that the world hates you.* 📖

ⁿ Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verses 14, 16

Not knowing God, the people of the world do not recognize or acknowledge believers for who they are (v. 1b; cf. AMP) – i.e. God’s people or children (v. 1a). The fact that believers are God’s people, not recognized by and indeed hated by the world (v. 13; cf. [John 15:19 ↑](#); [John 17:14 ↑](#)), points to the fact that believers are not of this world.

Phil 3:20 But *our citizenship is in heaven*, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ... 📖

Christians are citizens of heaven rather than citizens of this world.

1Cor 4:13 ... when slandered, we entreat. *We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.* 📖

The treatment of Paul as if he was the scum of the world, demonstrated that Paul was not of this world.

Lev 20:26 You shall be holy to me, for *I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples*, that you should be mine. 📖

... God’s people are in effect exiles and temporary residents in this world – even homeless in it

See also:

- [Heb 11:38 ↑](#)

God’s people should view their stay in this world as transitory –residing here temporarily, in exile from their true home, to which they will go after this life.

1Pet 1:1, 17 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, *To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion* in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 📖 ... ¹⁷*And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ...* 📖

In referring to believers as “exiles” (cf. [1Pet 2:11 ↓](#)), Peter speaks of their absence from their true and ultimate home in the new world that is to come.

1Pet 2:11 Beloved, *I urge you as sojourners and exiles* to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 📖

A “sojourner” is a person who is staying somewhere temporarily.

In vv. 9-10 the writer appears to correlate the promise to Abraham and his family of inheriting the promised land with the promise to all God’s people of the heavenly city to come.

Gen 23:3-4 And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, *“I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”* 📖

Abraham’s situation in Canaan reflects that of God’s people on earth (cf. [Heb 11:9-10, 13-16 ↓](#)).

1Chr 29:15 For *we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding.*^o 📖

^o Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew *hope, or prospect*

David’s first statement may be reflecting on the fact that even in the promised land the Israelites were merely aliens, tenants in the land – as stated in Leviticus 25:23, “... the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.” (Ps 39:12 below may also have this in mind.) This mirrors the fact that from God’s perspective his people are “strangers ... and sojourners ... on the earth”. His people should likewise see themselves as such.

Ps 39:12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears! For *I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.* 📖

Ps 119:19 *I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!* 📖

Luke 9:58 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but *the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*” 📖

In conjunction with being exiles and temporary residents in the world, in following Jesus believers may like him have no home of their own in this world (cf. [1Cor 4:11 ↓](#); [Heb 1:38 ↑](#)). Peter may have had this partly in view in his statement to Jesus in Matthew 19:27a – “See, we have left everything and followed you.”

1Cor 4:11 To the present hour we hunger and thirst, *we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, ...* 📖



✦ **As exiles on earth, God's people long for a heavenly city:**
Heb 11:9-10, 13-16 By faith *he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.* ¹⁰*For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.* ... ¹³*These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.* ¹⁴*For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.* ¹⁵*If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.* ¹⁶*But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.*

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for *he has prepared for them a city.*

In v. 10, the writer implies that Abraham was ultimately looking beyond the promise of inheriting the promised land, to dwelling in the heavenly city to come. Note that on the same theme as this passage, later the author of Hebrews says in 13:14, "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."

Pray for persecuted Christians



Major Pitfalls

I. Pride

- a) Pride in Thought 1886
- b) Pride in Action: Self-Exaltation and Boasting 1892
- c) Outcomes of Pride 1897
- d) Antithesis of Pride: Humility 1903

II. Riches and Sex

- a) Riches and Godliness 1908
- b) Further Warnings about Riches 1913
- c) Sexual Sin 1918
- d) Prohibited Forms of Sex 1922
- e) Epilogue: Be Wary 1927

I. Pride

Pride is one of the greatest dangers to one's life as a believer, yet it is also one of the most subtle. Pride has an adverse effect on both one's relationship with God and one's relationships with others. The opposite to pride is humility, which correspondingly is very much a key factor in living an ongoing and effective Christian life.

a) Pride in Thought

Subsections

- Do not be proud or conceited
- Do not be arrogant
- Do not be haughty . . .
- . . . Do not think you are better than others
- Do not be wise in your own eyes . . .
- . . . Seeing yourself as wise is associated with foolishness
- Do not be self-righteous . . .
- . . . Self-righteousness causes one to overlook sin
- Do not embrace glory from people – particularly in preference to glory from God
- Note: Pride can easily stem from riches and power

Do not be proud or conceited

See also:

- 1Sam 2:3 ↕; 1Sam 2:3 ↕; Prov 8:13 ↕; Prov 21:24 ↕; 2Tim 3:1-2 ↕

To be conceited is to be vain, having an excessively high opinion of yourself.

Jer 13:15 Hear and give ear; *be not proud*, for the LORD has spoken. 📖

Rom 11:20b *So do not become proud*, but fear. 📖

Gal 5:26 *Let us not become conceited*, provoking one another, envying one another. 📖

Phil 2:3 *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit*, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 📖

Rom 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you *not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* 📖

The phrase "measure of faith" is commonly understood to refer to the amount of faith one has (in God). Some think it refers more specifically to our faith as applied to serving others, and especially to the spiritual gifts we have been given (cf. vv. 6-8). Others take it to refer to the Christian faith. Irrespective of which is correct, Paul may be implying that the fact that this "measure of faith" has been given to us by God – rather than coming from ourselves – is one reason as to why we should think soberly or realistically of ourselves.

1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and *pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.* 📖

Ps 131:1 *O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.* 📖

In the first two clauses David speaks of not being proud. In the second part of the verse, he appears to be speaking of not aspiring to accomplish distinguished achievements (cf. CEV) and/or mastering subjects requiring great intellect (cf. GNT). To desire such things for the sake of status is indicative of pride.

Isa 16:6 *We have heard of the pride of Moab— how proud he is!— of his arrogance, his pride, and his insolence; in his idle boasting he is not right.* 📖

Ezek 16:49 *Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.* 📖

Do not be arrogant

See also:

- Isa 16:6 ↑
- Ps 101:5 ↕

1Sam 2:3 *Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.* 📖

Prov 8:13 The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. *Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.* 📖

The speaker is Wisdom personified. In speaking of hating evil and then immediately of hating pride and arrogance, the



verse implies that pride and arrogance are in fact evil – and thus should be hated and spurned.

Prov 16:5 *Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished.* 📖

Prov 21:24 *“Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.* 📖

Those who are arrogant typically scoff at others.

Rom 11:17-21 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root^a of the olive tree, ¹⁸*do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.* ¹⁹*Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”* ²⁰*That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear.* ²¹*For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.* 📖

^a Greek *root of richness*; some manuscripts *richness*

Here Paul warns his Gentile readers not to be arrogant and proud about their inclusion amongst God’s people while unbelieving Jews were “broken off”. In v. 12 Paul warns that we should not be proud about our position in Christ, as it is dependent on us continuing in faith rather than anything of ourselves. Rather than being proud and arrogant we should fear the consequences of not continuing in faith.

1Cor 13:4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; *it is not arrogant* ... 📖

2Tim 3:1-2 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ²*For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ...* 📖

✦ **Paul’s disdain for arrogance amongst the Corinthians:**

1Cor 4:18-20 *Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.* ¹⁹*But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power.* ²⁰*For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.* 📖

Do not be haughty . . .

To be “haughty” is to be arrogant and disdainful, viewing oneself as superior.

Rom 12:16a Live in harmony with one another. *Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.*^b 📖

^b Or *give yourselves to humble tasks*

1Tim 6:17 *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.* 📖

Ps 101:5 *Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.* 📖

Note that it is David speaking, as king. He would not tolerate people who were haughty and proud.

Prov 6:16-17 *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ...* 📖

Isa 3:16-17 *The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet, ¹⁷therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts.* 📖

The women were walking along “with outstretched necks” – i.e. “with their noses in the air” (GNT, NIV, NLT) – indicative of them seeing themselves as above others.

. . . Do not think you are better than others

Deut 17:19-20 And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ²⁰*that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.* 📖

Verse 20a is saying that the king “should not think he is better than his fellow Israelites” (NCV™; cf. CEV, GNT, NIV).

1Sam 18:18 *And David said to Saul, “Who am I, and who are my relatives, my father’s clan in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?”* 📖

David provides a good example of not thinking oneself to be better than others – as does Daniel in Daniel 2:30 below.



Isa 65:5 ... [There are those] *who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you." These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.* 

Here God is speaking against obstinate Israelites, who self-righteously considered themselves above others.

Dan 2:30 But as for me, *this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.* 

Luke 18:9-14 *He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:* ¹⁰*"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^c thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* 

^c Or *standing, prayed to himself*

1Cor 4:7 *For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?* 

Any notable attributes or talents that we might have are all ultimately gifts from God – not from ourselves. Thus we have no reason to think of ourselves as “better than others” (NCV™; cf. AMP, GNT, NIV, NLT) nor boast.

Gal 6:4-5 *But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load.* 

In v. 4 Paul is saying that we should evaluate our own actions without making comparisons with others – as it is for our own actions that we are responsible (v. 5). Paul may well have in mind the making of such comparisons in the hope of seeing oneself as better than others (cf. AMP, CEV). Note that the use of “boast” likely has in view “personal satisfaction” (NLT) rather than sinful pride.

‡ **To think you are better than you are, is just deceiving yourself:**

Gal 6:3 *For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* 

Groundless conceit appears to be in view. If you think you are important when you are not, you are just kidding yourself. The implication may be that no one should think themselves important.

Do not be wise in your own eyes . . .

Rom 12:16 *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.^d Never be wise in your own sight.* 

^d Or *give yourselves to humble tasks*

Prov 3:5-7 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.* 

In conjunction with not thinking yourself to be wise (v. 7), do not consider your own understanding – with your own perceptions and evaluations – to be sound enough to trust in (v. 5). Rather, trust in God.

Isa 5:21 *Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!* 

Isa 10:12-13 *When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he^e will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. ¹³For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones.* 

^e Hebrew *I*

Ezek 28:6-7 ... therefore thus says the Lord GOD: *Because you make your heart like the heart of a god, ⁷therefore, behold, I will bring foreigners upon you, the most ruthless of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendor.* 

The clause “you make your heart like the heart of a god” has the sense “you think you are as wise as a god” (GNT, NLT; cf. NCV, NIV).

Rom 11:25 *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers:^f a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* 

^f Or *brothers and sisters*



1Cor 4:10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but *you are wise in Christ*. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. 📖

The Corinthians considered themselves wise – in contrast to Paul's apparent foolishness – something which Paul scorns here with his use of irony.

... Seeing yourself as wise is associated with foolishness

Prov 26:12, 16 *Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.* 📖 ...¹⁶*The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.* 📖

To be wise in one's own eyes leads to an unrealistic trust in one's own judgment, making one very vulnerable to trouble. Hence there is more hope for a fool than for such a person (v. 12). Verse 16 is saying that lazy people see themselves as wiser than people who give considered answers. Such a view is obviously foolish.

Prov 28:11 *A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has understanding will find him out.* 📖

Having riches does not mean that one is wise – though such success may well lead a person to think themselves wise. The verse indicates that a rich man with such an attitude is not wise, even foolish.

Rom 1:22-23 *Claiming to be wise, they became fools,*²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 📖

This illustrates that thinking oneself wise can in fact lead to foolishness.

1Cor 3:18-20 Let no one deceive himself. *If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.*¹⁹*For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness,"*²⁰*and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."* 📖

In v. 18b, Paul is saying that one needs to stop seeing oneself as wise in accordance with this world's wisdom – in fact "become a fool" in the eyes of this world – in order to become wise by God's standards. For worldly wisdom is foolishness in God's eyes (v. 19).

2Cor 11:19-20 *For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves!*²⁰*For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.* 📖

Verse 19 suggests that pride in their own supposed wisdom had made new, exclusive teaching attractive to the Corinthians. But in fact foolishness was evident in them putting up with foolish false teachers (v. 19), even ones that exploited them (v. 20).

1Cor 8:1-2 Now concerning^g food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up.²*If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.* 📖

^g The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1

In v. 2 Paul may be meaning that anyone who considers themselves knowledgeable has an unrealistic understanding of human knowledge and its limitations (cf. v. 1) and so is really flawed in their knowledge.

‡ The wise man should not boast of his wisdom:

Jer 9:23 Thus says the LORD: "*Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ...*" 📖

Do not be self-righteous . . .

Deut 9:4, 6 *Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,'* whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. 📖 ...⁶*Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.* 📖

Here God warns the Israelites against seeing themselves as righteous, which was most definitely not the case (v. 6b).

Luke 18:9-14 *He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:*¹⁰*"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*¹¹*The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^h thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.*¹²*I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'*¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'¹⁴*I tell you, this man went*



down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

^h Or *standing, prayed to himself*

The Pharisee’s prayer was one of self-righteousness and self-justification. As such he failed to be justified before God – in contrast to the humble and contrite tax collector.

Matt 9:10-13 And as Jesusⁱ reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹²But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

ⁱ Greek *he*

The “righteous” (v. 13) appears to be used in an ironical sense, to denote the self-righteous – “those who think they are already good enough” (NLT; cf. Nlrv). To such Jesus could offer nothing, for only those who recognized themselves as “sick” (v. 12) – i.e. acknowledged they were sinners – could see the value of his call and the need to respond to it. The same is the case today.

Isa 65:5 ... [There are those] who say, “Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you.” These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.

As commented earlier, God is speaking against obstinate Israelites, who self-righteously considered themselves above others.

... Self-righteousness causes one to overlook sin

Prov 30:12 *There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.*

Jer 2:34-35 Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor; you did not find them breaking in. Yet in spite of all these things ³⁵you say, ‘I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me.’ Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, ‘I have not sinned.’

Claiming innocence in the face of one’s sin only worsens one’s culpability, making one even more liable to God’s judgment.

Rom 2:17-24 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹and if you

are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²²You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

Having the law and a special covenantal relationship with God had resulted in many Jews seeing themselves as righteous (vv. 17-20), when in fact their practices showed them to be far from this (vv. 21-22). Thus by their hypocrisy they had brought dishonor to God (vv. 23-24).

1Jn 1:8, 10 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ... ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Self-righteousness is behind such misguided thinking.

Prov 16:2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit.

This is speaking of people generally, rather than those who are particularly self-righteous. We naturally see things from our own perspective, tending to see what we do as right.

‡ Trusting in one’s righteousness can lead to sin:

Ezek 33:13 Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die.

When such a righteous man esteems his righteousness to the point of trusting in it, he then becomes self-righteous – which leads to evil and the consequent punishment.

Do not embrace glory from people – particularly in preference to glory from God

See also:

▪ ... *Seek to please God rather than people*, p. 1391

John 5:41, 44 I do not receive glory from people. ... ⁴⁴How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?



John 12:42-43 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. 📖

This illustrates that loving glory or praise from men more than from God (v. 43) leads to unfaithful actions (v. 42b).

1Thes 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 📖

Acts 10:25-26 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." 📖

In conjunction with not embracing such a gesture – one which was to his glory – Peter would not allow it to continue.

Acts 12:21-23 On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. ²²And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" ²³Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. 📖

Verse 23a implies that Herod embraced this glory from the people.

Luke 6:26 Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. 📖

When the vast majority of people speak well of someone, it is usually indicative of their life and beliefs being compatible with a worldly viewpoint. As such they basically live independently of God and his will, making them subject to his judgment. Thus, rather than embracing glory from people we should be very wary of it.

✦ A person is tested by the praise they receive:

Prov 27:21 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise. 📖

Note: Pride can easily stem from riches and power

Riches and power – as with other forms of success – can easily lead to pride.

Deut 8:12-14 ... lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted

up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ... 📖

Ezek 28:5, 17 ... by your great wisdom in your trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud in your wealth— 📖 ... ¹⁷Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you. 📖

This speaks of the King of Tyre (although some think that Satan is ultimately in view). In v. 17, "beauty" speaks of the splendor of the King and his possessions, stemming from his wealth (v. 5). Physical beauty is of course another thing that can lead to pride.

Prov 28:11 A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has understanding will find him out. 📖

Riches can lead a person to thinking themselves wise – which is indicative of pride.

2Chr 26:16 But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. 📖

This suggests that Uzziah's power was the main reason for his pride.

Ezek 30:6 Thus says the LORD: Those who support Egypt shall fall, and her proud might shall come down; from Migdol to Syene they shall fall within her by the sword, declares the Lord GOD. 📖

Ezek 31:3, 10 Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches and forest shade, and of towering height, its top among the clouds. ^j ... ¹⁰"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because it^k towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, ... 📖

^j Or its top went through the thick boughs; also verses 10, 14

^k Syriac, Vulgate; Hebrew you

Assyria's "height" (v. 10) – its great power and standing amongst the nations – resulted in its pride.

2Ki 14:10 You have indeed struck down Edom, and your heart has lifted you up. Be content with your glory, and stay at home, for why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you? 📖

Amaziah, king of Judah, had tasted military success against Edom, showing him to have some power. This led to his arrogance or pride – "your heart has lifted you up".



1Tim 3:6 *He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* 📖

This is speaking of credentials required for church overseers. Such success in quickly rising to a position of power can lead to conceit, even amongst God's people.

✦ Knowledge can lead to pride:

1Cor 8:1 Now concerning¹ food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. 📖

¹ The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians' letter; see 7:1

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Pride in Action: Self-Exaltation and Boasting

Subsections

- Do not exalt yourself . . .
- . . . Honor others, rather than yourself
- Do not dress lavishly for outward appearances
- Those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted
- Do not boast about yourself . . .
- . . . Only boast about God and Jesus Christ
- Boasting about oneself typically is bad
- Boasting is of no benefit and even destructive

Do not exalt yourself . . .

Prov 25:6 *Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, ...* 📖

Prov 30:32 *If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth.* 📖

The last clause appears to be saying to stop such talk.

Prov 12:23 *A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.* 📖

Wise people "don't make a show" (NLT) of what they know. To do so would be a form of self-exaltation.

Mark 12:38-40 And in his teaching he said, "*Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces*³⁹*and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts,*⁴⁰*who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.*" 📖

The self-exalting practices of vv. 38-39 also intimated great piety, like the lengthy public prayers (v. 40a). Presumably then the severity of the punishment (v. 40b) was in part due to their evil in taking widows' houses being exacerbated by such pretentiousness as well as their hypocritical praying.

Mark 10:35-37, 41-45 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."³⁶ And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"³⁷ And *they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."* 📖 ...⁴¹ *And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.*⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "*You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.*⁴³ *But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,*^m *and whoever would be first among you must be slaveⁿ of all.*⁴⁵ *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" 📖

^m Greek *diakonos*

ⁿ Greek *bondservant (doulos)*

James and John basically ask Jesus to promise that he will exalt them above all others throughout the afterlife (v. 37). Verse 41 demonstrates that such aspirations of or claims to greatness can incense others. In v. 42, Jesus may well be portraying rulers wrongly reveling in their exalted positions (cf. [Luke 2:25 ↓](#)), akin to actually exalting themselves. In vv. 43-44, Jesus teaches that any aspirations of greatness should in fact be channeled into humble service. (Extracts from the parallel passage in Luke follow, it having some subtle but notable differences.)

Luke 22:24-27 *A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.*²⁵ *And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors.*²⁶ *But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.*²⁷ *For who is*



the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. 

Luke 9:46-48 *An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.* ⁴⁷But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side ⁴⁸and said to them, *“Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.”* 

In speaking of welcoming such a child “in his name”, Jesus appears to be speaking of welcoming one as being of him – or possibly on his behalf (cf. NLT) or for his sake (cf. AMP). (These alternatives are to some extent interrelated anyway.) To welcome a child or a humble believer as such, is in effect to welcome Jesus himself. Thus Jesus rebukes the disciples’ desire to be the greatest by associating a little child, who had little or no status in the eyes of the world, with himself and ultimately God. Jesus draws the conclusion that the one who is the least amongst God’s people, unassuming and humble like a child, is in fact the greatest. This is reflected in Jesus’ own example (cf. [Mark 10:43-45](#) ↑; [Luke 2:26-27](#) ↑).

2Cor 10:12 Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with *some of those who are commending themselves*. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding. 

Paul appears to begin the verse with irony or sarcasm in disapproving of those “who exalt *and* furnish testimonials for themselves” (AMP).

2Cor 12:11 *I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing.* 

In the preceding couple of chapters, Paul had expounded his credentials in order to defend his credibility as an apostle. He acknowledges here that such self-exaltation was foolish, although the Corinthians had left him little option. He then is careful to qualify his status in a self-effacing manner, portraying himself as “a nobody” (AMP).

... Honor others, rather than yourself

See also:

- [Children are to honor and respect their parents . . .](#), p. 1711
- [Citizens should honor authorities](#), p. 1719

Ps 15:4 ... in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but *who honors those who fear the LORD*; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; ... 

We should honor others who fear God.

Rom 12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. *Outdo one another in showing honor.* 

Phil 2:3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility *count others more significant than yourselves.* 

We should consider others more significant and so “more important” (NASB, NCV) than ourselves. In doing so we honor others above ourselves in our thoughts, which is reflected in our words and deeds.

1Tim 5:3 *Honor widows* who are truly widows. 

1Pet 2:17 *Honor everyone.* Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. 

Prov 25:27 It is not good to eat much honey, *nor is it glorious to seek one’s own glory.*^o 

^o The meaning of the Hebrew line is uncertain

Matt 6:2 Thus, *when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.* 

‡ Punishment for exalting oneself against God:

Ezek 35:13-14 *And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it.* ¹⁴*Thus says the Lord GOD: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate.* 

Do not dress lavishly for outward appearances

To dress lavishly is in effect an attempt to exalt ourselves in the eyes of others. Correspondingly, it evidences vanity, which is also closely associated with pride.

1Pet 3:3-5 *Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—⁴but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.* ⁵*For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ...* 



Verse 5a illustrates that we should adorn ourselves by the way we act (cf. [1Tim 2:9](#) ↓) – as opposed to trying to promote ourselves by outward appearances.

1Tim 2:9-10 ...likewise also that *women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,* ¹⁰*but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.* 📖

Isa 3:16-24 *The LORD said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet,* ¹⁷*therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts.* ¹⁸*In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents;* ¹⁹*the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarves;* ²⁰*the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets;* ²¹*the signet rings and nose rings;* ²²*the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags;* ²³*the mirrors, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils.* ²⁴*Instead of perfume there will be rotteness; and instead of a belt, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a skirt of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty.* 📖

In “mincing along as they go” (v. 16) – taking “quick, short steps” (NirV®) – the women were probably trying to use ornaments “tinkling” on their feet or ankles (v. 16) to draw attention to themselves. This was consistent with their excessive emphasis on outward appearances, evidenced by the many things they wore or used for their appearance (vv. 18-24).

Luke 20:46 *Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ...* 📖

✦ Splendor can corrupt:

Ezek 28:17 *Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you.* 📖

The concept of splendor corrupting is relevant to all who would aspire to outward grandeur, even on a small scale.

Those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted

Luke 14:7-11 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸*“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him,* ⁹*and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place.* ¹⁰*But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you.* ¹¹*For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”* 📖

Luke 18:9-14 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰*“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.* ¹¹*The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.* ¹²*I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’* ¹³*But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’* ¹⁴*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”* 📖

Ⓟ Or standing, prayed to himself

Matt 23:11-12 *The greatest among you shall be your servant.* ¹²*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.* 📖

In v. 11 Jesus is saying that who willingly serves the others will be the greatest (cf. [Matt 18:4](#) ↓) – as affirmed by v. 12b.

Prov 25:6-7a *Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence or stand in the place of the great, for it is better to be told, “Come up here,” than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.* 📖

Ezek 21:25-26 *And you, O profane^a wicked one, prince of Israel, whose day has come, the time of your final punishment,* ²⁶*thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted.* 📖

^a Or slain; also verse 29



Job 5:11 ... *he sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.*

The term “lowly” most likely means “humble” (GNT, NCV) or “poor and humble” (NLT).

Luke 1:52 ... *he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ...*

The reference the mighty probably has primarily in view bad rulers (cf. [Ezek 21:25-26](#) ↑) who typically seek to further exalt themselves.

1Pet 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ...*

✦ **The humble are the greatest in God’s kingdom:**

Matt 18:4 *Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

In the parallel account in Luke, Jesus says, “For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.” (Luke 9:48)

Do not boast about yourself . . .

See also:

- [Jer 9:23](#) ↓
- *One’s righteous standing is no reason to boast, as it is not due to what one does – but to faith,* p. 645

Ps 75:2-4 At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity. ³When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. Selah ⁴*I say to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,’ and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up your horn; ...*

Particularly in view of God’s greatness (vv. 2-3), the boastful – and indeed all people – have no grounds to boast (v. 4).

Prov 27:1-2 *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. ²Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.*

1Cor 4:7 *For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

1Cor 9:16 *For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!*

Paul considered his wonderful work in preaching the gospel as no reason for him to boast, for it was not something he did on his own initiative – he had to do it; it was a duty given

him by God. Additionally, Paul may have had in view the fact that God enabled him to do the work.

1Cor 13:4 *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ...*

2Cor 12:5-6 *On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. ⁶Though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.*

Jude 1:16 *These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.*

1Ki 20:10-11 Ben-hadad sent to him and said, “The gods do so to me and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people who follow me.” ¹¹And the king of Israel answered, “Tell him, ‘Let not him who straps on his armor boast himself as he who takes it off.’”

The king of Israel rightly implied that one should be wary of boasting about doing something one is yet to accomplish.

Isa 10:12-13 *When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he^r will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. ¹³For he says: “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones.*

^r Hebrew I

. . . Only boast about God and Jesus Christ

Boasting about/in God involves boasting of God himself and what he has done or will do, including what he has done for/with oneself.

Ps 34:2 *My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.*

Ps 44:8 *In God we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to your name forever. Selah*

Jer 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD: “*Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness*



in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."



If one has to boast, one should boast about matters that really count, primarily knowledge of God and God's attributes and deeds. Note that v. 24 may be speaking of: boasting of knowing God, including knowing that he is the LORD who exercises such things (cf. NLT); or both boasting of knowing God and boasting of God being the LORD who exercises such things (cf. CEV).

1Cor 1:31 ... so that, as it is written, "*Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*"

Gal 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which^s the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

^s Or *through whom*

Rom 15:17-18 In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. ¹⁸For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ...

Here Paul is effectively "boasting" (NASB) of what Christ had accomplished, through him – rather than simply what he himself had done.

Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God^t and *glory in Christ Jesus* and put no confidence in the flesh—

^t Some manuscripts *God in spirit*

Other translations indicate that the idea of glorying in Christ is linked to: boasting in him (NLT, NRSV); taking pride in him (CEV, NCV); and rejoicing or exulting in him (GNT, NKJV).

Heb 3:6 ... but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and *our boasting in our hope.*^u

^u Some manuscripts insert *firm to the end*

In association with boasting about God and Jesus Christ, we should boast about the future hope that they have given us.

2Cor 11:30 *If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.*

In boasting of the things that showed his weaknesses (cf. **2Cor 12:9** ↓; **2Cor 12:5** ↑), Paul would make known how Jesus Christ had empowered him (cf. **2Cor 12:9** ↓) and likewise what Jesus Christ had done through him. In boasting as such, Paul was effectively boasting of Jesus Christ.

✦ Paul boasted about his weaknesses so that Christ's power would be with him:

2Cor 12:7-9 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,^v a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But *he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

^v Or *hears from me, even because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. So to keep me from becoming conceited*

In boasting of his weaknesses, Paul acknowledged them and was open to, even dependent on, Jesus Christ's empowerment. As per 11:30 immediately above, indirectly Paul was boasting about Jesus Christ.

Boasting about oneself typically is bad

James 4:16 As it is, *you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

Boasting is typically indicative of arrogance – and is evil.

1Cor 5:6 *Your boasting is not good.* Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

Ps 94:4 They pour out their arrogant words; *all the evildoers boast.*

Boasting is characteristic of evildoers (cf. **Ps 52:1** ↓).

Ps 52:1 *Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man?* The steadfast love of God endures all the day.

Boasting itself is bad enough, but even more so if it is boasting of evil.

Isa 16:6 We have heard of the pride of Moab— how proud he is!— of his arrogance, his pride, and his insolence; *in his idle boasting he is not right.*

Moab's boasts were baseless, false claims. Boasting has an inherent tendency to overstate facts and thus is often characterized by falsehood.

2Cor 11:17-18 *What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool.* ¹⁸Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast.

As noted earlier, in 2 Corinthians 10-12 Paul felt compelled to boast to try to prove his credentials as an apostle and to counter the boasts and claims of false apostles (cf. **2Cor 10:8**,



13-17 ↓; 2Cor 12:1 ↓). In doing so, Paul acknowledges that boasting is in itself foolish and merely in accordance with “human standards” (NRSV).

Ps 5:5 *The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.* 📖

The boastful are not permitted or able to stand before God; in his holiness God does not tolerate boastfulness. One could say that he “cannot stand the sight of” (GNT) boastful people.

✦ In “boasting” to defend his ministry, Paul did not exceed the truth:

2Cor 10:8, 13-17 *For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed.* 📖 ... ¹³*But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you.* ¹⁴*For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ.* ¹⁵*We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others.* But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, ¹⁶so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, *without boasting of work already done in another’s area of influence.* ¹⁷*Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”* 📖

In the latter part of v. 8, Paul may be meaning that in his boasting he would not be put to shame “for exceeding the truth” (AMP). In boasting to defend his ministry and credibility, Paul ensured he did not claim anything that was beyond the limits of what was true (vv. 13-15a). As such he did not want to boast about the work of others as if it were his own (vv. 15-16), but essentially only about what the Lord had done through him (v. 17).

Boasting is of no benefit and even destructive

Prov 25:14 *Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.* 📖

Jer 48:30 I know his insolence, declares the LORD; *his boasts are false, his deeds are false.* 📖

A number of other translations interpret the second part of the verse as indicating that the boasts “accomplish nothing” (NIV®, NLT; cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV).

2Cor 10:18 *For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.* 📖

Commending oneself, boasting about what one has done, counts for nothing. For God’s approval is only for those whom Jesus Christ commends.

2Cor 12:1 *I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.* 📖

In the first half of the verse, Paul would appear to have in mind that he needed to go on boasting – to counter false claims in his current circumstances (cf. 2Cor 11:17-18 ↑; 2Cor 10:8, 13-17 ↑) – though in itself there is nothing to be gained by boasting.

Prov 17:19 *Whoever loves transgression loves strife; he who makes his door high seeks destruction.* 📖

The second part of the verse figuratively implies that one who boasts is “asking for trouble” (GNT, NCV, cf. NLT). As well as inviting destruction itself (cf. Ps 12:3 ↓), boasting and the accompanying pride naturally tend to lead to trouble (which is probably what is primarily in view here).

Ps 12:3 *May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, ...* 📖

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Outcomes of Pride

See also:

- *Boasting is of no benefit and even destructive*, p. 1897
- *Not humbling yourself can bring dire consequences*, p. 1907

Subsections

- Pride is very detrimental to a relationship with God . . .
- . . . and acting presumptuously is linked with not obeying God’s commands
- Pride and arrogance lead to ill treatment of others
- Pride is associated with self-deception and flawed understanding
- Pride leads to one’s downfall – in contrast to humility
- God punishes the proud and arrogant . . .
- . . . God brings down and humbles the proud



Pride is very detrimental to a relationship with God . . .

See also:

- . . . *Self-righteousness causes one to overlook sin*, p. 1890

Deut 8:14 ... then *your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God*, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ...

Hos 13:6 ... but when they had grazed,^w they became full, they were filled, and *their heart was lifted up; therefore they forgot me*.

^w Hebrew *according to their pasture*

2Chr 26:16 But when he was strong, *he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God* and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.

Uzziah's pride led him to be unfaithful to God.

2Chr 32:24-25a In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and *he prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign.* ²⁵*But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud.*

Ps 10:4 *In the pride of his face^x the wicked does not seek him;*^y all his thoughts are, "There is no God."

^x Or *of his anger*

^y Or *the wicked says, "He will not call to account"*

In their pride, the wicked have no desire and see no need to seek God (v. 4). Note that the last clause appears to speak of the wicked thinking and/or telling themselves that there is no God.

Ps 36:1-2 Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart;^z *there is no fear of God before his eyes.* ²*For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.*

^z Some Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, Jerome (compare Septuagint); most Hebrew manuscripts *in my heart*

Note that flattering oneself is indicative of pride.

Ps 138:6 For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly, but *the haughty he knows from afar*.

Given what precedes it, the final phrase probably means that God distances himself from the proud (cf. NCV, NLT), "keeping an eye on them" from afar.

1Pet 5:5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*"

The quotation is from Proverbs 3:34, which is also quoted in James 4:6.

Prov 21:4 *Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp^a of the wicked, are sin.*

^a Or *the plowing*

Pride is actually sin – and evil (cf. **Mark 7:21-23** ↓) – and so detrimental to a relationship with God.

Mark 7:21-23 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, *pride, foolishness.* ²³*All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.*

1Cor 10:12 Therefore *let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*

Pride is not specifically referred to here, but Paul does appear to be warning against a self-confidence bordering on smugness or pride. Such an attitude makes one vulnerable to sin (cf. AMP, NLT).

. . . and acting presumptuously is linked with not obeying God's commands

As used in the following contexts, "presumption" or acting presumptuously involves arrogance, assuming that one's own perspective is right. As such it evidences pride.

Neh 9:16, 29 But they and our fathers *acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments.* ... ²⁹*And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules,* which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.

Deut 1:42-43 And the LORD said to me, 'Say to them, Do not go up or fight, for I am not in your midst, lest you be defeated before your enemies.'⁴³So I spoke to you, and you would not listen; but *you rebelled against the command of the LORD and presumptuously went up into the hill country.*



1Sam 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king. 

The two similes in the first statement may well be associating presumption with rebellion against God. The comparison with idolatry emphatically underlines the evilness of being presumptuous, here manifested in rejecting God's word.

Ps 119:21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones, who wander from your commandments. 

As with "presumption", "insolence" is akin to arrogance – and so indicative of pride.

Pride and arrogance lead to ill treatment of others

Ps 10:2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. 

Ps 31:18 Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt. 

Ps 56:2 ... my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly. 

Ps 73:6-8 Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. ⁷Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. ⁸They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. 

Ps 94:2-6 Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve! ³O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult? ⁴They pour out their arrogant words; all the evildoers boast. ⁵They crush your people, O LORD, and afflict your heritage. ⁶They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; ... 

Ps 119:51, 69, 78, 85, 122 The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law.  ... ⁶⁹The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;  ... ⁷⁸Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.  ... ⁸⁵The insolent have dug pitfalls for me; they do not live according to your law.  ... ¹²²Give your servant a pledge of good; let not the insolent oppress me. 

Ps 123:4 Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud. 

Ps 140:5 The arrogant have hidden a trap for me, and with cords they have spread a net;^b beside the way they have set snares for me. Selah 

^b Or they have spread cords as a net

Zeph 2:10 This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they taunted and boasted against the people of the LORD of hosts. 

This suggests that deriding others is symptomatic of pride.

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. 

↳ Insolence leads to strife:

Prov 13:10 By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom. 

Pride is associated with self-deception and flawed understanding

See also:

- ... Seeing yourself as wise is associated with foolishness, p. 1889

Self-deception and flawed understanding are inevitably outcomes of pride. Conversely they are often causes of or exacerbate pride. Note that flawed understanding includes both a lack of understanding and over-confidence in otherwise good understanding (or wisdom or knowledge).

Obad 1:3-4 The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock,^c in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" ⁴Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the LORD. 

^c Or Sela

Gal 6:3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 

Having an inflated opinion of oneself indicates pride, and means one has deceived oneself.

1Cor 3:18-20 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." 



Thinking oneself to be wise “by this world’s standards” (GNT, NLT cf. NCV, NIV) reflects pride. Ironically it is also indicative of being self-deceived (v. 18a), for worldly wisdom is in fact ultimately foolishness, as God knows and shows it to be (vv. 19-20).

1Cor 8:1-2 Now concerning^d food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” *This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.* ²*If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.* 

^d The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians’ letter; see 7:1

Verse 1b associates knowledge – that is apart from love – with pride, leading one to proudly think of his or her self as knowledgeable (v. 2a). Such knowledge is flawed as one can only wisely use knowledge in humility, with an awareness of the limitations of one’s knowledge. So anyone who has become puffed up or proud over their knowledge is in fact not as sound in knowledge and wise as they think. As such, their pride has led to self-deception.

2Cor 10:12 Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with *some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.* 

Paul’s adversaries were viewing their own conduct as the standard, and then taking pride in measuring up to it (cf. ZBC). Their resultant self-commendation reflected pride and reflected a lack of understanding and self-deception.

1Tim 6:3-4a If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound^e words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴*he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.* 

^e Or *healthy*

Isa 16:6 We have heard of *the pride of Moab— how proud he is!— of his arrogance, his pride, and his insolence; in his idle boasting he is not right.* 

Moab’s pride led her to make boasts that were baseless, false claims – quite possibly self-delusions rather than deliberate lies.

Isa 47:10 You felt secure in your wickedness, you said, “No one sees me”; *your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, “I am, and there is no one besides me.”* 

This is an example of over-confidence in one’s wisdom and knowledge misleading one into a proud, false opinion of oneself.

Jer 13:15-17 *Hear and give ear; be not proud, for the LORD has spoken.* ¹⁶*Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you look for light he turns it into gloom and makes it deep darkness.* ¹⁷*But if you will not listen, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock has been taken captive.* 

In v. 17 Jeremiah may well be speaking of the people being “too proud to listen” (CEV). Pride (vv. 15, 17) is a key reason why people do not pay attention and listen to God’s word – leaving them with a flawed understanding.

Jer 43:2 Azariah the son of Hoshai and Johanan the son of Kareah and *all the insolent men said to Jeremiah, “You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to live there,’* 

In their insolence the men failed to recognize and understand that Jeremiah had been sent by God.

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

See also:

- *Those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted*, p. 1894
- *Boasting is of no benefit and even destructive*, p. 1897

Prov 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.* 

2Chr 26:16 But when he was strong, *he grew proud, to his destruction.* For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. 

2Ki 14:10 You have indeed struck down Edom, and *your heart has lifted you up. Be content with your glory, and stay at home, for why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?* 

This warning was given by Jehoash king of Israel to Amaziah king of Judah. In his arrogance Amaziah would not withdraw from threatening Israel, resulting in his downfall (cf. vv. 11-14).

Prov 18:12 *Before destruction a man’s heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.* 

Prov 29:23 *One’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.* 



Prov 11:2 *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.* ㊦

Matt 23:12 *Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.* ㊦

Prov 22:4 *The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.*^f ㊦

^f Or *The reward for humility is the fear of the LORD, riches and honor and life*

✦ **One is better off being humble and poor than sharing loot as one of the proud:**

Prov 16:19 *It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.* ㊦

The term “lowly spirit” refers to “a humble spirit” (NASB, NKJV; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT). The future prospects of the proud – spoken of in the preceding verse (v. 18 ↑) – and the contrasting future prospects of the humble, affirm the validity of the verse’s assertion.

God punishes the proud and arrogant . . .

Psa 31:23 *Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.* ㊦

Prov 15:25 *The LORD tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow’s boundaries.* ㊦

Prov 16:5 *Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished.* ㊦

Isa 10:12 *When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he^g will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes.* ㊦

^g Hebrew *I*

Jer 13:9 *Thus says the LORD: Even so will I spoil the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.* ㊦

Jer 48:29, 38-39 *We have heard of the pride of Moab— he is very proud— of his loftiness, his pride, and his arrogance, and the haughtiness of his heart. ㊦ ... ³⁸On all the housetops of Moab and in the squares there is nothing but lamentation, for I have broken Moab like a vessel for which no one cares, declares the LORD. ³⁹How it is broken! How they wail! How*

Moab has turned his back in shame! So Moab has become a derision and a horror to all that are around him. ㊦

Jer 50:31-32 *Behold, I am against you, O proud one, declares the Lord GOD of hosts, for your day has come, the time when I will punish you. ³²The proud one shall stumble and fall, with none to raise him up, and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it will devour all that is around him.* ㊦

Ezek 30:6 *Thus says the LORD: Those who support Egypt shall fall, and her proud might shall come down; from Migdol to Syene they shall fall within her by the sword, declares the Lord GOD.* ㊦

Zeph 2:9-10 *Therefore, as I live,” declares the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Moab shall become like Sodom, and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, a land possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever. The remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation shall possess them.”¹⁰This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they taunted and boasted against the people of the LORD of hosts.* ㊦

Zeph 3:11 *On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.* ㊦

Mal 4:1 ^h “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when *all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.* ㊦

^h Ch 4:1-6 is ch 3:19-24 in the Hebrew

Luke 1:51 *He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ...* ㊦

God has scattered those whose pride is evidenced in the thoughts of their hearts.

Luke 11:43 *Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.* ㊦

In their pride the Pharisees loved the most important seats in the synagogues and being acknowledged in public. Such pride was a key factor in Jesus in effect condemning them.

1Tim 3:6 *He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* ㊦

This may well be intimating that the devil was conceited. Those who are likewise conceited will be punished as he was (cf. AMP) and/or will be (cf. CEV).



Rev 18:7-8 *As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.'* ⁸*For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.* ☞

... God brings down and humbles the proud

2Sam 22:28 You save a humble people, but *your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down.* ☞

Job 40:11-12 Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him. ¹²*Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand.* ☞

In underlining Job's unworthiness to question him, God is here pointing out things he does that are way beyond Job's capabilities – including humbling every proud person.

Isa 2:11-12, 17 *The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.* ¹²*For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;* ☞ ... ¹⁷*And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.* ☞

Isa 13:11 I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; *I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.* ☞

Isa 14:12-15 *How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!* ¹³*You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;* ⁱ ¹⁴*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'* ¹⁵*But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.* ☞

ⁱ Or in the remote parts of Zaphon

This is speaking of the king of Babylon, but like Ezekiel 28:17 below, some understand it to be also referring to Satan and what is often thought to be his fall from an originally exalted position (cf. [1Tim 3:6](#) ↑).

Isa 23:9 *The LORD of hosts has purposed it, to defile the pompous pride of all glory,^j to dishonor all the honored of the earth.* ☞

^j The Hebrew words for *glory* and *hosts* sound alike

The "pride of all glory" is speaking of all that is glorious in a worldly sense.

Isa 25:11 And he will spread out his hands in the midst of it as a swimmer spreads his hands out to swim, but *the LORD will lay low his pompous pride together with the skill^k of his hands.* ☞

^k Or in spite of the skill

Isa 26:5 *For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust.* ☞

Ezek 28:17 *Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you.* ☞

Dan 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and *those who walk in pride he is able to humble.* ☞

Dan 5:20-21 *But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.* ²¹*He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.* ☞

Obad 1:3-4 *The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock,¹ in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?"* ⁴*Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the LORD.* ☞

¹ Or Sela

⚡ God does not answer the proud:

Job 35:12 *There they [wicked people] cry out, but he does not answer, because of the pride of evil men.* ☞

Pray for persecuted Christians



d) Antithesis of Pride: Humility

See also:

- *Humble yourself before God over your sin – and its consequences*, p. 1844

Humility is the opposite of pride. It is a most critical attitude for maintaining one's guard against things that can cause one to fall – spiritually and otherwise. This is in contrast to pride which opens oneself up to many kinds of destructive dangers (as reflected in the previous section, *Outcomes of Pride*).

Subsections

- Be humble, particularly before God
- Humbly acknowledge your unworthiness before God and Jesus Christ
- Fast as a means of humbling yourself before God
- Be humble towards others
- Humility is important for obeying and serving God
- God cares for and blesses the humble
- Not humbling yourself can bring dire consequences

Be humble, particularly before God

See also:

- *... and humble yourself before God* [praying before God], p. 1218

Mic 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,^m and to *walk humbly with your God*? 

^mOr *steadfast love*

Dan 10:12 Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and *humbled yourself before your God*, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. 

This shows that humbling ourselves before God is important for prayer.

Isa 58:5 *Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?* 

One can infer from this that we are to constantly humble ourselves before God – not just in formal worship.

Isa 66:2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But *this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble* and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. 

The phrase “I will look” appears to have the sense “I will have regard for” (cf. AMP, CEV, NIV).

Zeph 2:3 *Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands;*ⁿ *seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.* 

ⁿ Or *who carry out his judgment*

This suggests that humility is vital in order to seek God.

1Pet 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God* so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ... 

The admonition to humble themselves “under the mighty hand of God” is probably a reference to either: God allowing or ordaining the sufferings the readers were experiencing (cf. 1:7; 4:12, 19; 5:10); or, as the final clause suggests, trusting in God’s mighty power and deliverance.

‡ **Those with child-like humility are the greatest in God’s kingdom:**

Matt 18:1-4 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ²And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴*Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* 

Jesus’ reference to greatness in the kingdom of heaven (v. 4) looks back to the disciples’ question in v. 1. He associates such greatness with child-like humility – without which one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (v. 3).

Humbly acknowledge your unworthiness before God and Jesus Christ

Gen 18:27 Abraham answered and said, “*Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.* 

Job 40:1-5 And the LORD said to Job: ²“Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.” ³*Then Job answered the LORD and said: “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. ⁵I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.”* 



Job's sense of unworthiness before God was no doubt accentuated by God confronting Job with his foolish, presumptuous questioning of him, the Almighty.

Job 33:6 *Behold, I am toward God as you are; I too was pinched off from a piece of clay.* 

Here Elihu speaks to Job – rather than directly to God – of their unworthiness before God, by pointing to their humble origins.

Mark 7:25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and *fell down at his feet.* 

Luke 5:8 But when Simon Peter saw it, *he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* 

On witnessing Jesus' miraculous, divine power (cf. vv. 4-7), Peter acknowledged his unworthiness before Jesus.

Luke 7:6-7 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for *I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.*⁷ *Therefore I did not presume to come to you.* But say the word, and let my servant be healed. 

Luke 7:37-38 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, *she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.* 

The woman's act not only demonstrated great love towards Jesus (cf. v. 47), it demonstrated her humility, even a sense of unworthiness, before him.

Luke 17:10 So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, *'We are unworthy servants;° we have only done what was our duty.'* 

° Greek *bondservants*

The reference is to our attitudes as servants of God or Jesus Christ (cf. *Humility is important for obeying and serving God*, below).

John 1:26-27 John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know,²⁷ *even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.*" 

John the Baptist is speaking in regard to Jesus (cf. **John 3:29-30** ↓).

Gen 32:10 *I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.* 

Here Jacob humbly acknowledges before God his unworthiness of God's great blessing. David similarly acknowledges his unworthiness of God's blessing – on a couple of occasions: "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?" (2Sam 7:18b); and, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly?" (1Chr 29:14a).

† **John humbly accepted that he needed to take a lesser role to Jesus:**

John 3:29-30 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰*He must increase, but I must decrease.*[†] 

† Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 36

John the Baptist likened his preparatory role to that of a friend attending a bridegroom (v. 29b). Now that Jesus had come, John humbly and realistically states that he needed to take a lesser role (v. 30).

Fast as a means of humbling yourself before God

Possibly fasting is seen as a means of humbling oneself as it heightens our sense of our own weakness and insufficiency, particularly as we come before God.

Ezra 8:21 Then *I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods.* 

Ps 35:13 But I, when they were sick— I wore sackcloth; *I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed^q on my chest.* 

^q Or *my prayer shall turn back*

David's fasting – along with his putting on sackcloth – is indicative of him humbling himself (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV) before God.

Ps 69:10 When *I wept and humbled^r my soul with fasting, it became my reproach.* 

^r Hebrew lacks *and humbled*



1Ki 21:27-29 And when Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh and *fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly*. ²⁸And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ²⁹“Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because *he has humbled himself before me*, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son’s days I will bring the disaster upon his house.”

Be humble towards others

See also:

- *Serve each other*, p. 1426

Eph 4:1-2 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²*with all humility* and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ...

In speaking of humility in association with characteristics that pertain to relating to people rather than to God (cf. **Col 3:12 ↓**; **1Pet 3:8 ↓**), it would appear that Paul has humility towards others in view.

Col 3:12 *Put on then*, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, *humility*, meekness, and patience, ...

1Pet 3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and *a humble mind*.

1Pet 5:5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another*, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Rom 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but *associate with the lowly*.^s Never be wise in your own sight.

^s Or *give yourselves to humble tasks*

Phil 2:3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but *in humility count others more significant than yourselves*.

Luke 22:25-27 And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But *I am among you as the one who serves*.”

In contrast to the heads of the Gentiles, leaders amongst Christians are to “become as the youngest” (v. 26a) – a key requirement of which is humility – and serve the others (vv. 26b-27).

Eph 3:8 To me, though *I am the very least of all the saints*, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ...

In 2 Corinthians 12:11, somewhat similarly Paul humbly tells his readers: “I am nothing.”

✚ Show courtesy toward all people:

Titus 3:2 ... to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to *show perfect courtesy toward all people*.

Humility is important for obeying and serving God

See also:

- **Luke 22:25-27 ↑**
- *Serve God with humility*, p. 1421
- ... *and acting presumptuously is linked with not obeying God’s commands*, p. 1898

Phil 2:5-8 *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus*,^t ⁶*who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*, ⁷*but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant*,^u *being born in the likeness of men*. ⁸*And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*.

^t Or *which was also in Christ Jesus*

^u Greek *bondservant*

Jesus Christ’s example illustrates the role of humility in obeying and serving God, pointing to the importance of humility for doing so.

Zeph 2:3 Seek the LORD, *all you humble of the land, who do his just commands*;^v *seek righteousness; seek humility*; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.

^v Or *who carry out his judgment*

The first part of the verse associates humility with obedience to God (cf. **Phil 2:8 ↑**); similarly the second associates it with righteousness.

2Chr 30:8, 10-11 Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but *yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God*, that his fierce anger may turn away from you.



... ¹⁰So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun, but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them. ¹¹However, *some men of Asher, of Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.*

Some of the people of the northern kingdom of Israel accepted the invitation of Hezekiah – the king of the southern kingdom of Judah – to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover (v. 11), in submission to God’s will and in accordance with serving God (v. 8).

Luke 17:7-10 “Will any one of you who has a servant^w plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table?’ ⁸Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly,^x and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink?’ ⁹Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰*So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants;^y we have only done what was our duty.’”*

^w Greek *bondservant*; also verse 9

^x Greek *gird yourself*

^y Greek *bondservants*

Even when completing tasks God or Jesus Christ have given us, rather than presume to be shown any favor or acknowledgement from them (vv. 7b, 9), we ought to be ready to continue serving them (v. 8) and acknowledge that we are merely unworthy servants (v. 10).

Acts 20:18b-19 You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹*serving the Lord with all humility* and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ...

God cares for and blesses the humble

See also:

- *Those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted*, p. 1894
- *Pride leads to one’s downfall – in contrast to humility*, p. 1900

Ps 18:27 For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down.

Ps 149:4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; *he adorns the humble with salvation.*

Ps 25:9 *He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.*

Ps 138:6 For though the LORD is high, *he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.*

This appears to point to God’s care of the humble (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Ps 147:6 *The LORD lifts up the humble;*^z he casts the wicked to the ground.

^z Or *afflicted*

Prov 22:4 *The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.*^a

^a Or *The reward for humility is the fear of the LORD, riches and honor and life*

Isa 57:15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: *“I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

Zeph 3:11-12 On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. ¹²*But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly.* They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, ...

This illustrates God’s mercy and favor to the humble.

Luke 1:52 ... he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and *exalted those of humble estate;* ...

1Pet 5:6 *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ...*

James 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but *gives grace to the humble.*”

Matt 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

The “poor in spirit” are those who in their spirit acknowledge that they are impoverished in spiritual matters. They know they are “spiritually poor” (GNT) with “great spiritual needs” (NCV™, cf. NLT) – an attitude reflecting at least a degree of humility.



‡ God was mindful of Mary's humble state in his unique blessing of her:

Luke 1:46-49 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 📖

Not humbling yourself can bring dire consequences

See also:

- *Those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted*, p. 1894
- *Pride leads to one's downfall – in contrast to humility*, p. 1900

Ex 10:3-5 So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me. ⁴For if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country, ⁵and they shall cover the face of the land, so that no one can see the land. And they shall eat what is left to you after the hail, and they shall eat every tree of yours that grows in the field, ... 📖

Here God threatens Pharaoh with a further judgment if he did not humble himself before God, bowing to his demand.

Jer 44:10-11 *They have not humbled themselves even to this day, nor have they feared, nor walked in my law and my statutes that I set before you and before your fathers. ¹¹"Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will set my face against you for harm, to cut off all Judah. 📖*

Dan 5:22-23, 30 And you his son,^b Belshazzar, *have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored. 📖 ... ³⁰That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 📖*

^b Or successor

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Riches and Sex

Riches and sex are both good in themselves; in fact they are blessings from God. However they both are easily and often misused, bringing ill effects for both ourselves and others. Indeed, few things have the capacity of riches or sex for both good and harm. So it should be no surprise that they feature so prominently in the Bible's teaching on our relationships with others and moreover our relationship with God.

a) Riches and Godliness

See also:

- *Do not trust in riches*, p. 1134
- *c) Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions*, p. 1589
- *d) Justice and the Needy (II): Insights*, p. 1593

Subsections

- Riches are a barrier to a relationship with God
- Riches draw one away from God . . .
- . . . Contrastingly, the poor are given prominence as recipients of the gospel and God's kingdom
- Desire for riches can lead to mistreatment of others
- So, do not love money . . .
- . . . Be content with what you have
- Note: Wealth ultimately comes from God

Riches are a barrier to a relationship with God

Matt 6:19-21, 24 *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^a destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [E] ... ²⁴"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*^b [E]

^a Or worm; also verse 20

^b Greek *mammon*, a Semitic word for money or possessions

Matt 13:22 *As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.* [E]

Similarly, Luke 8:14 says of such people in their response to God's word: "... they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life ..."

Mark 10:21-25 *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²²Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is^c to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." [E]*

^c Some manuscripts add *for those who trust in riches*

Note the reference to the rich in particular in the text note on v. 24 (cf. AMP).

Col 3:5 *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^d sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. [E]*

^d Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

Here "covetousness" is identified with "idolatry" because it involves devotion to earthly things rather than to God – illustrating that desire for riches or possessions is a barrier to a relationship with God.

Rev 3:17-18 *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. [E]*

The Laodiceans' material success – demonstrated notably by their gold, textile trade and a noted eye salve or ointment – had resulted in a self-reliance and limp spirituality. In v. 18 Jesus Christ figuratively exhorts them to instead obtain from him spiritual riches, provisions and insight.

Job 22:23-26 *If you return to the Almighty you will be built up; if you remove injustice far from your tents, ²⁴if you lay gold in the dust, and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed, ²⁵then the Almighty will be your gold and your*



precious silver. ²⁶*For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God.* 

This has parallels with the well-known words of Jesus above in Matthew 6:21, 24 and Mark 10:21. One's delight should be in God; he should be our most treasured possession (vv. 25-26). Riches have an innate tendency to captivate us and become our delight and priority, rather than God. As such we should take measures to counteract this, even getting rid of our riches (v. 24). Note that despite the wisdom of Eliphaz's word, they were inappropriately spoken to godly Job.

Isa 2:6-7 *For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners.* ⁷*Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots.* 

The inclusion of the people's massive stock of silver and gold amidst a listing of their sins (cf. vv. 6-8) implies that this had contributed to their poor spiritual condition.

Hos 12:7-8 A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress. ⁸Ephraim has said, *"Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin."* 

Verse 8 indicates either that the wealth of the people of Ephraim had deceived them into thinking that they were without sin in their labors – which was certainly not the case (v. 7) – or they thought that with their wealth they would be able to cover up their sin. Both possibilities illustrate that riches can be a barrier to godliness and thus to a relationship with God.

Riches draw one away from God . . .

Deut 8:11-14 Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹²*lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ...* 

Deut 32:15 *But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.* 

The first half of the verse portrays Israel as growing affluent.

Prov 30:8-9 Remove far from me falsehood and lying; *give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, ⁹lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?"* or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God. 

As reflected in Deuteronomy 8:11-14 above (cf. [Rev 3:17](#) ), riches can lead to self-reliance – instead of trusting in God – which in turn can lead to forgetting God (v. 9).

1Tim 6:9-10 *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.* ¹⁰*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.* 

Ezek 7:19 They cast their silver into the streets, and their gold is like an unclean thing. *Their silver and gold* are not able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. They cannot satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For *it was the stumbling block of their iniquity.* 

. . . Contrastingly, the poor are given prominence as recipients of the gospel and God's kingdom

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because *he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.* He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ... 

Luke 7:22 And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers^e are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, *the poor have good news preached to them.*" 

^e *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Luke 6:20-21 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*" ²¹*"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.*" 

Note that some commentators do not think that "poor" is here referring exclusively to those who are materially poor, claiming that it also has a spiritual application (cf. Matt 5:3). Such commentators may have a similar view of the above references from Luke.



James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brothers, *has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?*



It would appear that James is making a generalization, as obviously not all who are poor are rich in faith, and presumably some who are not poor will have a part in the kingdom.

James 1:9-11 *Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass^f he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.*

^f Or a wild flower

The term “exaltation” (v. 9) appears to refer to an exalted position in God’s kingdom, although many commentators think it refers to the exalted position of simply being in the kingdom. In contrast the rich brother is in a low position – “his humiliation” (v. 10) – because he and what he has will pass away. James’s application of “boast” (v. 9) to the rich possibly has in view that the rich should “boast” or take pride as being in a low or humble position itself is a good thing. Alternatively, James may be applying “boast” to the rich in an ironic sense, as one who is rich is in fact in a low position in or in relation to the kingdom, destined to fade away.

Luke 1:53 *... he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.*

Mary may be referring to God’s past deeds. But given the context, with the impending advent of the Messiah, this could refer to or encompass the poor being filled with the spiritual blessings that God’s kingdom offers – in contrast to the rich being sent away from the kingdom, devoid of its blessings.

‡ God chooses the lowly:

1Cor 1:26-29 *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards,^g not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,^h so that no human being^h might boast in the presence of God.*

^g Greek *according to the flesh*

^h Greek *no flesh*

In v. 28 Paul expands on the previous verse, saying that God has chosen the lowly, the despised and those seen as nothing, to reduce to nothing the things that are important

in the eyes of the world. God does this so that no one can be in a position to boast before him (v. 29), with one’s standing before God having nothing to do with what one was previously.

Desire for riches can lead to mistreatment of others

See also:

▪ **1Tim 6:10** ↓

In addition to harming our relationship with God, a desire for riches can also lead us to mistreat other people.

Prov 18:23 *The poor use entreaties, but the rich answer roughly.*

Despite the poor’s pleas for mercy, the rich are often unmerciful in their pursuit of increased wealth.

James 2:6-7 *But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?*

Not all rich people do such things, but such things are normally done by rich people, or those desiring riches. Note that in v. 7 James may be speaking of these rich people slandering the name of Jesus indirectly through their mistreatment of his people (James’s readers), or in addition to this mistreatment.

2Pet 2:3 *And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*

Isa 5:8 *Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land.*

This condemns those who acquire assets – in particular property – to the detriment of others.

Acts 16:16-23 *As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates,*



they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” ²²The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. 

ⁱ Greek *bondservants*

The desire for riches of the slave girl’s owners led them to exploit her (v. 16). Additionally, when they lost this source of riches, their desire for riches led them to vindictively take vengeance on Paul and Silas (vv. 19-23).

Acts 19:24-29 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.” ²⁸When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s companions in travel. 

So, do not love money . . .

See also:

- *Do not covet*, p. 1562
- *Do not be greedy*, p. 1561

Heb 13:5a *Keep your life free from love of money ...* 

Ps 62:10 Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; *if riches increase, set not your heart on them.* 

1Tim 3:2-3 Therefore an overseer^j must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^k sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, *not a lover of money.* 

^j Or *bishop*; Greek *episkopos*; a similar term occurs in verse 1

^k Or *a man of one woman*; also verse 12

1Tim 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. 

Ecc 5:10 *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.* 

The final clause refers to the uselessness or emptiness of loving money, a desire that can never be satisfied.

Luke 16:14-15 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For *what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.* 

The final statement may refer to or be inclusive of money and the love of it (v. 14a), although Jesus may primarily be speaking of the Pharisees’ pretentious public image (v. 15a).

Prov 23:4 *Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.* 

This is a warning against wearing ourselves out trying to get rich (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV). Such “toil” is indicative of a love of money, and is unwise.

Prov 28:20, 22 A faithful man will abound with blessings, but *whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.*  ... ²²*A stingy man¹ hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty will come upon him.* 

¹ Hebrew *A man whose eye is evil*

The punishment in view in v. 20 may well be punishment for dishonesty, a constant temptation for “whoever hastens to be rich”.

. . . Be content with what you have

Heb 13:5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” 

1Tim 6:6-8 Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and^m we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 

^mGreek *for*; some manuscripts insert [it is] *certain* [that]



Luke 3:14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and *be content with your wages.*” 

Phil 4:11-13 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for *I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.* ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. *In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.* ¹³*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* 

A number of commentators point out that the word translated as “content” can be understood as meaning “self-sufficient”. Paul had learned how to be self-sufficient and content in every circumstance, not being reliant on things of this world, through the strength that Jesus Christ gives (v. 13).

Eccl 4:6-8 *Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.* ⁷Again, I saw vanity under the sun: ⁸one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet *there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, “For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?” This also is vanity and an unhappy business.* 

Verse 6 is saying that it is better to have a small amount with “peace and quiet” (NirV®) – associated with being “content” (NCV™) – than having more from toil and futilely chasing an ever-increasing amount, as v. 8 elaborates. For those who endlessly toil after riches are “never satisfied” (v. 8) with what they gain (cf. [Eccl 5:10](#) ↑).

Eccl 6:9 *Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the appetite:* this also is vanity and a striving after wind. 

It is better to be content with and enjoy what you have – that which your eyes can see – rather than to crave what you do not have.

Prov 19:23 *The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied;* he will not be visited by harm. 

This indicates that fearing God is a key to being content.

✦ The psalmist’s contentment with God:

Ps 73:25-26 *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.* ²⁶*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strengthⁿ of my heart and my portion forever.* 

ⁿ Hebrew *rock*

The rhetorical question (v. 25a) implies that not only did the psalmist not have anyone nor anything else in heaven, he also did not long for such. In saying that God was his “portion

forever” (v. 26) the psalmist appears to be implying that God was all he ever needed (cf. GNT) or wanted.

Note: Wealth ultimately comes from God

See also:

- *God shows goodness to the wicked – even their prosperity ultimately comes from him*, p. 453
- *... along with physical and material blessings*, p. 1159
- *... In fact, all we have to give God has been given to us by him and ultimately belongs to him*, p. 1364
- *Prosperity* [blessings of wisdom], p. 1685

Bear in mind that the knowledge that wealth ultimately comes from God is no reason to keep it for oneself. Rather, one must use wealth wisely, remembering that: riches give one great potential for good (cf. [1Tim 6:18](#) ↓) – for God’s kingdom and helping others; and there are grave potential pitfalls associated with accumulating riches (as the other subsections in this and the following section indicate). Also note that the knowledge that wealth ultimately comes from God rather than our own efforts, should encourage us to not be focused on chasing wealth.

Deut 8:17-18 *Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’* ¹⁸*You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.* 

Note that the promise of material wealth for those who obeyed God and kept his covenant was a promise of the first covenant (v. 18b). Under the new covenant, spiritual and eternal blessings are stated as the rewards for God’s people.

1Sam 2:7 *The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts.* 

1Chr 29:12 *Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.* 

Prov 10:22 *The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.*^o 

^o Or *and toil adds nothing to it*

Wealth without trouble is a gift from God – as is wealth and the enjoyment of it (cf. [Eccl 5:19](#) ↓).

Eccl 5:19 *Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.* 



Gen 26:12-13 And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him,¹³ and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. 

This and the following verses do not actually say or necessarily imply that wealth in general ultimately comes from God. But as examples of God giving wealth, they illustrate and even allude to this.

2Chr 32:29 He [Hezekiah] likewise provided cities for himself, and flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great possessions. 

Job 1:10b You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 

Hos 2:8 And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. 

✦ God provides us with everything – including riches, which should be used for the good of others:

1Tim 6:17-19 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. 

The teaching in v. 18 that the rich should use their riches for the good of others, may have in view the fact that they only have such riches because of God's provision (v. 17b).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Further Warnings about Riches

See also:

- *Note: Pride can easily stem from riches and power*, p. 1891

Subsections

- Riches are not secure . . .
- . . . and we do not know what the future holds
- Life does not last and the dead cannot take their riches with them
- Hoarding riches will bring ill consequences in the afterlife
- Other shortcomings of riches
- Note: Advantages of riches, as opposed to poverty

Riches are not secure . . .

See also:

- *Ill-gotten gain does not last*, p. 1624

Prov 23:4-5 Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.⁵ When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven. 

Prov 27:24 ... for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations? 

The reference to the insecurity of “a crown” parallels and accentuates the aforementioned insecurity of riches.

Matt 6:19 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^p destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ... 

^p Or worm; also verse 20

1Tim 6:17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 

James 5:2-3a Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten.³ Your gold and silver have corroded ... 

Eccl 5:13-14 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt,¹⁴ and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. 



... and we do not know what the future holds

We do not know what the future holds, for ourselves or our riches.

Prov 27:1 *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.* 

James 4:13-14 *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—¹⁴yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.* 

Ecc 7:14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that *man may not find out anything that will be after him.* 

The thought appears to be that as our circumstances are of God, we cannot know what the future holds.

Ecc 8:7 For *he [man] does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be?* 

Ecclesiastes 10:14b is very similar: "... no man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him?"

Ecc 9:1, 11-12 But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. *Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him.*  ... ¹¹Again I saw that under the sun *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.* ¹²*For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.* 

The last statement of v. 1 appears to mean that no one knows whether they will experience "love or hate"; both are possible. This "love or hate" is presumably from other people, but some interpret it as referring to God's "favor" (cf. NlrV, NLT) or lack thereof. The phrase "his time" (v. 12a) refers to a time of disaster, not necessarily death.

Ecc 11:2, 6 Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for *you know not what disaster may happen on earth.*  ... ⁶In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for *you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.* 

Verse 6 and the following two verses are not so readily applicable to the insecurity and questionable worth of riches

in view of the uncertainty of the future. But they do further illustrate that one does not know what the future holds.

Acts 20:22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by^a the Spirit, *not knowing what will happen to me there, ...* 

^a Or *bound in*

Gen 27:2 He said, "Behold, I am old; *I do not know the day of my death.*" 

† One's endeavors contain risks:

Ecc 10:8-9 *He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall.* ⁹*He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them.* 

The meaning of these verses is debatable. One possibility – the reason for their inclusion here – is that they are referring to "the risks of life" (NLT), illustrating that rather than advancing one's circumstances, one's endeavors may in fact lead to harm. Other possibilities are that: they warn of the wisdom needed to avoid calamity; and, particularly v. 8, they speak of malicious activities bringing harm to the perpetrators (cf. AMP).

Life does not last and the dead cannot take their riches with them

See also:

- [James 4:13-14](#) 
- [People's lives are very brief](#), p. 225
- [Each person is destined to die . . .](#), p. 226
- [. . . All people die no matter who or what they are](#), p. 226

Ps 37:35-36 *I have seen a wicked, ruthless man, spreading himself like a green laurel tree.*^r ³⁶*But he passed away,*^s *and behold, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found.* 

^r The identity of this tree is uncertain

^s Or *But one passed by*

The second clause in v. 35 implies that it is a rich wicked man in view.

Ps 39:5-6 *Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah* ⁶*Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing^t they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!* 



^t Hebrew *Surely as a breath*

The “shadow” metaphor (v. 6a) appears to allude to one or more of the following aspects of human existence: brevity (v. 5); instability; and futility. Verse 6b teaches that working hard to heap up wealth is a vain exercise, as one’s wealth must be left behind to someone else when one dies.

Ps 49:10-14, 16-17 For he sees that *even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others.* ¹¹*Their graves are their homes forever;^u their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names.* ¹²*Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.* ¹³*This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts.^v* Selah ¹⁴*Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell.* ☞ ... ¹⁶*Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases.* ¹⁷*For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him.* ☞

^u Septuagint, Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Their inward thought was that their homes were forever*

^v Or *and of those after them who approve of their boasts*

The clause “they called lands by their own names” (v. 11b) refers to land that they had owned (“lands of their own” – GNT, cf. CEV, NLT) – i.e. part of their wealth. The context suggests that the rich are primarily in view in vv. 13-14 as well as in the other verses here.

Ecdl 2:18-21 *I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me,* ¹⁹*and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.* ²⁰*So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,* ²¹*because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.* ☞

A consequence of people not being able to take their riches with them when they die is that they must leave their riches for others who have not worked for them (v. 21) and who may even use them foolishly (v. 19). This situation renders the accumulation of riches an essentially meaningless exercise.

Ecdl 5:15 *As he came from his mother’s womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.* ☞

Luke 12:16-21 And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷and he thought to

himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ ²⁰But *God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’* ²¹*So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.*” ☞

Verse 21 indicates that the plight of the rich fool (v. 20) is applicable to all who store up things for themselves and are “not rich toward God” (v. 20). Not being rich “toward God” probably refers to not having spiritual riches – “not rich in God’s sight” (GNT, cf. CEV). Unlike one who has been “rich toward God”, such people will have no equivalent replacement for their riches in the afterlife.

1Cor 7:29-31 This is what I mean, brothers: *the appointed time has grown very short.* From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, ³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and *those who buy as though they had no goods,* ³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. *For the present form of this world is passing away.* ☞

The instruction that “those who buy” goods should treat them “as though they had no goods” (v. 30b) has partly in view the transience of life and of life as we know it (vv. 29b, 31b) – coupled with the fact that we cannot keep material possessions beyond this life.

1Tim 6:7 ... *for we brought nothing into the world, and^w we cannot take anything out of the world.* ☞

^w Greek *for*; some manuscripts insert [it is] *certain* [that]

James 1:10-11 ... and *the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass^x he will pass away.* ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. *So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.* ☞

^x Or *a wild flower*



Hoarding riches will bring ill consequences in the afterlife

See also:

▪ [Luke 12:16-21](#) ↑

Luke 6:24-25 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵“Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ☞

Luke 16:9-12 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth,^y so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. ¹⁰“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and *one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.* ¹¹*If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?* ¹²*And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?* ☞

^y Greek *mammon*, a Semitic word for money or possessions; also verse 11; rendered *money* in verse 13

One must use worldly wealth for the benefit of others (v. 9), as opposed to hoarding it. Those who have not used worldly wealth – comparatively “very little” (v. 10) – as they ought to have, will not be given the “true riches” (v. 11) of God’s kingdom – i.e. “much” (v. 10) wealth. Note that in v. 10, “unrighteous” (NASB) and “unjust” (NKJV) are alternative translations to “dishonest”.

Luke 16:19-26 *There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.* ²⁰And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side.^z *The rich man also died and was buried,* ²³*and in Hades, being in torment,* he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for *I am in anguish in this flame.*’ ²⁵*But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.*’ ²⁶*And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’* ☞

^z Greek *bosom*; also verse 23

As alluded to in other references in this subsection, the rich who ignore the poor face eternal condemnation – characterized by torment (vv. 23-24).

James 5:1-5 Come now, *you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.* ²Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver have corroded, and *their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.* ⁴Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵*You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* ☞

Note that v. 4 implies that this passage was primarily aimed at people who were wicked as well as rich (cf. v. 6). In v. 5, “a day of slaughter” denotes a day of God’s judgment – not necessarily the final judgment day, but applicable to it.

‡ **People who covet have no inheritance in God’s kingdom, and instead face God’s wrath:**

Eph 5:5-6 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or *who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.* ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for *because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* ☞

The phrase “these things” (v. 6) refers to the sins mentioned in v. 5 including covetousness, which is essentially being “greedy” (CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NRSV). The “wrath of God” (v. 6) may not primarily be referring to the eschatological wrath of God, but it is most probably at least inclusive of it.

Other shortcomings of riches

Prov 11:4 *Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.* ☞

The “day of wrath” possibly refers to death (cf. GNT, NCV), but may more specifically refer to a time of divine retribution (cf. [Zeph 1:18](#) ↓).

Prov 13:8 *The ransom of a man’s life is his wealth, but a poor man hears no threat.* ☞

Prov 15:16-17 *Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.* ¹⁷*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.* ☞



Spiritual things are better than wealth, particularly where the latter is accompanied by trouble. Possibly these verses also imply that wealth tends to create such troubles.

Prov 18:11 *A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination.* 

This hints at the shortcomings of riches for providing security. Rich people tend to trust in riches for security, seeing them as a wall that cannot be overcome. However this is a mistaken notion, merely what they imagine.

Prov 27:7 *One who is full loathes honey, but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.* 

Particularly in light of the latter part of the verse, the first part may well be implying that those who have plenty do not appreciate things.

Prov 28:6 *Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.* 

It is no good being rich if one's ways are crooked.

Prov 28:11 *A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has understanding will find him out.* 

This implies that having riches tends to lead a rich man to think that he is wise, but a discerning poor man can see him for what he really is.

Ecdl 7:12 *For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.* 

This indicates that while wisdom and money both provide significant protection, money is less able to preserve one's life.

Ecdl 5:11-13 *When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? ¹²Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but *the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.* ¹³There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: *riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, ...* *

Verse 12b appears to figuratively refer to the excessive wealth of the rich causing them worry. Verse 13 complements the thought, pointing out the irony that wealth sometimes brings harm to its owner.

Zeph 1:18 *Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD.* In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth. 

✦ **God will punish the rich who acquire assets to the detriment of others:**

Isa 5:8-10, 17 *Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. ⁹The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing: "Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. ¹⁰For ten acres^a of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah."^b  ... ¹⁷Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture, and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich.* 

^a Hebrew *ten yoke*, the area ten yoke of oxen can plow in a day

^b A *bath* was about 6 gallons or 22 liters; a *homer* was about 6 bushels or 220 liters; an *ephah* was about 3/5 bushel or 22 liters

Note: Advantages of riches, as opposed to poverty

Prov 10:15 *A rich man's wealth is his strong city; the poverty of the poor is their ruin.* 

Prov 14:20 *The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends.* 

Prov 19:4, 7 *Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend.  ... ⁷All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him! He pursues them with words, but does not have them.*^c 

^c The meaning of the Hebrew sentence is uncertain

Prov 22:7 *The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.* 

Ecdl 10:19 Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and *money answers everything.* 

There are many interpretations of the final clause. Quite possibly the verse is saying that just as a feast (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV) provides laughter and wine provides merriment, so money provides everything (cf. NLT) – or so people think (cf. NIV).

✦ **The equality of rich and poor before God:**

Prov 22:2 *The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the maker of them all.* 

Here the phrase "meet together" is akin to "have this in common" (GNT, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV).



Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Sexual Sin

Subsections

- Avoid sexual sin . . .
- . . . Be pure
- Sexual sin has ill consequences
- Sexual sin ultimately results in God's judgment
- Further insights on sexual sin
- Note: The sexually immoral who believe and repent are forgiven and granted righteousness

Avoid sexual sin . . .

Acts 15:28-29 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than *these requirements*: ²⁹*that you abstain* from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and *from sexual immorality*. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

Rom 13:13 *Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.*

1Cor 6:18a *Flee from sexual immorality.*

Eph 5:3 But *sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:*⁴ *sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

⁴ Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

The terms "impurity" (cf. **Eph 5:3** ↑) and "passion" appear to be primarily referring to such things associated with sexual immorality, with the Greek for "passion" also translated as "lust" (GNT, NIV, NLT).

1Thes 4:3-6 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification:*^e *that you abstain from sexual immorality;*⁴ *that each one of you*

know how to control his own body^f *in holiness and honor,*⁵ *not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;*⁶ *that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.*

^e Or *your holiness*

^f Or *how to take a wife for himself*; Greek *how to possess his own vessel*

Note that the first clause of v. 6 appears to be speaking against sexual sin with a brother's wife (cf. NLT).

Heb 12:16 ... [See to it] *that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.*

John 8:3, 11 The scribes and the Pharisees brought *a woman who had been caught in adultery*, and placing her in the midst ... ¹¹She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; *go, and from now on sin no more.*"

. . . Be pure

See also:

- **Eph 5:3** ↑; **Col 3:5** ↑
- *Be pure . . .*, p. 1869

Most of the following verses are not necessarily speaking of being pure in contrast in particular to being sexually immoral, but this is quite possibly at least partially in view in all of them.

2Cor 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, *let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body*⁸ *and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*

⁸ Greek *flesh*

1Tim 5:1-2, 22 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, *younger women as sisters, in all purity.* ... ²²Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; *keep yourself pure.*

Titus 2:5 ... *to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*

Heb 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and *let the marriage bed be undefiled*, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.



2Tim 2:22 *So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.* 

The “youthful lusts” (AMP, NASB, NKJV; cf. NLT) Paul refers to presumably include sexually immoral ones.

1Pet 1:22 *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ...* 

Ps 119:9 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.* 

✦ **Rather than being impure, God calls us to be holy:**

1Thes 4:7-8 *For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.* 

In v. 8, “disregards this” refers to the preceding commands to avoid sexual immorality (cf. [vv. 3-6](#) ).

Sexual sin has ill consequences

See also:

- [... Warnings against being enticed by an adulteress – which leads to ruin](#), p. 1698
- [Prostitution](#), p. 1924

1Cor 6:9-10 *Or do you not know that the unrighteous^h will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,ⁱ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* 

^h Or *wrongdoers*

ⁱ The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

Note that this verse and the following two references (Eph 5:5; Rev 2:14-15), also pertain to the following subsection, as missing out on involvement in God’s kingdom is also part of God’s judgment.

Eph 5:5 *For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.* 

Rev 22:14-15 *Blessed are those who wash their robes,^j so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.* 

^j Some manuscripts *do his commandments*

The sexually immoral, along with other ungodly people, will miss out on participating in the new Jerusalem of the afterlife.

1Cor 6:12 *“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be enslaved by anything.* 

Paul seems to be quoting some of the Corinthians who apparently – in order to justify their sexual sin – claimed that everything is permissible for Christians to do, presumably in reference to not being under the OT law. Paul argues that while in one sense this might be true, obviously it is not a good idea to do things that are harmful. For like all sin, sexual sin is not beneficial and it can master or have control over a person (cf. [2Pet 2:18-19](#) ; Eph 4:19).

1Cor 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin^k a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.* 

^k Or *Every sin*

In contrast to other sins, sexual sin involves the misuse and mistreatment of one’s own body. Moreover, Paul seems to imply that sexual sin adversely affects the body or one’s being in a deeper way than any other sin (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Rom 1:24, 27 *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,  ... ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.* 

Verse 24 shows that sexual sin is dishonoring. As such it is “shameful” (CEV, GNT, NLT) and so brings shame. The concept of such sin having intrinsic ill consequences is apparent in v. 27b, which appears to refer to some kind of spiritual and/or emotional harm.

2Pet 2:18-19 *For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves^l of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.* 

^l Greek *bondservants*



The false teachers promised that their immoral way would bring freedom, but ironically they themselves had become subject to and controlled by such depravity (v. 19; cf. [1Cor 6:12](#) ↑). In light of v. 18, it appears that sexual immorality was one thing primarily involved in both their promise of freedom and in the depravity that had mastered them.

Prov 6:25-26 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; ²⁶for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread,^m but a married womanⁿ hunts down a precious life.

^mOr (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate) *for a prostitute leaves a man with nothing but a loaf of bread*

ⁿHebrew *a man's wife*

Prov 31:1-3 The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him: ²What are you doing, my son?^o What are you doing, son of my womb? What are you doing, son of my vows? ³*Do not give your strength to women, your ways to those who destroy kings.*

^oHebrew *What, my son?*

Harems in particular may be in view in this warning given to a king. A life focused largely on sexual desire is a waste of one's energy and leads to ruin.

Sexual sin ultimately results in God's judgment

See also:

- [1Cor 6:9-10](#) ↑; [Eph 5:5](#) ↑; [Rev 22:14-15](#) ↑; [Rom 1:24](#) ↑
- *Do not commit adultery – which brings God's judgment* . . . , p. 1698

Col 3:5-6 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:^p *sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* ⁶*On account of these the wrath of God is coming.*^q

^pGreek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

^qSome manuscripts add *upon the sons of disobedience*

1Thes 4:3, 6 For this is the will of God, your sanctification:^r that you *abstain from sexual immorality*; ... ⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because *the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you.*

^rOr *your holiness*

Heb 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for *God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.*

2Pet 2:9-10a ... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^s and *to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,* ¹⁰*and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.*

^sOr *temptations*

Jude 1:6-7 *And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—* ⁷*just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,^t serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.*

^tGreek *other flesh*

Verse 6 may be referring to the actions of “the sons of God” in Genesis 6:1-4, who improperly took wives from the daughters of man.

Rev 21:8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, *the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.*

1Cor 10:8 *We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.*

Rev 2:20-23 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and *seducing my servants^u to practice sexual immorality* and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹*I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.* ²²*Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,* ²³*and I will strike her children dead.* And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

^uGreek *bondservants*

The term “her children” (v. 23) refers to those who followed this self-proclaimed prophetess Jezebel in practicing immorality – her “spiritual” children.

Further insights on sexual sin

1Cor 6:13b-17, 19-20 *The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* ¹⁴*And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.* ¹⁵*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them*



members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Or do you not know that he who is joined^v to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ☞ ... ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. ☞

^v Or *who holds fast* (compare Genesis 2:24 and Deuteronomy 10:20); also verse 17

The last pair of phrases in v. 13 appears to imply that our bodies are to be used for the benefit of the Lord, just as the Lord acts for the benefit of our bodies (and selves). The subsequent verse (v. 14) reinforces Christ’s and God’s concern for the body, with the reference to God resurrecting us.

Eph 4:19 *They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.* ☞

The phrase “have become callous” indicates that the consciences of these ungodly people had been so dulled that they no longer had any “feeling of shame” (GNT, NCV). This is generally characteristic of those who persistently indulge in sexual sin and long for more.

Gal 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ...* ☞

Sexual sin is a prominent product of the sinful nature, “the flesh”.

Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ☞

Sexual immorality is indeed “a stumbling block” and so is something that Christ’s servants ought to be wary of being led into.

Note: The sexually immoral who believe and repent are forgiven and granted righteousness

Matt 21:28-32 “What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax

collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him. ☞

Verse 32 indicates that like the first son (v. 29) the prostitutes (and the tax collectors) changed their minds and did “believe”. In so doing they chose “the way of righteousness” (v. 32a) and were entering the kingdom of God (v. 31b).

Luke 7:37-50 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.” ⁴¹“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” ⁴³Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” ⁴⁸And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among^w themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” ☞

^w Or to

In being described as “a sinner” (vv. 37, 39), the woman was probably a prostitute. In v. 47a, Jesus is saying that her great love (vv. 37-38) showed that her many sins had been forgiven – rather than saying that it was the reason for why they were forgiven; for it was her faith that saved her (v. 50). One can infer that the love she showed Jesus was an expression of her faith – and presumably of her repentance as well – which led to her forgiveness and salvation.



John 8:3-11 The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman who had been caught in adultery*, and placing her in the midst ⁴*they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.* ⁵*Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?"* ⁶*This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.* ⁷*And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."* ⁸*And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.* ⁹*But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.* ¹⁰*Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"* ¹¹*She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."*



Jesus' command to repent (v. 11b) implies that in not condemning the woman (v. 11a) – possibly implying that he forgave her – he required her to repent. Note that the Jewish authorities were hoping to be able to accuse Jesus of either: not upholding the OT law; or apparently – if he did endorse stoning – of being unmerciful and/or contravening the Romans who prohibited the Jews to impose such penalties. One can only guess what Jesus may have written on the ground (vv. 6, 8). In view of v. 7, possibly it was other commandments, to point out the hypocrisy of the woman's accusers in condemning her for one sin while being guilty themselves of breaking other ones – including ones punishable by death under the OT law.

1Cor 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous^x will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither *the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,*^y ¹⁰*nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* ¹¹*And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

^x Or *wrongdoers*

^y The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

Undoubtedly those spoken of had repented and come to faith – and thus received forgiveness and were justified (v. 11), and so made righteous.

Heb 11:31 *By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.*

James 2:25 *And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?*

By her action in the cause of God and his people (cf. Jos 2), the prostitute Rahab was justified. Above in Hebrews 11:31 her actions are deemed to be ones of faith, resulting in her escaping the judgment of those who "were disobedient". Thus her action can be understood as indicative of belief and repentance, for which she was seen as righteous and in effect forgiven.

Rev 2:20-22 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is *teaching and seducing my servants^z to practice sexual immorality* and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹*I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.* ²²*Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ...*

^z Greek *bondservants*

The implication is that if the false prophetess Jezebel had repented (v. 21) she would have avoided the judgment (v. 22a) – indicative of being forgiven – as was the case for those who had followed her ways (v. 22b).

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Prohibited Forms of Sex

See also:

- *Do not rape*, p. 1576
- *Do not commit adultery – which brings God's judgment . . .*, p. 1698
- *. . . Warnings against being enticed by an adulteress – which leads to ruin*, p. 1698

Subsections

- Lust
- Fornication
- Prostitution
- Homosexual acts



- Incest
- Bestiality

Lust

Job 31:1 *I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?*

Job speaks of making a covenant with his eyes, effectively himself, not to look lustfully at young woman.

Matt 5:27-29 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But *I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* ²⁹*If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.*

Gazing longingly at a woman with sexual desire, is committing adultery in one’s heart and in a spiritual sense. The instruction in v. 29 is not meant to be taken literally. It is hyperbole, emphasizing that one should do whatever is needed to get rid of sin, here lust in particular.

Col 3:5 *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:*^a *sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

^a Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*

Here and elsewhere in this subsection, “passion” refers to or at least encompasses “lust” (GNT, NIV, NLT).

1Thes 4:3-5 *For this is the will of God, your sanctification:*^b *that you abstain from sexual immorality;* ⁴*that each one of you know how to control his own body^c in holiness and honor,* ⁵*not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;* ...

^b Or *your holiness*

^c Or *how to take a wife for himself*; Greek *how to possess his own vessel*

1Pet 4:3 *For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.*

2Pet 2:9-10a ... then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,^d and *to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,* ¹⁰*and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.*

^d Or *temptations*

2Pet 2:18 For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by *sensual passions of the flesh* those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

This implies that lust is a product of sinful human nature.

1Jn 2:16 *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.*

The phrase “the desires of the flesh” encompasses – if not primarily referring to – sexual desire or lust. The subsequent phrase, “the desires of the eyes”, likely denotes coveting of worldly things in general. Being of the world rather than from God, such things are to be avoided.

Prov 6:25 *Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;* ...

✦ **It is better to marry rather than to burn with lust:**

1Cor 7:9 *But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

Obviously people should marry someone whom they are also compatible with, rather than simply someone for whom they “burn with passion”.

Fornication

See also:

- ... *Warnings against being enticed by an adulteress – which leads to ruin*, p. 1698

“Fornication” is used in this subheading as referring to sexual relations involving two unmarried people. Used in a more general sense it also encompasses adultery. (The latter is also a prohibited form of sex, as indicated in the above cross reference.)

Ex 22:16-17 *“If a man seduces a virgin^e who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price^f for her and make her his wife.* ¹⁷*If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins.*

^e **fx 22:16** Or *engagement present*; also verse 17

Two unmarried people having sexual relations required them to get married (cf. Deut 22:28-29) – unless the father refused. Even so the bride-price was a few years’ wages and so was a very substantial consequence. This indicates that God’s people are not free to have sexual relations outside of marriage.



Deut 22:20-21 But if the thing is true, that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman,²¹ then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because *she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father's house*. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Despite the use of "whoring", which may be hyperbole, most likely it is the act of sex before marriage which is in view (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). Note that the death penalty for prohibited sexual acts is not advocated by the NT (cf. *Note: The sexually immoral who believe and repent are forgiven and granted righteousness*, p. 1921). However its inclusion in OT references such as this does serve to underline the seriousness of such sins.

Matt 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

The Greek terms for "sexual immorality" and "the sexually immoral" in this and the following references are translated more specifically as "fornication" (or "fornications") and "fornicators" in the NASB and NRSV, suggesting that fornication is primarily in view. Moreover, the listing of "sexual immorality" in addition to "adultery" in this verse, strongly implies that sexual sin outside of marriage is in view here, i.e. fornication.

Acts 15:20 ... but should write to them to *abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality*, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

1Cor 6:9 Or do you not know that *the unrighteous^g will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral*, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^h ...

^g Or *wrongdoers*

^h The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

Heb 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for *God will judge the sexually immoral* and adulterous.

The reference to "the sexually immoral" alongside of adulterers points to the fact that "fornicators" (NASB, NKJV, NRSV) are in view.

✦ **Living together does not constitute a marriage:**

John 4:17-18 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and *the one you now have is not your husband*. What you have said is true."

The "one you now have" implies that the woman was living with a man (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Prostitution

Lev 19:29 Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, lest the land fall into prostitution and the land become full of depravity.

Deut 23:17-18 None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, and none of the sons of Israel shall be a cult prostitute.¹⁸ You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a dogⁱ into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

ⁱ Or *male prostitute*

Ezek 43:9 Now let them put away their whoring and the dead bodies of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

The reference appears to be to spiritual "prostitution" or unfaithfulness to God. But the imagery still serves to indicate the wrongness of prostitution.

1Cor 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

Prov 6:25-26 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;²⁶ for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread,^j but a married woman^k hunts down a precious life.

^j Or (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate) *for a prostitute leaves a man with nothing but a loaf of bread*

^k Hebrew *a man's wife*

If the rendering in the text note is to be preferred, v. 26a is saying that a prostitute can bring a man to poverty (cf. NIV, NLT; 29:3). As it is, it serves to highlight the gravity of the consequences of adultery.



Prov 23:26-28 My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe^l my ways. ²⁷For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress^m is a narrow well. ²⁸She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind.

^l Or *delight in*

^m Hebrew *a foreign woman*

Verse 28 appears to apply to both the prostitute and the wayward wife (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV).

Prov 29:3 He who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.

Hos 4:10-14 They shall eat, but not be satisfied; *they shall play the whore, but not multiply, because they have forsaken the LORD to cherish* ¹¹*whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding.* ¹²My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles. For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have left their God to play the whore. ¹³They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore *your daughters play the whore, and your brides commit adultery.* ¹⁴I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for *the men themselves go aside with prostitutes and sacrifice with cult prostitutes, and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.*

In v. 12 “a spirit of whoredom” probably is comparing the people with a prostitute, or those who use them, in their unfaithfulness to God – while also alluding to their desire for prostitutes (cf. CEV). Verse 14 may be implying that the men punished their daughters for turning to prostitution, punishment which God would take no part in, as the men themselves hypocritically used prostitutes.

Jer 13:26-27 *I myself will lift up your skirts over your face, and your shame will be seen.* ²⁷*I have seen your abominations, your adulteries and neighings, your lewd whorings, on the hills in the field. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will it be before you are made clean?*

Spiritual prostitution is again at least partly in view, with such imagery indicative of the ungodliness of prostitution. Note that physical prostitution was often involved in such spiritual prostitution as worshipping other gods.

Homosexual acts

Lev 18:22 *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.*

Lev 20:13 *If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.*

Under the old covenant, in Israel the law required the death penalty for certain prohibited acts, including adultery and other sexual sins (cf. vv. 10-16). The New Testament does not advocate for the death penalty, including for sexual sins (cf. John 8:1-11).

Rom 1:26-27 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

This points out that homosexual relations are unnatural. In v. 27, as noted earlier, “receiving in themselves the due penalty” implies that the committing of such acts carries its own natural consequences.

1Cor 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteousⁿ will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, *nor men who practice homosexuality*,^o ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers *will inherit the kingdom of God.*

ⁿ Or *wrongdoers*

^o The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

1Tim 1:9-10 ... understanding this, that *the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,* ¹⁰*the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers,*^p *liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound*^q *doctrine, ...*

^p That is, those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery

^q Or *healthy*

The passage implies that the practices listed in vv. 9b-10a are against the law (v. 9a) and sound doctrine (v. 10b) – and that the unrighteous terms in v. 9a apply to those who commit these practices.

✚ The forbidding of cross-dressing:

Deut 22:5 *A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.*



This prohibition may have had in view marginalizing God-ordained distinctions between males and females, or ungodly sexual practices that may involve or are associated with wearing clothing of the opposite sex.

Incest

Lev 18:6-13 *None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. I am the LORD. ⁷You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. ⁸You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness. ⁹You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether brought up in the family or in another home. ¹⁰You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter, for their nakedness is your own nakedness. ¹¹You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, brought up in your father's family, since she is your sister. ¹²You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's relative. ¹³You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's relative.* 

The expression “uncover the nakedness” is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Note that in view of the reference to one's mother in v. 7, v. 8 appears to refer to a stepmother (cf. **1Cor 5:1** ↓) or another wife of a father in a polygamous marriage. Clauses such as “it is your father's nakedness” (v. 8), refer to violating or disgracing a person.

Lev 18:14-18 *You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt. ¹⁵You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife, you shall not uncover her nakedness. ¹⁶You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness. ¹⁷You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, and you shall not take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness; they are relatives; it is depravity. ¹⁸And you shall not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive.* 

As is the case in a sense at least in vv. 7-8 above, these prohibitions speak of in-laws (cf. **vv. 7-8** ↑). Thus they go beyond basic incest laws regarding blood relatives, which are in part due to medical concerns regarding any offspring. They may partly have in view the vulnerability of women to sexual abuse when living in close proximity to other males in an extended family. Regarding the prohibition in v. 16 (cf. **Lev 20:21** ↓), some commentators claim that it applies even to

marrying a deceased brother's wife. If this is the case, the inheritance rights of children of the dead brother may be in view. A divorced or widowed woman and her blood relatives appear to be spoken of in v. 17.

Lev 20:17, 21 *If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness, and he shall bear his iniquity.*  ... ²¹*If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity.^r He has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.* 

^r Literally menstrual impurity

‡ Condemnation of sleeping with one's stepmother:

1Cor 5:1 It is actually reported that *there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.* 

A man's “father's wife” appears to refer to his “stepmother” (CEV, GNT).

Bestiality

Lev 18:23 *And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion.* 

Ex 22:19 *Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.* 

Lev 20:15-16 *If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. ¹⁶If a woman approaches any animal and lies with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.* 

Deut 27:21 *‘Cursed be anyone who lies with any kind of animal.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’* 

‡ Do not mate different kinds of animals:

Lev 19:19a *“You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians



e) Epilogue: Be Wary

See also:

- *Be careful not to turn away from God . . .*, p. 1800

Believers are to be wary of such things as the “pitfalls” spoken of in this chapter, and of any other sin or thing that would compromise our life of faith.

Subsections

- Be sober-minded
- Watch yourself . . .
- . . . Watch and guard yourself against sinning
- Examine and evaluate yourself
- Keep a clear conscience . . .
- . . . A good conscience is vital for governing ourselves in pleasing God
- Evaluate all things
- Do not be deceived, nor deceive yourself
- Beware: Sin is deceptive
- Warnings against complacency

Be sober-minded

See also:

- *Drunkenness and gluttony are unwise, causing one trouble . . .*, p. 1664
- . . . *Drunkenness should be avoided, particularly as it leads to ungodliness*, p. 1665

1Thes 5:6-8 So then *let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.* ⁷*For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.* ⁸*But since we belong to the day, let us be sober,* having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 

In being “sober” we are to be “calm, collected, and circumspect” (AMP), in contrast to being drunk (v. 7b).

2Tim 4:5 As for you, *always be sober-minded*, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 

1Pet 1:13 Therefore, *preparing your minds for action*,^s and *being sober-minded*, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 

^s Greek *girding up the loins of your mind*

In conjunction with being sober-minded, we ought to prepare our minds for action.

1Pet 4:7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore *be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers*. 

1Pet 5:8 *Be sober-minded; be watchful.* Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 

‡ Be alert:

Acts 20:31 Therefore *be alert*, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. 

Watch yourself . . .

1Tim 4:16 *Keep a close watch on yourself* and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. 

1Ki 2:4 . . . that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons *pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness* with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack^t a man on the throne of Israel.’ 

^t Hebrew *there shall not be cut off for you*

David’s descendants needed to watch how they lived so that they would stay faithful to God, as per 8:25 – “... if only your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.”

Acts 20:28 *Pay careful attention to yourselves* and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God,^u which he obtained with his own blood.^v 

^u Some manuscripts *of the Lord*

^v Or *with the blood of his Own*

1Cor 16:13 *Be watchful*, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. 

“Be watchful” is applicable to watching ourselves and also to watching out for spiritual threats, to both our own spiritual lives and those of others.

Deut 4:9 *Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.* Make them known to your children and your children’s children— 



The command to “keep your soul diligently” (cf. [Prov 4:23](#) ↓) is akin to “watch yourselves closely” (NIV®, NRSV).

Prov 4:23 *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.* 📖

“Watch over your heart with all diligence” (NASB), carefully guarding your thoughts (cf. CEV).

... Watch and guard yourself against sinning

See also:

- [Prov 4:23](#) ↑
- *Beware of spiritual dangers*, p. 1813
- *Renew your mind and take care of your “heart”*, p. 1858

Deut 4:15-16 Therefore *watch yourselves very carefully*. Since you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, ¹⁶*beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, ...* 📖

Ps 39:1 I said, “*I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence.*” 📖

Prov 16:17 *The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life.* 📖

Particularly in the light of the first half of the verse, the second half probably alludes to guarding one’s way so as not to follow evil. This is also the case in 22:5 below.

Prov 22:5 *Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.* 📖

One who guards themselves against wickedness will keep away from its traps and/or consequences.

Mal 2:15-16 Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?^w And what was the one God^x seeking?^y Godly offspring. So *guard yourselves^z in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.* ¹⁶“For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her,^a says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers^b his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So *guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.*” 📖

^w Hebrew *in it*

^x Hebrew *the one*

^y Or *And not one has done this who has a portion of the Spirit. And what was that one seeking?*

^z Or *So take care*; also verse 16

^a Hebrew *who hates and divorces*

^b Probable meaning (compare Septuagint and Deuteronomy 24:1-4); or “*The LORD, the God of Israel, says that he hates divorce, and him who covers*

To “guard yourselves in your spirit” (vv. 15b, 16b) involves watching and evaluating such things as one’s attitudes, motives and conscience – effectively one’s thoughts.

Matt 16:6, 11-12 Jesus said to them, “*Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*” 📖 ... ¹¹How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*” ¹²*Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.* 📖

Matt 26:41 *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.* The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 📖

Luke 12:15 And he said to them, “*Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*” 📖

Gal 6:1 Brothers,^c if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. *Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.* 📖

^c Or *Brothers and sisters*; also verse 18

2Jn 1:8 *Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we^d have worked for, but may win a full reward.* 📖

^d Some manuscripts *you*

Further to watching against sin, we should watch out that we do not fall away from God altogether, forfeiting our reward.

✦ **It is not easy to discern one’s own sin:**

Ps 19:12 *Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.* 📖

Examine and evaluate yourself

Ps 119:59 When *I think on my ways*, I turn my feet to your testimonies; ... 📖

Lam 3:40 *Let us test and examine our ways*, and return to the LORD! 📖

We should “examine and probe our ways” (NASB).

Hag 1:7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *Consider your ways.* 📖



Note that this verse is actually the beginning of a strong reprimand.

2Cor 13:5 *Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.* Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! 

Paul is quite possibly asking the Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they were living in accordance with the faith (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NRSV). Alternatively, some understand Paul to be speaking of them needing to assess if they were in fact genuine believers (cf. NlrV, NLT).

1Cor 11:27-29, 31 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸*Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.  ... ³¹*But if we judged^e ourselves truly, we would not be judged.* 

^e Or *discerned*

The references to “judgment” (v. 29) and being “judged” (v. 31b) are to the Lord’s disciplining of believers. The phrases “the body and blood of the Lord” (v. 27) and “the body” (v. 29) probably refer to Jesus’ sacrifice of himself – along with what this accomplished – but some would contend that his body the church is also or alternatively in view (cf. 10:16-17). To participate in the Lord’s Supper is to symbolically and spiritually participate in these things, and we must take part appropriately in recognition of this. Thus we need to examine our readiness for taking part and our approach in doing so, examining and judging ourselves (vv. 28, 31).

Ps 4:4 Be angry,^f and do not sin; *ponder in your own hearts on your beds,* and be silent. Selah 

^f Or *Be agitated*

The second part of the verse appears to be an exhortation (possibly aimed at David’s enemies) to examine or “search” oneself – quite possibly in particular in regard to the issues relating to the aforementioned anger. Note that the meaning of the first part of the verse is also open to debate (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB).

Gal 6:4-5 But *let each one test his own work,* and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵For each will have to bear his own load. 

We should evaluate our own actions without making comparisons with others, as it is for our own actions that we are responsible (v. 5).

Prov 20:27 *The spirit^g of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all his innermost parts.* 

^g Hebrew *breath*

This appears to be making an observation that our spirit – presumably in part with the light of our conscience – tends to examine our innermost character, attitudes and thoughts. It may also be implying that we should consciously seek to do this.

‡ **Ask God to examine you:**

Ps 139:23-24 *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!^h ²⁴And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!* 

^h Or *cares*

ⁱ Or *in the ancient way* (compare Jeremiah 6:16)

Here David asks God to examine him, presumably with a view to God enlightening him about his spiritual state. Similarly in Psalms 26:2 David prays, “Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind.”

Keep a clear conscience . . .

Acts 23:1 And looking intently at the council, Paul said, “Brothers, *I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.*” 

Acts 24:16 *So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.* 

Paul strove to keep his conscience clear not only before God but also before others, trying not to do anything wrong in the eyes of anyone.

1Tim 3:9 They must *hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.* 

2Tim 1:3 I thank *God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience,* as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 

1Pet 3:20-21 ... because^j they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as *an appeal to God for a good conscience,* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ... 

^j Or *when*



In being baptized one effectively makes “an appeal to God for a good conscience”. Subsequently one should live in keeping with a good conscience.

Heb 13:18 Pray for us, for *we are sure that we have a clear conscience*, desiring to act honorably in all things. 📖

... A good conscience is vital for governing ourselves in pleasing God

A good conscience is vital for governing ourselves in pleasing God for it helps us to evaluate our actions.

Rom 2:14-15 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while *their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ...* 📖

Though they did not have the law, the Gentiles’ consciences bore witness to its requirements and so they themselves could judge their own actions. Similarly, when we are unsure whether some action meets God’s approval, a clear conscience is a good guide.

Rom 9:1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I *am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit*— 📖

As one having the Holy Spirit, Paul’s conscience under the guidance of the Spirit confirmed to himself (cf. **2Cor 1:12** ↓) that he was not lying.

2Cor 1:12 For our boast is this, *the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity^k and godly sincerity*, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. 📖

^k Some manuscripts *holiness*

Their consciences confirmed to them that they had acted rightly.

1Tim 1:5-6, 18-19 The aim of our charge is *love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*. ⁶*Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion*, 📖 ... ¹⁸This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, ¹⁹*holding faith and a good conscience*. *By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, ...* 📖

In conjunction with a pure heart and along with a sincere faith, a good conscience produces love of others (v. 5), manifested in actions. Verses 6, 19 both indicate that a good

conscience is critical to maintaining one’s faith (cf. **1Tim 3:9** ↑).

1Pet 3:15-16 ... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶*having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame*. 📖

Peter implies that keeping a clear conscience helps ensure one’s behaviour is good, thus foiling the slander of opponents.

Evaluate all things

See also:

- *e) Guarding against False Teachers*, p. 1529

1Thes 5:20-21 Do not despise prophecies, ²¹but *test everything*; hold fast what is good. 📖

Lev 10:10-11 *You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean*, ¹¹and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses. 📖

The priests needed to be able to make such distinctions – closely linked here to their role of teaching the people the law (v. 11). Similarly Christians need to evaluate all things and distinguish between what is holy or acceptable to God and what is not.

Heb 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to *distinguish good from evil*. 📖

Job 34:2-4 Hear my words, you wise men, and give ear to me, you who know; ²*for the ear tests words as the palate tastes food*. ⁴*Let us choose what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good*. 📖

This points to the need to evaluate what people say (v. 3; cf. **1Cor 10:15** ↓; **1Cor 14:29** ↓) so as to discern and learn what is right and good (v. 4).

1Cor 10:15 I speak as to sensible people; *judge for yourselves what I say*. 📖

1Cor 14:29 Let two or three prophets speak, and *let the others weigh what is said*. 📖



Do not be deceived, nor deceive yourself

See also:

- ... *Do not be deceived or led astray by false teachers*, p. 1529

1Cor 6:9-10 Or do you not know that the unrighteous^l will not inherit the kingdom of God? *Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^m nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* 

^l Or *wrongdoers*

^mThe two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts

1Cor 15:33 *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*ⁿ 

ⁿ Probably from Menander's comedy *Thais*

Gal 6:7 *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.* 

James 1:16 *Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.* 

This appears to be referring to the incorrect notion that temptation originates from God (cf. v. 13), when in fact it comes from ourselves (cf. vv. 14-15). By contrast, from God come all "good and perfect" things (cf. v. 17).

1Jn 3:7 *Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.* 

1Cor 3:18-19 *Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness,"* 

Gal 6:3 *For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* 

1Jn 1:8 *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* 

James 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* 

James 1:26 *If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.* 

Jer 49:16 *The horror you inspire has deceived you, and the pride of your heart, you who live in the clefts of the rock,^o who hold the height of the hill. Though you make your nest as high as the eagle's, I will bring you down from there, declares the LORD.* 

^o Or *of Sela*

Beware: Sin is deceptive

See also:

- *Satan is deceitful* . . . , p. 182
- ... *Those who follow Satan likewise are deceitful*, p. 183

Heb 3:13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the *deceitfulness of sin.* 

Rom 7:11 For *sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me* and through it killed me. 

This appears to mean that the law allows sin the opportunity to deceive, as the law presents truth and – being contrary to the law – sin deceives us in regard to its truths.

Eph 4:22 ... to put off your old self,^p which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through *deceitful desires*, ... 

^p Greek *man*; also verse 24

One's "old self" has been infected by sin. Thus in keeping with sin's deceitfulness, one's "old self" (or sinful nature) has become "corrupted by its deceitful desires".

1Tim 2:14 ... and Adam was not deceived, but *the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.* 

Thus alludes to the deceitfulness of sin and in particular its chief instigator, Satan – "The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."" (Gen 3:13b)

‡ **Sin also clings:**

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and *sin which clings so closely*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ... 

Note that sin's deceitfulness may be partly in view, with the writer quite possibly having in mind how "deftly and cleverly" (AMP) sin operates.



Warnings against complacency

We are to avoid complacency in living our Christian life. One aspect of this is that we should avoid being complacent in regard to God's coming judgment, when we will receive his payment for our actions. A number of the passages below (including the extracts from the OT prophets) have this aspect in view, speaking of the complacency of the wayward or ungodly amongst God's people.

Prov 1:32 For the simple are killed by their turning away, and *the complacency of fools destroys them*; ...

Isa 32:9-11 Rise up, *you women who are at ease, hear my voice; you complacent daughters, give ear to my speech.* ¹⁰*In little more than a year you will shudder, you complacent women; for the grape harvest fails, the fruit harvest will not come.* ¹¹*Tremble, you women who are at ease, shudder, you complacent ones; strip, and make yourselves bare, and tie sackcloth around your waist.*

Presumably these women were ungodly. In their complacency they were unconcerned about their actions and oblivious to God's judgment that would befall them and their people.

Amos 6:1-7 *"Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes! ²Pass over to Calneh, and see, and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory, ³O you who put far away the day of disaster and bring near the seat of violence? ⁴"Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, ⁵who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music, ⁶who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph! ⁷Therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretch themselves out shall pass away."*

The meaning of v. 2 is debatable. One possibility is that Amos was using the cities in question as examples of cities that once had appeared secure but now were destroyed; as such they served as a warning to his people. In v. 3 Amos appears to indicate that his people had put off all thoughts of the coming day of judgment, while by their evil activities they effectively hastened its coming (cf. AMP, GNT, NIV, NLT).

Zeph 1:12 At that time *I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent,^a those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.'*

^a Hebrew *are thickening on the dregs* [of their wine]

1Cor 10:12 Therefore *let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.*

Heb 2:1-3a Therefore *we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.* ²*For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?*

As opposed to being complacent, we must pay careful attention to the gospel message (v. 1) and not be indifferent to it (v. 3a).

Heb 6:12 ... *so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

Do not become "spiritually dull and indifferent" (NLT).

✚ **Be very careful how you live:**

Eph 5:15-16 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*

The phrase "making the best use of the time" refers to making the best out of every situation we can for the cause of God's glory and his kingdom.

Pray for persecuted Christians



Hard Times

I. General

- a) Prologue: God’s People Still Have Hard Times 1934
- b) Mourn Loss 1938
- c) Keep in Mind God and His Word 1942
- d) Trust in God 1945
- e) Hope in God and Wait for Him 1950

II. Praying in Hard Times

- a) Express Your Anguish to God 1954
- b) Ask God for Help (I): General 1958
- c) Ask God for Help (II): Things to Appeal To 1965
- d) Praise and Rejoice in God 1970
- e) Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering and Cries 1975

I. General

Hard times are experienced by all Christians. This reality is reflected in the Bible, notably in Job and Psalms. But the Bible also shows that there are a number of practical and effective things that we can do when undergoing hard times.

Note that the next chapter looks at experiencing persecution because of one's faith. This current chapter deals with undergoing hard times in general – particularly when one is hurting or "down" – irrespective of whether such times are a result of one's faith or not. As such the responses discussed in this chapter, supplement or reinforce the responses to persecution that are given in the following chapter.

a) Prologue: God's People Still Have Hard Times

See also:

- *d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons*, p. 869
- *e) God Disciplines His People (II): Insights*, p. 875
- *a) God's People Face Persecution*, p. 1982

Subsections

- Trouble is characteristic of human life
- The wicked seek to oppress the righteous and the poor
- Examples of God's people undergoing hard times
- Examples of God's people even attributing hard times to God
- Note: The desire to contend with God over one's plight

Trouble is characteristic of human life

Job 5:7 ... but *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*.


Job 14:1 *Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble*.


Job asserts that people's lives are typically full of trouble.

Job 7:1 *Has not man a hard service on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired hand?*


Human life is hard and difficult.

Ps 90:10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet *their span^a is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone*, and we fly away.


^a Or *pride*

Ecc 2:23 *For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest*. This also is vanity.


As with the other verses in this subsection, this and 5:17 below are referring to the lives of people in general.

Ecc 5:17 *Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger*.


The first part of the verse appears to be speaking of living in darkness (cf. GNT), as explained by the second half of the verse. The reference seems to be to the lot of people in general, but some commentators interpret it to have in view those who hoard wealth (cf. v. 13).

Ecc 8:6 For there is a time and a way for everything, although *man's trouble^b lies heavy on him*.


^b Or *evil*

The second part of the verse indicates that people's lives are often hard (cf. CEV), weighed down by trouble (cf. NCV, NLT).

‡ The difficulties of old age:

Ecc 12:1-5 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before *the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";² before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain,³ in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows are dimmed,⁴ and the doors on the street are shut—when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low—⁵they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along,^c and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets—
*

^c Or *is a burden*

Verses 2-5 describe old age, mostly in metaphorical terms. Fading eyesight is referred to by: "the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened" (v. 2); and "those who look through the windows are dimmed" (v. 3). The final clause of v. 2 most likely speaks of more troubles looming ("the clouds") soon after other troubles ("the rain") have



diminished. The “keepers of the house” (v. 3) apparently refers to one’s arms. The “grinders” (v. 3) that cease and are few generally are thought to be teeth that are ground down and/or fall out. In v. 4, faltering speech and deafness seem to be largely in view. In v. 5, “the almond tree blossoms” apparently depicts gray hair. The reference to the grasshopper dragging itself along (v. 5) depicts how old age stiffens once nimble beings.

The wicked seek to oppress the righteous and the poor

See also:

- . . . *The needy are often mistreated by the wicked and made to suffer*, p. 952

Ps 37:14, 32 *The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright;* ☞ ... ³²*The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to put him to death.* ☞

Ps 64:2-4 Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers,³ who whet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows,⁴ *shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear.* ☞

Ps 119:51, 61, 69, 78, 95, 110 *The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law.* ☞ ... ⁶¹*Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law.* ☞ ... ⁶⁹*The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts;* ☞ ... ⁷⁸*Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.* ☞ ... ⁹⁵*The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, but I consider your testimonies.* ☞ ... ¹¹⁰*The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.* ☞

Prov 29:10 *Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright.*^d ☞

^d Or *but the upright seek his soul*

Amos 2:6 Thus says the LORD: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because *they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—* ☞

Amos 5:11-12 Therefore because *you trample on^e the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him*, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their

wine. ¹²For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins— *you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.* ☞

^e Or *you tax*

Job 20:19 *For he has crushed and abandoned the poor; he has seized a house that he did not build.* ☞

Ps 10:2 *In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.* ☞

Examples of God’s people undergoing hard times

See also:

- **Ps 119:51, 61, 69, 78, 95, 110** ↑
- *Tell God of your plight and how you feel . . .*, p. 1954

1Ki 19:3-4 Then *he* [Elijah] *was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life* and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And *he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”* ☞

Job 3:24-26 *For my sighing comes instead of^f my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water.* ²⁵*For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me.* ²⁶*I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes.* ☞

^f Or *like; Hebrew before*

Job 6:2-3, 8-9, 11 *Oh that my vexation were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances!*³ *For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea; therefore my words have been rash.* ☞ ... ⁸*“Oh that I might have my request, and that God would fulfill my hope,* ⁹*that it would please God to crush me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!* ☞ ... ¹¹*What is my strength, that I should wait? And what is my end, that I should be patient?* ☞

Job 7:3-6 ... *so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me.* ⁴*When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’ But the night is long, and I am full of tossing till the dawn.* ⁵*My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt; my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh.* ⁶*My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle and come to their end without hope.* ☞

Job 17:1-2, 7, 11 *My spirit is broken; my days are extinct; the graveyard is ready for me.* ²*Surely there are mockers about*



me, and my eye dwells on their provocation.  ... ⁷My eye has grown dim from vexation, and all my members are like a shadow.  ... ¹¹My days are past; my plans are broken off, the desires of my heart. 

In v. 7, “all my members” refers to body parts, perhaps limbs in particular (cf. GNT).

Job 19:17-20 *My breath is strange to my wife, and I am a stench to the children of my own mother. ¹⁸Even young children despise me; when I rise they talk against me. ¹⁹All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me. ²⁰My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.* 

Job 30:15-17, 26-31 *Terrors are turned upon me; my honor is pursued as by the wind, and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud. ¹⁶“And now my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction have taken hold of me. ¹⁷The night racks my bones, and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest.  ... ²⁶But when I hoped for good, evil came, and when I waited for light, darkness came. ²⁷My inward parts are in turmoil and never still; days of affliction come to meet me. ²⁸I go about darkened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. ²⁹I am a brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches. ³⁰My skin turns black and falls from me, and my bones burn with heat. ³¹My lyre is turned to mourning, and my pipe to the voice of those who weep.* 

In v. 29, by speaking of his camaraderie with such creatures, Job appears to speak of wailing – howling like a jackal and squealing dismally like an ostrich (cf. AMP).

Ps 6:6-7 *I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. ⁷My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes.* 

Ps 42:10 *As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”* 

Ps 57:4 *My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts— the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.* 

Ps 88:3 *For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol.* 

Jer 15:10 *Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.* 

Jer 20:14-18 *Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! ¹⁵Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, “A son is born to you,” making him very glad. ¹⁶Let that man be like the cities that the LORD overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, ¹⁷because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. ¹⁸Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?* 

✦ David endured many hardships:

Ps 132:1 *Remember, O LORD, in David’s favor, all the hardships he endured, ...* 

Examples of God’s people even attributing hard times to God

See also:

- [Job 7:3](#) ↑
- [God controls the good and bad things that happen to people](#), p. 290
- [However, hard times from God are not always due to sin](#), p. 873
- [Prayer despairingly speaking of God as even the source of one’s suffering](#), p. 1957

Ruth 1:13b, 20-21 *No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me.”  ... ²⁰She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi;^g call me Mara,^h for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. ²¹I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”* 

^g Naomi means pleasant

^h Mara means bitter

Naomi’s husband and two sons had died (cf. v. 5).

Job 6:4 *For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.* 

Job 16:7-14 *Surely now God has worn me out; he hasⁱ made desolate all my company. ⁸And he has shriveled me up, which is a witness against me, and my leanness has risen up against me; it testifies to my face. ⁹He has torn me in his wrath and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me; my adversary sharpens his eyes against me. ¹⁰Men have gaped at me with*



their mouth; they have struck me insolently on the cheek; they mass themselves together against me. ¹¹God gives me up to the ungodly and casts me into the hands of the wicked. ¹²I was at ease, and he broke me apart; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces; he set me up as his target; ¹³his archers surround me. He slashes open my kidneys and does not spare; he pours out my gall on the ground. ¹⁴He breaks me with breach upon breach; he runs upon me like a warrior. 

ⁱ Hebrew *you have*; also verse 8

Job 19:8-13, 21 *He has walled up my way, so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths. ⁹He has stripped from me my glory and taken the crown from my head. ¹⁰He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone, and my hope has he pulled up like a tree. ¹¹He has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary. ¹²His troops come on together; they have cast up their siege ramp¹ against me and encamp around my tent. ¹³“He has put my brothers far from me, and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me.  ... ²¹Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me!* 

^j Hebrew *their way*

As often the case with laments – as seen in other passages in this subsection – this includes figurative portrayals (e.g. v. 12) of what the sufferer understood as God’s action against him. In v. 21, the final clause speaks of God striking him.

Jer 45:3 You said, ‘Woe is me! For *the LORD has added sorrow to my pain*. I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.’ 

Lam 3:1-18 *I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath; ²he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; ³surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long. ⁴He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones; ⁵he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; ⁶he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago. ⁷He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy; ⁸though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer; ⁹he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked. ¹⁰He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; ¹¹he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate; ¹²he bent his bow and set me as a target for his arrow. ¹³He drove into my kidneys the arrows of his quiver; ¹⁴I have become the laughingstock of all peoples, the object of their taunts all day long. ¹⁵He has filled me with bitterness; he has sated me with wormwood. ¹⁶He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; ¹⁷my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness^k*

is; ¹⁸so I say, “My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD.” 

^k Hebrew *good*

The language of vv. 2-13 is largely metaphorical. Wormwood (v. 15) is a woody shrub with a bitter taste, sometimes figuratively used to portray sorrow.

Note: The desire to contend with God over one’s plight

Job 7:11, 17-21 *“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.  ... ¹⁷What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him, ¹⁸visit him every morning and test him every moment? ¹⁹How long will you not look away from me, nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit?²⁰If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you?²¹Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I shall lie in the earth; you will seek me, but I shall not be.”* 

“Therefore” (v. 11) appears to refer to the misery of Job’s predicament (cf. vv. 2-5) with the prospect of imminent death (cf. vv. 6-10) – and possibly also his apparent innocence (cf. 6:10, 24, 30). His circumstances being as such, he therefore would not keep silent but speak out and complain to God. In vv. 17-18 Job queries as to why a person, so insignificant in comparison to God, should be given so much attention that so much affliction be directed towards him – seemingly from God. In v. 21 Job asks why God does not forgive his sins and relent, apparently reasoning that his death – by which he would pay for his sin – was now imminent anyway.

Job 10:2 *I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me.* 

Job 13:3, 15-16 *But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God.  ... ¹⁵Though he slay me, I will hope in him;¹ yet I will argue my ways to his face. ¹⁶This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him.* 

¹ Or *Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope*

In v. 16, Job claims or hopes that by arguing his case before God, he will prove his innocence – and be saved – for the guilty godless would not dare come before God.

Job 13:22-23 *Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and you reply to me. ²³How many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin.* 



Job 21:4 As for me, *is my complaint against man?* Why should I not be impatient? 

Job indicates that his complaint is directed to God.

Job 23:3-7 *Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! ⁴I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. ⁵I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me. ⁶Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would pay attention to me. ⁷There an upright man could argue with him, and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.* 

Job 31:35-37 *Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary! ³⁶Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me as a crown; ³⁷I would give him an account of all my steps; like a prince I would approach him.* 

"Here is my signature" (v. 35) speaks of Job signing off on a written testimony to the truth of what he had said in his defense. In v. 36 Job appears to indicate that he would wear proudly any accusations for all to see, confident that it would be obvious to all that they were not true.

Job 5:8 *As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause, ...* 

Here Eliphaz says that if he was in Job's dreadful position he would appeal to God over it. His tone is more restrained than Job's in the above references.

✦ **Job's resignation over the uselessness of disputing with God:**

Job 9:3-4, 14-20 *If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times. ⁴He is wise in heart and mighty in strength —who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?—  ... ¹⁴How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him? ¹⁵Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.^m ¹⁶If I summoned him and he answered me, I would not believe that he was listening to my voice. ¹⁷For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause; ¹⁸he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness. ¹⁹If it is a contest of strength, behold, he is mighty! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?ⁿ ²⁰Though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse.* 

^mOr to my judge

ⁿ Compare Septuagint; Hebrew *me*

In v. 20 Job fears that whatever he said may in fact make him appear guilty, probably thinking either that he would be overwhelmed by God's presence or foiled by God's far superior intellect.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Mourn Loss

The actions spoken of in this section are important for dealing with grief. For they help us express it and "get it out of our system". Note that while the vast majority of the verses in this section refer to loss in accordance with the above heading – usually in regard to the death of one or more loved ones – a few of them speak of other troubles.

Subsections

- Mourn and weep over loss – particularly deaths
- Mourn and weep before God
- Openly express your sorrow and grief
- Fast in mourning

Mourn and weep over loss – particularly deaths

Gen 23:2 *And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.* 

Deut 34:7-8 *Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. ⁸And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.* 

2Sam 13:33, 36-37 *Now therefore let not my lord the king so take it to heart as to suppose that all the king's sons are dead, for Amnon alone is dead."  ... ³⁶And as soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king's sons came and lifted up their voice and wept. And the king also and all his servants wept very bitterly. ³⁷But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son day after day.* 



2Sam 18:33 ° And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

° Ch 19:1 in Hebrew

Job 16:16 My face is red with weeping, and on my eyelids is deep darkness, ...

Isa 16:7 Therefore let Moab wail for Moab, let everyone wail. Mourn, utterly stricken, for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth.

The last clause apparently refers to one of the good things lost in the destruction of the city.

Isa 22:4 Therefore I said: "Look away from me; let me weep bitter tears; do not labor to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people."

The phrase "the daughter of my people" (cf. [Jer 9:1 ↓](#)) appears to figuratively denote the people themselves and/or Jerusalem (cf. NCV).

Jer 9:1, 10 ¶ Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! ... ¹⁰"I will take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard; both the birds of the air and the beasts have fled and are gone.

¶ Ch 8:23 in Hebrew

In v. 10 Jeremiah speaks of weeping over the desolation of the land, due to the Babylonian conquest and the subsequent lack of people to tend the land.

Zec 12:10 And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

This is commonly understood to depict Israel's eventual turning to Jesus Christ in deep remorse over their prior response to him – in particular the instigation of his death by their ancestors – along with the repercussions. The setting is probably either immediately preceding or on Christ's return.

John 11:32-35 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also

weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."³⁵Jesus wept.

Jesus' emotion in v. 33b appears to be at least in part in response to the weeping of Mary and the other Jews, but may well also have been due to his friend's death, as appears to be the case in v. 35.

Acts 8:2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.

Matt 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The mourning referred to here is probably primarily the mourning of godly people over sin and its consequences, rather than mourning over loss or trouble. (For further comment see [Be sorrowful over your sin](#), p. 1843.) However, it would appear to still at least be applicable to the latter.

‡ The Jews wept in exile at their loss of Zion:

Ps 137:1 By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.

Mourn and weep before God

See also:

- [Tell God of your plight and how you feel . . .](#), p. 1954
- [. . . Pour out your heart to God](#), p. 1955

Josh 7:4-6 So about 3,000 men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, ⁵and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water. ⁶Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads.

The actions of Joshua and the elders (v. 6) signified mourning. Note that the ark of the LORD signified God's presence amongst the Israelites.

2Ki 19:1 As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD.

Wearing sackcloth is an expression of intense sorrow, as is tearing one's clothes (cf. [Josh 7:6 ↑](#)).

Judg 20:25-26 And Benjamin went against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed 18,000 men of the



people of Israel. All these were men who drew the sword. ²⁶Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

The ark was kept at Bethel at this time.

1Sam 1:10, 15 She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. ... ¹⁵But Hannah answered, “No, my lord [Eli], I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.

Job 16:20 My friends scorn me; my eye pours out tears to God, ...

Ps 39:12a “Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; hold not your peace at my tears!

Lam 3:49-50 My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, ⁵⁰until the LORD from heaven looks down and sees; ...

Isa 38:2-3 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, ³and said, “Please, O LORD, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

This suggests that Hezekiah wept before God, subsequent to praying to God.

Openly express your sorrow and grief

Note that the adjacent subsections also contain a number of verses illustrating open expression of sorrow and grief.

Num 14:1 Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night.

1Sam 30:3-4 And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. ⁴Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they had no more strength to weep.

2Sam 1:11, 17-19, 23-27 Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. ... ¹⁷And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son, ¹⁸and he said it^a should be taught to the people of Judah; behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar.^r He said: ¹⁹“Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places!

How the mighty have fallen! ... ²³“Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions. ²⁴“You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. ²⁵“How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! “Jonathan lies slain on your high places. ²⁶I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women. ²⁷“How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”

^a Septuagint; Hebrew *the Bow*, which may be the name of the lament’s tune

^r Or of the upright

A lament is a passionate and often poetic expression of grief. In vv. 19-27 David recites his lament as an open expression of his sorrow and grief. Moreover, he even ordered that the men of Judah be taught it (v. 18). In v. 26 David speaks of his deep love for Jonathan, who was like a brother to him. The “weapons” (v. 27b) possibly refers to Saul and Jonathan (cf. CEV text note), although the destruction of their actual weapons could be in view.

2Sam 13:19 And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.

Here Tamar mourns and weeps after being raped and further ill treated by her half brother, Amnon (who would later pay with his life).

2Sam 15:23, 30 And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness. ... ³⁰But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went.

The occasion was David’s evacuation from Jerusalem – and the loss of much of his authority – due to the conspiracy of his son Absalom.

Est 4:1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry.

Isa 15:2b-3 On every head is baldness; every beard is shorn; ³in the streets they wear sackcloth; on the housetops and in the squares everyone wails and melts in tears.



Isa 33:7 Behold, their heroes cry in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly. 

Matt 2:16-18 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸*“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”* 

✦ **Believers have reason to not grieve like others do, without any hope:**

1Thes 4:13-14 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴*For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* 

Fast in mourning

See also:

- *In petitioning God, express your anguish over consequences of your sin – even with fasting*, p. 1845

Judg 20:26 Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. 

2Sam 1:12 And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. 

Note that 1 Chronicles 10:12 says that the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead fasted seven days after Saul's death.

2Sam 3:33-35 And the king lamented for Abner, saying, “Should Abner die as a fool dies? ³⁴Your hands were not bound; your feet were not fettered; as one falls before the wicked you have fallen.” And all the people wept again over him. ³⁵Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was yet day. But David swore, saying, “God do so to me and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!” 

Ezra 10:6 Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, where *he spent the night*,^s *neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles.* 

^s Probable reading; Hebrew *where he went*

Est 4:3 And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, *there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting*, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes. 

This speaks of the proposed annihilation of all Jews, during the reign of the Persian King Xerxes.

Dan 10:2-3 In those days *I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks.* ³*I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.* 

It is not stated why Daniel mourned and fasted, but it most likely was due to either his people's current predicament or the implications of the vision he had received in v. 1.

Matt 9:15 And Jesus said to them, “*Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.*” 

While Jesus was with them there was no reason for the disciples to mourn and fast, but when he would be “taken away from them” – probably a reference to his death – then they would do so.

1Sam 20:34 And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and *ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David*, because his father had disgraced him. 

Zec 8:19 Thus says the LORD of hosts: *The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace.* 

These fasts were commemorative fasts, in which the Jews mourned particular events surrounding the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (cf. 2Ki 25).

✦ **Saul's fasting while blind:**

Acts 9:8-9 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹*And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.* 

Saul's fasting was probably more related to his recognition of his spiritual condition than his blindness.



Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Keep in Mind God and His Word

Subsections

- In hard times, remember God . . .
- . . . and remember what God has done
- Seek God in hard times
- Do not forget God's word
- Keep meditating on God's word and obeying it – living righteously
- Put your hope in God's word
- Take comfort in God's word and delight in it

In hard times, remember God . . .

See also:

- *Ensure you remember God*, p. 1787

The verses in this and the following subsection indicate that even in hard times we can draw hope and comfort from remembering: God himself, including his amazing capabilities and loving characteristics; and what he has done, including the things he has done for us (cf. comment on [Ps 7:7-15](#) ↓)

Ps 42:6b *My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you* from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. 📖

Jer 51:50 You who have escaped from the sword, go, do not stand still! *Remember the LORD from far away*, and let Jerusalem come into your mind: ... 📖

The exiles who had escaped the sword – either that of the Babylonians or their conquerors the Persians (cf. v. 49) – are told to leave Babylon (cf. vv. 6, 49) and return to Jerusalem. The call to “Remember the LORD in a distant land” (NIV®, NRSV) is applicable to believers of all generations living in difficult circumstances.

Jonah 2:7 *When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD*, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. 📖

Neh 4:14 And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “*Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome*, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.” 📖

. . . and remember what God has done

Deut 7:18 *...you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ...* 📖

Ps 77:7-15 “Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? ⁸Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? ⁹Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?” Selah ¹⁰*Then I said, “I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.”^t ¹¹I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. ¹²I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. ¹³Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? ¹⁴You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. ¹⁵You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah* 📖

^t Or *This is my grief: that the right hand of the Most High has changed*

The expression “the years of the right hand of the Most High” (v. 10) speaks of the years when God's power was clearly manifested on his people's behalf. In the face of present difficulties and God's apparent rejection and inactivity (vv. 7-9), the psalmist chooses to remember and meditate on God's wonderful deeds of the past (vv. 10-12, 15), by which he finds encouragement and a revitalized view of God (vv. 13-14).

Ps 143:3-6 For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead. ⁴Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. ⁵*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands. ⁶I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Selah* 📖

Remembering and meditating on what God has done in the past (v. 5), appears to prompt the psalmist to pray to God (v. 6).

‡ Additionally, remember who God is:

Isa 44:6-8, 21-22 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “*I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. ⁷Who is like me? Let him*



proclaim it.^u Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. ⁸Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.” ²¹Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. ²²I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you. ²³

^u Or *Who like me can proclaim it?*

“Remember “these things” (v. 21a) may primarily have in view the preceding discussions on who God is and his incomparableness (vv. 6-8) – as illustrated by God foretelling the future (vv. 7-8a) and the contrasting uselessness of idols (cf. vv. 9-20). As God’s servants, his people ought to remember who and how great God is. “Remember these things” could additionally be speaking of remembering that they are his servant/s (cf. GNT, NCV), made so by God (v. 21b), and that as his servants God would not forget them (v. 21b). It could also encompass what he had done for them in forgiving them and redeeming them (v. 22). In hard times – as at any time – it is important to remember all such things.

Seek God in hard times

See also:

- . . . *By punishment and discipline God causes his people to seek him again*, p. 870

Ps 27:7-8 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! ⁸You have said, “*Seek^v my face.*” My heart says to you, “*Your face, LORD, do I seek.*”^w

^v The command (*seek*) is addressed to more than one person

^w The meaning of the Hebrew verse is uncertain

To seek God’s face (cf. **2Chr 7:14** ↓) has been equated with seeking God’s favor, but it may well fundamentally refer to seeking his presence or fellowship – from which would follow his favor, involving such things as his protection.

Ps 77:2 *In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted.*

2Chr 7:13-14 When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and *pray and seek my face*

and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

This speaks of suffering God’s punishment because of sin, but the direction to seek God is very much applicable to all difficult circumstances.

2Chr 20:2-4 Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,^x from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar” (that is, Engedi). ³Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴And Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

^x One Hebrew manuscript; most Hebrew manuscripts Aram (Syria)

‡ **Asa’s failure to seek God when in need:**

2Chr 16:12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. *Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD*, but sought help from physicians.

Do not forget God’s word

See also:

- *Remember God’s word and commands*, p. 1789

Ps 119:61, 83, 93, 109, 141, 153 Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, *I do not forget your law.* ⁸³For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, *yet I have not forgotten your statutes.* ⁹³*I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.* ¹⁰⁹I hold my life in my hand continually, *but I do not forget your law.* ¹⁴¹I am small and despised, *yet I do not forget your precepts.* ¹⁵³Look on my affliction and deliver me, *for I do not forget your law.*

The psalmist’s suffering had taken its toll on him so much so that he likened himself to a wineskin hung over a fire (v. 83), which becomes shriveled and blackened. In v. 93b the psalmist appears to be speaking of the strength and meaning he found in God’s word during his affliction, which had effectively preserved his life. “I hold my life in my hand continually” (v. 109a) may be a reference to the psalmist putting his life in danger by remaining faithful to God’s law, refusing to forget it (v. 109b).

‡ **The psalmist longed for God’s precepts:**

Ps 119:40 *Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!*



In the midst of adversity, not only did the psalmist not forget God's word, he longed for God's commands. Possibly being able to obey God's commands is primarily in view (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT).

Keep meditating on God's word and obeying it – living righteously

See also:

- *Remember God's word and commands*, p. 1789
- *Persistently meditate on God's word and commands . . .*, p. 1790
- *. . . Keep God's word and commands in your heart and thoughts*, p. 1790

Ps 119:23, 51, 69, 78, 87, 95, 98, 157, 166 Even though princes sit plotting against me, *your servant will meditate on your statutes*. ... ⁵¹The insolent utterly deride me, *but I do not turn away from your law*. ... ⁶⁹The insolent smear me with lies, *but with my whole heart I keep your precepts*; ... ⁷⁸Let the insolent be put to shame, because they have wronged me with falsehood; *as for me, I will meditate on your precepts*. ... ⁸⁷They have almost made an end of me on earth, *but I have not forsaken your precepts*. ... ⁹⁵The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, *but I consider your testimonies*. ... ⁹⁸Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, *for it is ever with me*. ... ¹⁵⁷Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, *but I do not swerve from your testimonies*. ... ¹⁶⁶I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and *I do your commandments*.

Job 6:10 This would be my comfort; I would even exult^y in pain unsparing, for *I have not denied the words of the Holy One*.

^y The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Job has primarily in view his obedience to God's commands (cf. CEV), which he had not rejected (cf. NCV, NirV) amidst his great ordeal.

Ps 17:3, 5 *You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night, you have tested me, and you will find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress*. ... ⁵*My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped*.

Amidst the threat of enemies (cf. vv. 1-2, 9-12), David continued to hold to God's ways and not to sin.

Ps 37:34 Wait for the LORD and *keep his way*, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.

Job 4:5-6 But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed. ⁶*Is not your fear of God^z your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?*

^z Hebrew lacks *of God*

Living righteously does give reason for confidence and hope for one's future – although here Eliphaz was mistaken to believe that it necessarily meant freedom from one's suffering in this life (cf. v. 7).

‡ **Do not turn to evil in the midst of affliction:**

Job 36:21 *Take care; do not turn to iniquity, for this you have chosen rather than affliction*.

Elihu appears to be warning Job to not do this, rather than accusing him of already having done so. Note that 2 Chronicles 28:22 indicates that King Ahaz was guilty of this – “In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the LORD—this same King Ahaz.”

Put your hope in God's word

See also:

- *During hard times, put your hope in God*, p. 1950

Ps 119:43, 81, 114, 147 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for *my hope is in your rules*. ... ⁸¹My soul longs for your salvation; *I hope in your word*. ... ¹¹⁴You are my hiding place and my shield; *I hope in your word*. ... ¹⁴⁷I rise before dawn and cry for help; *I hope in your words*.

The references to hoping in God's word involve primarily having hope in the promises that God has made in his word (cf. v. 41 ↓; v. 50 ↓), to which the psalmist clung amidst adversity. Note that in v. 43a the psalmist appears to either call on God not to take his promises away from him, or to allow him to continue to speak God's word, propagating it amongst others.

Ps 130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and *in his word I hope*; ...

‡ **Trust in God's word:**

Ps 119:41-42 Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; ⁴²then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for *I trust in your word*.



Take comfort in God's word and delight in it

See also:

- *God's word encourages people*, p. 314

Ps 119:50, 52 *This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.* 📖 ... ⁵²*When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD.* 📖

In v. 50 the psalmist says that his comfort in suffering is God's promise which preserves or "revives" (NLT) his life, through the hope that it gives (cf. [vv. 43, 81, 114, 147](#) ↑).

Ps 119:70, 77, 92, 111, 143 ... their heart is unfeeling like fat, *but I delight in your law.* 📖 ... ⁷⁷*Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight.* 📖 ... ⁹²*If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.* 📖 ... ¹¹¹*Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.* 📖 ... ¹⁴³*Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight.* 📖

In v. 92 the psalmist asserts that he would have perished in his affliction if God's law had not "been the source of my joy" (GNT) and so "sustained me with joy" (NLT). The reason why God's word produced such joy may have primarily been because of its promises ([v. 50](#) ↑) and/or because the psalmist "found happiness in obeying" it (CEV). In regard to the latter, bear in mind that willingly obeying God's commands brings such things as contentment and meaning to one's life.

✦ **Even in hard times, God's word gives freedom:**

Ps 119:45 ... and *I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts.* 📖

As this was written in troubled times (cf. [v. 50](#) ↑; [vv. 77, 92, 143](#) ↑), the thought may be that the trials the psalmist was experiencing were not burdensome or oppressive because of the "freedom" (CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) that God's word brought, with its encouragement and wise counsel.

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Trust in God

See also:

- *I. Faith and Hope*, p. 1084
- *Note: Believe that God will hear you and answer your prayer – and tell him so*, p. 1969
- *b) Have Faith in God and Pray* [what to do in persecution], p. 2011

Subsections

- [During hard times, trust in God](#)
- [Commit yourself to God and take refuge in him . . .](#)
- [. . . For God saves and protects those who take refuge in him](#)
- [Accept hard times from God](#)
- [Do not complain against nor contend with God because of hard times](#)

During hard times, trust in God

See also:

- *Have faith that God will care for you*, p. 1092

Ps 13:2, 5 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? 📖 ... ⁵*But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.* 📖

Ps 25:1-2 *To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. ²O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.* 📖

Ps 28:2, 7 Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary.^a 📖 ... ⁷*The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.* 📖

^a Hebrew *your innermost sanctuary*

Ps 31:9-15 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. ¹⁰For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away. ¹¹Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. ¹²I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have



become like a broken vessel. ¹³For I hear the whispering of many— terror on every side!— as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. ¹⁴*But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.”* ¹⁵*My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!*

The statement: “You are my God” (v. 14) – part of David’s declaration of faith (vv. 14-15a) from the depths of despair (vv. 9-13) – implies that the LORD is the one he trusts in as sovereign over his life, the one who held his present and future circumstances in his hands (v. 15a).

Ps 62:8 *Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah*

Ps 143:7-8a Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit. ⁸Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for *in you I trust.*

Isa 50:10 Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? *Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*

This is most likely directed to godly people living in the darkness of difficult circumstances (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NLT), although some interpret it as speaking to those living in the darkness of sin (cf. CEV).

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for *I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*^b

^b Or *what I have entrusted to him; Greek my deposit*

If the alternative rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), then Paul would appear to be speaking of trusting God to guard his ministry and its fruits, along with himself – even through death. Despite his great suffering, Paul knew God, the one whom he believed or “trusted” (GNT, cf. NLT). Knowing God, Paul was certain that God was able to guard that which he had entrusted to God, even through death.

Ps 116:10 *I believed, even when^c I spoke, “I am greatly afflicted”; ...*

^c Or *believed, indeed; Septuagint believed, therefore*

The psalmist affirms his faith even amidst his great affliction.

Commit yourself to God and take refuge in him . . .

See also:

- [Ps 62:8](#) ; [2Tim 1:12](#)
- [God is a refuge for his people](#), p. 946

To commit yourself to God is to entrust yourself to him, trusting God to care for you. Taking refuge in God involves focusing on God’s surrounding presence and trusting in his protection, as a refuge.

Ps 31:5 *Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.*

In the first part of the verse, David speaks of committing or entrusting (cf. NLT) his spirit and/or life (cf. NCV, NIV) to God’s care. The words were spoken by Jesus just prior to his death (cf. Luke 23:46).

Jer 11:20 But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, let me see your vengeance upon them, for *to you have I committed my cause.*

1Pet 2:23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but *continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

Ps 143:8b-9 Make me know the way I should go, for *to you I lift up my soul.* ⁹Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! *I have fled to you for refuge!*^d

^d One Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint; most Hebrew manuscripts *To you I have covered*

The expression “to you I lift up my soul” (cf. [Ps 25:1](#)) probably has a meaning akin to “to you I commit my soul”. It certainly appears to be an expression of trust.

Ruth 2:12 The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, *the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!*

Ps 11:1-3 *In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, “Flee like a bird to your mountain, ²for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart; ³if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”*^e

^e Or *for the foundations will be destroyed; what has the righteous done?*

In the face of fearful advice to flee from the threatening circumstances (vv. 1b-3), David states that he will instead take refuge in the LORD (v. 1a). Note that the quotation marks include vv. 2-3 as part of the advice beginning in v. 1b.



Ps 57:1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for *in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.* 

Ps 71:1, 3, 7 *In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;* let me never be put to shame!  ... ³*Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come; you have given the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.*  ... ⁷*I have been as a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.* 

Ps 73:28 *But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,* that I may tell of all your works. 

Ps 118:8-9 *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.* ⁹*It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.* 

Jer 17:17 Be not a terror to me; *you are my refuge in the day of disaster.* 

Ps 62:6-8 *He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.* ⁷*On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.* ⁸*Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.* Selah 

Ps 63:7-8 ... for you have been my help, and *in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.* ⁸*My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.* 

In speaking of being in the “shadow” of God’s “wings” (v. 7) and of clinging to God (v. 8), David is effectively speaking of taking refuge in God.

Heb 6:17-18 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, *we who have fled for refuge* might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 

The phrase “fled for refuge” appears to refer to taking refuge in God, with quite possibly his great promises for our future largely in view.

... For God saves and protects those who take refuge in him

Ps 17:7 Wondrously show^f your steadfast love, *O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.* 

^f Or *Distinguish me by*

Ps 18:30 This God—his way is perfect;^g the word of the LORD proves true; *he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.* 

^g Or *blameless*

Ps 31:19-20 *Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!* ²⁰*In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.* 

Ps 34:22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants; *none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.* 

Ps 37:40 *The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.* 

Ps 91:1-13 *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.* ²*I will say^h to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”* ³*For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.* ⁴*He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.* ⁵*You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.* ⁷*A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.* ⁸*You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.* ⁹*Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place— the Most High, who is my refugeⁱ—* ¹⁰*no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.* ¹¹*For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.* ¹²*On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.* ¹³*You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.* 

^h Septuagint *He will say*

ⁱ Or *For you, O LORD, are my refuge! You have made the Most High your dwelling place*

In vv. 3-6 imagery relating to a mother bird protecting her young from various dangers is used to illustrate God’s protection of those who take refuge in him. In v. 13 the reference to lions and snakes denotes dangers or foes, possibly implying both powerful ones (the lions) and insidious ones (the snakes). Those who take refuge in God will overcome all such things.



Ps 27:1, 5 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? *The LORD is the stronghold^d of my life*; of whom shall I be afraid? ... ⁵*For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.*

^j Or *refuge*

The references to God's "shelter" and "tent" (v. 5) refer to the tabernacle, and so point to God's presence (cf. **Ps 31:19-20** [†]).

Ps 5:11 But *let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them*, that those who love your name may exult in you.

In praying that God will protect those who take refuge in God, David implies that God is able to protect them, and even that God does do so.

Ps 32:7 *You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.* Selah

Isa 57:13b But *he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain.*

This may be alluding to blessings of the last days.

Nah 1:7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; *he knows those who take refuge in him.*

† Those who take refuge in God are blessed:

Ps 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. *Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

Note that "he", "his" and "him" may refer to God (cf. CEV, GNT), but could instead refer to the Son. (The Hebrew is itself is actually unclear.) Also note that similarly Psalms 34:8b says, "Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"

Accept hard times from God

See also:

- *Note: Accept God's discipline for sin*, p. 1846

Gen 43:14 May God Almighty^k grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And *as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.*

^k Hebrew *El Shaddai*

In the first statement Jacob acknowledged that God was in control of the destiny of his two sons and his last statement

implies that he would accept the outcome even if it meant his loss of them.

Job 1:13-22 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁴and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, ¹⁵and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants^l with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁶While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁷While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁸While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, ¹⁹and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you." ²⁰Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and *fell on the ground and worshiped.* ²¹*And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* ²²In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

^l Hebrew *the young men*; also verses 16, 17

In v. 21 Job classically states that all he had was only what God had given him – none of which was his forever – and that therefore God had the right to take it away. In acknowledging this and blessing God in the light of it, Job shows unqualified acceptance of such distressing events (vv. 13-19) as being in line with God's will.

Job 2:7-10 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes. ⁹Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." ¹⁰But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. *Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?*"^m In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

^m Or *disaster*; also verse 11

Job's rhetorical question (v. 10) implies we should "accept" (AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT) all things from God, both good and bad.



Ecc 7:14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and *in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other*, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.



The main theme of this verse is the uncertainty of life, but arguably it can also be construed from it that as both good and bad times are from God, we should be accepting of both – rather than one and not the other (cf. [Job 2:10 ↑](#)).

Heb 12:5-9 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, *do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.* ⁶For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” ⁷*It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons.* For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. *Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?*

The instructions to “not regard lightly” nor “be weary” over hardship from God (v. 5), to endure it as discipline (v. 7) and to submit to God’s will in it (v. 9) – i.e. “accept discipline from the Father” (NCV™) – all speak of accepting hard times from God.

Luke 22:42 ... saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, *not my will, but yours, be done.*”



1Pet 2:18-19 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹*For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.*

The phrase “mindful of God” (v. 19) speaks of being mindful of God’s will (cf. GNT). Peter is speaking of viewing such unjust suffering as being in accordance with God’s will, and therefore accepting and enduring it.

Do not complain against nor contend with God because of hard times

See also:

- [Do not test or question God](#), p. 1116

Num 11:1 *And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp.*

Num 14:2-3, 27-29 *And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?”* ... [God:] ²⁷*“How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. ²⁸Say to them, ‘As I live, declares the LORD, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me, ...*

Num 21:4-6 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵*And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.”* ⁶*Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.*

Job 33:13-14 *Why do you contend against him, saying, ‘He will answer none of man’s words’?* ¹⁴For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it.

ⁿ Hebrew *his*

^o Or *He will not answer for any of his own words*

Job’s perseverance in his great hardship was in many ways exemplary. But he was guilty of contending with and making unjust accusations and complaints against God.

Job 35:14-16 *How much less when you say that you do not see him, that the case is before him, and you are waiting for him! ¹⁵And now, because his anger does not punish, and he does not take much note of transgression,^p ¹⁶Job opens his mouth in empty talk; he multiplies words without knowledge.*



^p Theodotion, Symmachus (compare Vulgate); the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

Here Elihu appears to chide Job for complaining: that God had not shown interest in his plight (v. 14a; cf. [Job 33:13 ↑](#)), making him wait for his case to be heard (v. 14b); and that God does not punish wickedness (v. 15), which was a further slur on God’s justice.



Job 40:1-2, 8 And the LORD said to Job: ²“Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.” ☞ ... ⁸Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? ☞

To contend with God or accuse him (v. 2b) amounts to attempting to correct God (v. 2a). This is obviously an absurd thing to do – a point that God would accentuate in questioning Job in this and the subsequent chapter. As a result Job repented (cf. [Job 42:3](#) ↓).

Job 42:3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ☞

Job is the speaker here. He quotes a rhetorical question from God which indicates that in contending with God, Job had misconstrued God’s counsel with his relatively negligible knowledge. Anyone who would contend with God is in danger of doing this.

Ps 73:13-15, 21-22 All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. ¹⁴For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. ¹⁵If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children. ☞ ... ²¹When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, ²²I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. ☞

In v. 15 the psalmist acknowledges that to have publicly expressed such complaints (vv. 13-14), which in essence were against God, would have been in a sense a betrayal of God’s people – undermining their relationship with God and possibly leading some astray. In vv. 21-22 he acknowledges that in his bitterness and hurt, his thoughts expressed before God were irrational.

Isa 40:27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”? ☞

1Cor 10:9-11 We must not put Christ^a to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ☞

^a Some manuscripts *the Lord*

Note that v. 9 refers to the incident in Numbers 21:4-6 above.

‡ Do not complain when God punishes you for sin:

Lam 3:39 Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? ☞

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Hope in God and Wait for Him

Subsections

- During hard times, put your hope in God
- Look resolutely and expectantly to God
- Wait for God
- Wait for God patiently and quietly
- Wait with confidence and in the knowledge that God will act . . .
- . . . For God cares for and blesses those who wait for him

During hard times, put your hope in God

See also:

- *Put your hope in God’s word*, p. 1944

Job 13:15 Though he slay me, I will hope in him;† yet I will argue my ways to his face. ☞

† Or *Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope*

Ps 33:18-19 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ¹⁹that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. ☞

Ps 39:7 And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you. ☞

Ps 42:5-6a, 10-11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation^s ⁶and my God. ☞ ... ¹⁰As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” ¹¹Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. ☞

^s Hebrew *the salvation of my face*; also verse 11 and 43:5

Ps 71:10, 14 For my enemies speak concerning me; those who watch for my life consult together ☞ ... ¹⁴But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. ☞



Ps 119:166 *I hope for your salvation, O LORD, and I do your commandments.*

Ps 130:7 *O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.*

Isa 8:17 *I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.*

In a time when God had turned away from his rebellious people, withdrawing his care and blessings, Isaiah resolved to wait for and hope in God.

Lam 3:19-24 Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! ²⁰My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. ²¹But *this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:* ²²*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;* ^t*his mercies never come to an end;* ²³*they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.* ²⁴*“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”*

^t Syriac, Targum; Hebrew *Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off*

Regarding v. 24, just as God was the sole “portion” and inheritance of the priests and Levites (cf. Num 18:20), so he is all the writer has and needs. As God is sufficient for his needs – even in hard times – the writer will hope in him.

Ps 9:18 *For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.*

This may imply that the hope of the afflicted – here based firmly in God – will eventually be fulfilled.

Look resolutely and expectantly to God

See also:

▪ [Mic 7:7](#)

1Chr 16:11 *Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!*

Note that the context does not involve hard times.

2Chr 20:12 *O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.*

Ps 5:3 *O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you^u and watch.*

^u Or *I direct my prayer to you*

Ps 25:15 *My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net.*

Ps 59:9-10 *O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress. ¹⁰My God in his steadfast love^v will meet me; God will let me look in triumph on my enemies.*

^v Or *The God who shows me steadfast love*

Verses 9b-10 are indicative of the expectancy in which David looked or watched for God.

Ps 119:123 *My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.*

“My eyes long for” attests to the psalmist persistence in looking to God.

Ps 123:1-2 *To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! ²Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he has mercy upon us.*

Ps 141:8 *But my eyes are toward you, O GOD, my Lord; in you I seek refuge; leave me not defenseless!*^w

^w Hebrew *refuge; do not pour out my life!*

‡ The joy of those who look to God:

Ps 34:5 *Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.*

Those who look to God for help “beam with joy” (NIRV®; cf. NLT).

Wait for God

Ps 25:5, 21 *Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.* ...

²¹May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for *I wait for you.*

In v. 21 David is in a sense meaning that his life of “integrity and uprightness” gives him reason to wait on God to take action to preserve him.

Ps 33:20 *Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.*

Ps 39:7 *And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.*

David implies that he waits for God, in whom is his hope.



Ps 52:9 I will thank you forever, because you have done it. *I will wait for your name, for it is good*, in the presence of the godly.

God's name is largely synonymous with God himself. Thus David is saying that he will wait for God, for God is good.

Ps 130:5-6 *I wait for the LORD, my soul waits*, and in his word I hope; *my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.*

Isa 8:17 *I will wait for the LORD*, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.

In a time when God had turned away from his rebellious people, withdrawing his care and blessings, Isaiah resolved to wait for God.

Isa 33:2 O LORD, be gracious to us; *we wait for you*. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.

Hos 12:6 "So you, by the help of your God, return, hold fast to love and justice, and *wait continually for your God.*"

Dan 12:12 *Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.*

This may well be referring to a period of tribulation prior to Christ's return, although it could instead be speaking of the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C.

Mic 7:7 But as for me, *I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation*; my God will hear me.

Wait for God patiently and quietly

See also:

- *Endure persecution and suffering patiently*, p. 2008

Ps 37:7 *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him*; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

"Be still" speaks of a calmness and quiet trust, which goes "hand in hand" with the call to wait patiently for God. Psalms 46:10 similarly calls people to be still: "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

Ps 40:1 *I waited patiently for the LORD*; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope, *be patient in tribulation*, be constant in prayer.

Ps 62:1, 5 *For God alone my soul waits in silence*; from him comes my salvation. ... ⁵*For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.*

Lam 3:26 *It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*

Hab 3:16 I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. *Yet I will quietly wait* for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.

Habakkuk resolved to quietly wait for the day of God's judgment on the invaders.

Isa 30:15 For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, *"In returning^x and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength."* But you were unwilling, ...

^x Or *repentance*

The "rest" and "quietness" called for (v. 15) reflect the need to wait quietly in hard times for God to act (cf. [Lam 3:26](#) ↑). (Unfortunately here the people acted contrary to this, with adverse results as shown in the subsequent verse, v. 16.)

‡ **After waiting patiently, Abraham received the promised blessing:**

Heb 6:15 And thus *Abraham^y having patiently waited, obtained the promise.*

^y Greek *he*

Unlike the other references, this is not about waiting amidst suffering, but has been included as a further example of waiting patiently for God to act in our interest. See also [Await Jesus Christ's return – and for all that will follow](#), p. 1804.

Wait with confidence and in the knowledge that God will act . . .

See also:

- [Ps 62:1](#) ↑; [Lam 3:26](#) ↑; [Hab 3:16](#) ↑; [Heb 6:15](#) ↑

Note that God's action on behalf of his troubled people is not always simply the removal of the cause of their trouble. It may instead involve strengthening his people to cope with the trouble, with inner joy and peace.

Ps 27:13-14 *I believe^z that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!* ¹⁴*Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!*

^z Other Hebrew manuscripts *Oh! Had I not believed*

The psalmist believes that God will act (v. 13), and so he exhorts himself to wait for God (v. 14).



Ps 38:15 But for you, O LORD, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. 

Mic 7:7 But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. 

Hab 2:3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. *If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.* 

The “vision” from God concerns the end of Babylon. Though it “may seem slow in coming” (GNT, cf. NLT), Habakkuk is to wait for it.

Gen 49:18 I wait for your salvation, O LORD. 

Job 14:13-14 Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! ¹⁴If a man dies, shall he live again? *All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal^a should come.* 

^a Or relief

In vv. 13-14a Job ponders the possibility of God bringing him back to life after dying. Most probably “the days of my service” (v. 14b) is speaking of Job’s current suffering. His “renewal” or “relief” (cf. text note) would then refer to either: a renewal in this life; or his release from his suffering through death and renewal in a life after death. Alternatively, “the days of my service” may refer to the time in the grave between his death and such a resurrection. Christians have a firmer and clearer hope of a resurrection – in which their ultimate renewal will come – giving great incentive to wait throughout any lengthy trials they have in this life.

... For God cares for and blesses those who wait for him

Isa 25:9 It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” 

Isa 40:29-31 He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. ³⁰Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. 

Those who “wait for the LORD” are strengthened (v. 31) by God (v. 29).

Isa 64:4 From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. 

Ps 25:2-3 O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. ³Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. 

Ps 37:9, 34 For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.  ... ³⁴Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off. 

The primary reference here is to Israelites who wait for the LORD inheriting Canaan or the land in which they lived. But arguably this is also applicable to believers who wait for God inheriting the earth (cf. v. 11; Matt 5:5; ZBC)

Prov 20:22 Do not say, “I will repay evil”; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you. 

Lam 3:25 The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. 

Isa 30:18 Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. 

Israel had been rebellious (cf. vv. 9-17) and so had to endure God’s punishment. But he longed to be gracious to them and would show them mercy. The last statement implies that those who wait for God will be blessed with his graciousness and mercy. The verse illustrates that as God waits to show mercy to us, so we should wait for him to do so.

Isa 49:23 Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame. 

The renewed Israel of the end times is in view here. This verse makes the significant point that those who wait for God will not be put to shame, as God will care for and bless them.

‡ All who wait for God should be strong and take courage:

Ps 31:24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD! 

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. Praying in Hard Times

Prayer is probably the most prominent positive response to hard times. The Bible shows us a great deal about praying to God in such times. The psalms in particular contain a number of prayers of people faced with great difficulties and suffering, from which we can learn much.

a) Express Your Anguish to God

See also:

- *Mourn and weep before God*, p. 1939

Note that the themes of some of these subsections are not applicable or appropriate in all experiences of hard times. See also the introductory comments below on *Prayer anxiously speaking of God's seeming remoteness and of apparent isolation from him . . .*, p. 1956, and *Prayer despairingly speaking of God as even the source of one's suffering*, p. 1957.

Subsections

- Tell God of your plight and how you feel . . .
- . . . Pour out your heart to God
- Prayer anxiously speaking of God's seeming remoteness and of apparent isolation from him . . .
- . . . Consequent longing for God amidst suffering
- Prayer despairingly speaking of God as even the source of one's suffering
- Prayer desperately asking God how long suffering and his apparent inaction or wrath is to continue

Tell God of your plight and how you feel . . .

See also:

- *Examples of God's people undergoing hard times*, p. 1935
- *Examples of God's people even attributing hard times to God*, p. 1936

Ps 9:13 Be gracious to me, O LORD! See my affliction from those who hate me, O you who lift me up from the gates of death, ...

Ps 22:6-8, 11-18 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. ⁷All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" ... ¹¹Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help. ¹²Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; ¹³they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. ¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet^a— ¹⁷I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

^a Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts like a lion [they are at] my hands and feet

This psalm is quoted or alluded to in the NT more often than any other psalm. It is used in the NT in relation to Jesus' suffering.

Ps 25:16-19 Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. ¹⁷The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. ¹⁸Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins. ¹⁹Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me.

Ps 31:9-13 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. ¹⁰For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away. ¹¹Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. ¹²I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. ¹³For I hear the whispering of many— terror on every side!— as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

Ps 35:11-12, 15-16 Malicious^b witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know. ¹²They repay me evil for good; my soul is bereft.^c ... ¹⁵But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered; they gathered together against me; wretches whom I did not know tore at me without ceasing; ¹⁶like profane mockers at a feast,^d they gnash at me with their teeth.

^b Or Violent

^c Hebrew it is bereavement to my soul

^d The meaning of the Hebrew phrase is uncertain



Verse 11 appears to be speaking of the psalmist being accusingly questioned over false accusations made against him, things he knows nothing about.

Ps 42:3 *My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"*

The question mentioned was used as a taunt (cf. NLT).

Ps 55:2-5 *Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, ³because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they drop trouble upon me, and in anger they bear a grudge against me. ⁴My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen upon me. ⁵Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me.*

Ps 59:3-4 *For behold, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men stir up strife against me. For no transgression or sin of mine, O LORD, ⁴for no fault of mine, they run and make ready. Awake, come to meet me, and see!*

Ps 69:1-4, 19-20 *Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.^e ²I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. ³I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. ⁴More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore? ... ¹⁹You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. ²⁰Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.*

^e Or waters threaten my life

Ps 109:1-5, 22-25 *Be not silent, O God of my praise! ²For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me, speaking against me with lying tongues. ³They encircle me with words of hate, and attack me without cause. ⁴In return for my love they accuse me, but I give myself to prayer.^f ⁵So they reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love. ... ²²For I am poor and needy, and my heart is stricken within me. ²³I am gone like a shadow at evening; I am shaken off like a locust. ²⁴My knees are weak through fasting; my body has become gaunt, with no fat. ²⁵I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they wag their heads.*

^f Hebrew *but I am prayer*

In v. 23b the psalmist speaks of feeling as if he has been tossed aside like an insect (cf. CEV).

Ps 142:3b-4, 6 *In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. ⁴Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul. ... ⁶Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me!*

Ps 143:3-4 *For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead. ⁴Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled.*

Jer 15:15 *O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach.*

... Pour out your heart to God

See also:

- *Openly express your sorrow and grief*, p. 1940

To pour out your heart to God involves earnestly telling God about all your concerns and feelings. In a sense it is to empty your heart of all its troubles, laying them out before God.

Ps 62:8 *Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah*

Lam 2:19 *"Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street."*

Ps 42:4 *These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.*

Note that here "pour out my soul" possibly simply means that the psalmist's heart was breaking (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT) rather than necessarily involving him pouring out his emotions and problems before God.

1Sam 1:10, 12-16 *She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. ... ¹²As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. ¹³Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. ¹⁴And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." ¹⁵But Hannah answered, "No,*



my lord [Eli], I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but *I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.* ¹⁶Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along *I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.*" 

Hannah's deep distress (v. 10) and "great anxiety and vexation" (v. 16) led her to pour out her soul or heart to God (v. 15) in prayer.

Ps 142:2 *I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him.* 

One could say that David poured out his troubles to God.

Prayer anxiously speaking of God's seeming remoteness and of apparent isolation from him . . .

See also:

- [God is near us in hard times and when we pray](#), p. 1975

The things said in this and the following subsections are not necessarily exemplary in the sense of being things that we ought to say to God amidst hard times. But they do show how one can express anguish to God and suggest that it is acceptable, even productive, for the most part to say/express such thoughts and emotions. (See also the introductory comment below on [Prayer despairingly speaking of God as even the source of one's suffering](#), p. 1957.)

Ps 10:1 *Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?* 

Ps 22:1-2 *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.* 

The question that begins this psalm was quoted by Jesus on the cross (cf. Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). As far as David understood, God had forsaken him; he had cried out to God day and night, but God did not answer.

Ps 44:23-24 *Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! ²⁴Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?* 

Ps 88:14 *O LORD, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?* 

Ps 31:22a *I had said in my alarm,^g "I am cut off from your sight."* 

^g Or in my haste

Lam 5:20 *Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days?* 

Job 23:3, 8-9 *Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!  ... ⁸"Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; ⁹on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.* 

Here Job is speaking to his friends rather than to God in prayer. Similar to the above prayers, amidst his trouble Job speaks of his inability to find God – pointing to God's apparent remoteness from him in his dreadful circumstances.

. . . Consequent longing for God amidst suffering

See also:

- [Job 23:3](#) 

Ps 42:1-2 *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?^h* 

^h Revocalization yields and see the face of God

Ps 63:1 *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.* 

Ps 143:6 *I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.* Selah 

Isa 26:8-9 In the path of your judgments, O LORD, *we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul. ⁹My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.* For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. 

Verse 8b is speaking of desiring or longing for either God (cf. GNT, NASB, NCV, NKJV) or his honor (cf. CEV, NLT) – or perhaps both.

Ps 84:2 *My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.* 

Psalm 84 is a prayer which speaks of longing for the house of God, in essence for God's presence. It may have been written in difficult times, possibly expressing the longing of one who had been prevented from going to the temple in Jerusalem. Alternatively, it may simply be speaking of the longing of one making a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem.



‡ Longing for God's salvation:

Ps 119:81, 123, 174 *My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word. ...¹²³My eyes long for your salvation and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise. ...¹⁷⁴I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight.*

Prayer despairingly speaking of God as even the source of one's suffering

See also:

- *Examples of God's people even attributing hard times to God*, p. 1936

Those suffering in the Bible did not always speak of God as the source of their suffering (particularly when wicked opponents afflicted them). In reading the following examples of those that did, bear in mind that such people were not necessarily always correct or fair in what they said and how they expressed it.

Job 7:13-16 When I say, 'My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint,'¹⁴*then you scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions,*¹⁵*so that I would choose strangling and death rather than my bones.*¹⁶*I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are a breath.*

Ps 60:1-3 *O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses; you have been angry; oh, restore us.*²*You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open; repair its breaches, for it totters.*³*You have made your people see hard things; you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger.*

The first two clauses in v. 2 speak metaphorically of the devastation of the people and their society.

Ps 80:5-6 *You have fed them [God's people] with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure.*⁶*You make us an object of contention for our neighbors, and our enemies laugh among themselves.*

Ps 88:6-9a, 15-18 *You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep.*⁷*Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves.* Selah⁸*You have caused my companions to shun me; you have made me a horror⁸ to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape;*⁹*my eye grows dim through sorrow. ...¹⁵Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.*¹⁶*Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me.*¹⁷*They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together.*¹⁸*You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me; my companions have become darkness.*^k

ⁱ Or *an abomination*

^j The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain

^k Or *darkness has become my only companion*

Psalm 88 has been called the saddest psalm, poignantly illustrating intense and sustained suffering, with little or no sign of hope or resolution. Verse 18b speaks either of darkness being the psalmist's only companion (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV), or his companions in their absence being as if they were in darkness (cf. NASB, NRSV).

Ps 102:9-10 *For I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink,*¹⁰*because of your indignation and anger; for you have taken me up and thrown me down.*

Isa 38:13 *I calmed myself¹ until morning; like a lion he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end.*

¹ Or (with Targum) *I cried for help*

The expression "breaks all my bones" figuratively depicts Hezekiah's devastated state.

Lam 3:45 *You have made us scum and garbage among the peoples.*

‡ **In his pain, Jeremiah complained to God that God had let him down:**

Jer 15:18 *Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?*

In his intense suffering, Jeremiah distraughtly and unfairly portrays God as deceptive or unreliable, comparing him to a supply of water that at times appears to be plentiful, but dries up.

Prayer desperately asking God how long suffering and his apparent inaction or wrath is to continue

Ps 6:3 *My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long?*

Ps 13:1-2 *How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ²How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*

Ps 35:17 *How long, O Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their destruction, my precious life from the lions!*



Ps 74:9-10 We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and *there is none among us who knows how long*.¹⁰*How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever?* 

This psalm was composed during the time of the Babylonian exile. The psalmist asks how long would God allow himself to be dishonored by the enemy – with his people in such a subjugated position (cf. vv. 1-2) and his sanctuary in ruins (cf. vv. 3-7).

Ps 80:4 O LORD God of hosts, *how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?* 

Ps 89:46 *How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?* 

Ps 90:13 *Return, O LORD! How long?* Have pity on your servants! 

Ps 119:82, 84 My eyes long for your promise; I ask, *"When will you comfort me?"*  ... ⁸⁴*How long must your servant endure?^m When will you judge those who persecute me?* 

^mHebrew *How many are the days of your servant?*

✦ Further discouragement over God's apparent inaction:

Jer 14:8-9 O you hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble, *why should you be like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night?* ⁹*Why should you be like a man confused, like a mighty warrior who cannot save?* Yet you, O LORD, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name; do not leave us. 

Verse 8b is likening God to a disinterested stranger.

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Ask God for Help (I): General

See also:

- *d) Making Requests*, p. 1224
- *Determine and promise to praise and thank God for deliverance*, p. 1972
- *Pray to God, asking for help* [in persecution], p. 2014

Subsections

- When facing trouble, call on God . . .
- . . . Cry out to God for help
- Ask God and Jesus Christ for mercy
- Ask God for strength
- Ask God to guide you
- Ask God to preserve and protect you
- Ask God to deliver you
- Ask God to hear and answer your prayer . . .
- . . . Ask God to quickly answer and help you
- Persist in prayer to God
- Note: Prayer asking for retribution for wicked enemies

When facing trouble, call on God . . .

See also:

- *Jonah 2:2* ↓ 

Ps 86:7 *In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.* 

Ps 50:14-15 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,ⁿ and perform your vows to the Most High, ¹⁵and *call upon me in the day of trouble*; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me. 

ⁿ Or *Make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*

James 5:13 *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.* Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 

Ps 77:2 *In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord*; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted. 

Ps 107:6 Then *they cried to the LORD in their trouble*, and he delivered them from their distress. 

Ps 116:3-4 *The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.* ⁴*Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!"* 



Joel 1:19-20 *To you, O LORD, I call. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has burned all the trees of the field. ²⁰Even the beasts of the field pant for you because the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.* 📖

In this time of devastation of the land even the wild animals seemingly looked to God (v. 20), indicative of it being the best course of action.

Jonah 2:1-2, 7 *Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, ²saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. ... ⁷When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.* 📖

Luke 22:44 *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*^o 📖

^o Some manuscripts omit verses 43 and 44

Ps 109:4 *In return for my love they accuse me, but I give myself to prayer.*^p 📖

^p Hebrew *but I am prayer*

David may well be meaning that in the face of his enemies' accusations he turns to prayer. But note that the meaning of the Hebrew text for the final clause is not clear (cf. CEV text note, GNT text note).

1Ki 8:37-38 *If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemy besieges them in the land at their gates,^q whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, ³⁸whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house, ...* 📖

^q Septuagint, Syriac *in any of their cities*

Here Solomon speaks of people in affliction calling on God.

... Cry out to God for help

See also:

- [Ps 30:8](#) 📖; [Ps 130:2](#) 📖; [Ps 142:1](#) 📖

Ex 2:23 *During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.* 📖

Job 30:28 *I go about darkened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help.* 📖

Ps 18:6 *In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.* 📖

Ps 119:145, 147 *With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes. ... ¹⁴⁷I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words.* 📖

Judg 4:3 *Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help, for he had 900 chariots of iron and he oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years.* 📖

Ps 57:2 *I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.* 📖

Note that this and the following extracts may not explicitly speak of asking God for help, but this is clearly implied.

Ps 88:13 *But I, O LORD, cry to you; in the morning my prayer comes before you.* 📖

Ps 130:1 *Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!* 📖

Lam 2:18 *Their heart cried to the Lord. O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears stream down like a torrent day and night! Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite!* 📖

In the second and third statements the people of Jerusalem are called upon to weep ceaselessly, as they cry out to God.

Joel 1:14 *Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.* 📖

Jonah 2:2 *... saying, "I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.* 📖

2Chr 20:9 *'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment,^r or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.'* 📖

^r Or *the sword of judgment*

2Chr 32:18, 20 *And they shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, in order that they might take the city. ... ²⁰Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven.* 📖



Heb 5:7 In the days of his flesh, *Jesus*^s offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 📖

^s Greek *he*

✚ **Condemnation of not sincerely crying out to God:**

Hos 7:14 *They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds; for grain and wine they gash themselves; they rebel against me.* 📖

Ask God and Jesus Christ for mercy

Ps 30:8, 10 To you, O LORD, I cry, and *to the Lord I plead for mercy:* 📖 ... ¹⁰*Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!* 📖

Ps 123:3 *Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt.* 📖

Ps 130:2 O Lord, hear my voice! *Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!* 📖

Ps 142:1 With my voice I cry out to the LORD; *with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD.* 📖

Dan 2:18 ... and told them to *seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this* mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 📖

Hab 3:2 O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; *in wrath remember mercy.* 📖

In the final clause Habakkuk asks God in the midst of his wrath to be merciful.

Matt 15:22 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”* 📖

Matt 20:30-31 And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, *“Lord,^t have mercy on us, Son of David!”*
³¹The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, *“Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”*
📖

^t Some manuscripts omit *Lord*

Job 9:14-15 How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him? ¹⁵Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; *I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.*^u 📖

^u Or *to my judge*

In view of God's great wisdom and power (cf. vv. 4-13), Job realizes that he could not successfully argue his case with God, even if he were innocent. All he could do would be to plead with God for mercy.

Ps 6:2 *Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.* 📖

Graciousness (cf. **Ps 119:132** ↓) and compassion (cf. **Ps 79:8** ↓) are closely associated with mercy.

Ps 79:8 Do not remember against us our former iniquities;^v *let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.* 📖

^v Or *the iniquities of former generations*

Ps 119:132 *Turn to me and be gracious to me,* as is your way with those who love your name. 📖

✚ **Where applicable, appeal to God for justice:**

Ps 17:1-2 *Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry! Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit! ²From your presence let my vindication come! Let your eyes behold the right!* 📖

Ask God for strength

Neh 6:9 For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But *now, O God,^w strengthen my hands.* 📖

^w Hebrew lacks *O God*

Ps 86:16 Turn to me and be gracious to me; *give your strength to your servant,* and save the son of your maidservant. 📖

Ps 119:28 My soul melts away for sorrow; *strengthen me according to your word!* 📖

Isa 33:2 O LORD, be gracious to us; we wait for you. *Be our arm every morning,* our salvation in the time of trouble. 📖

This use of “arm” is a figurative reference to strength (cf. AMP, CEV, NCV, NASB, NIV, NLT).

✚ **Ask God to uphold you amidst trouble:**

Ps 119:116-117 *Uphold me according to your promise,* that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope! ¹¹⁷*Hold*



me up, that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually! 

Akin to asking for strength (cf. GNT), the psalmist asks God to support and sustain him.

Ask God to guide you

Ps 5:8 *Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.* 

In asking to be led “in your righteousness”, David may be appealing to God to act in accordance with his righteousness (cf. CEV). Alternatively he may be asking to be led along a way that is in accordance with God’s righteousness – as appears to be the case with “Lead me in your truth” in 25:5 immediately below. (See also the comments below on 27:11 and 43:3.)

Ps 25:5 *Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.* 

Ps 27:11 *Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.* 

In this context, a “level path” (cf. **Ps 143:10** ↓) quite possibly means a “safe path” (GNT). Alternatively, it could be a “right path” (CEV; cf. NCV, NLT) encompassing both righteous living and the resultant stability and protection.

Ps 43:3 *Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!* 

The reference could be to being guided by the “light” and “truth” of God’s word or ways (cf. **Ps 25:5** ↑). However more likely the psalmist is asking God to guide him by God’s favour/salvation (“light”) and because of God’s faithfulness (“truth”).

Ps 139:24 *And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!** 

* Or *in the ancient way* (compare Jeremiah 6:16)

The term “the way everlasting” probably refers to the long-standing, time-proven ways of God (cf. CEV, NRSV text note), which will forever be the right and best way (cf. Nlrv). It has alternatively been interpreted to speak of the way that leads to “everlasting life” (NCV™, NLT).

Ps 143:8, 10 *Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.*  ... ¹⁰*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!* 

Ps 61:2 ... from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. *Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, ...* 

The “rock that is higher than I” denotes a place of safety, that seems to be beyond the psalmist’s reach. Quite possibly it alludes to God himself (cf. vv. 3-4).

1Sam 30:8 *And David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?” He answered him, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue.”* 

David similarly asks God for guidance in the midst of warfare in 2 Samuel 2:1 and 5:19, 23. Note that David probably made such inquiries of God through the priest and the use of lots.

Ask God to preserve and protect you

See also:

▪ **Ps 31:2** ↓ 

Ps 16:1 *Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.* 

Ps 25:20-21 *Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. ²¹May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you.* 

Ps 64:1-2 *Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; preserve my life from dread of the enemy. ²Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers, ...* 

Ps 140:4 *Guard me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from violent men, who have planned to trip up my feet.* 

Ps 17:8-9 *Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings, ⁹from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me.* 

Ps 69:29 *But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high!* 

Isa 38:14 *Like a swallow or a crane I chirp; I moan like a dove. My eyes are weary with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; be my pledge of safety!* 



Ask God to deliver you

See also:

▪ Ps 25:20 [↑](#); Ps 69:29 [↑](#)

Ps 22:20 *Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog!* [📖](#)

Ps 31:1-2, 15-16 In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; *let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!* ²Incline your ear to me; *rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!* [📖](#) ... ¹⁵My times are in your hand; *rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!* ¹⁶Make your face shine on your servant; *save me in your steadfast love!* [📖](#)

Ps 43:1 *Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!* [📖](#)

Ps 69:14-15, 18 *Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. ¹⁵Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.* [📖](#) ... ¹⁸Draw near to my soul, *redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies!* [📖](#)

Ps 70:1, 5 *Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!* [📖](#) ... ⁵But I am poor and needy; *hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!* [📖](#)

Ps 80:2-3 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your might and *come to save us!* ³*Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!* [📖](#)

^y Or *Turn us again*; also verses 7, 19

Ps 119:146, 154 *I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies.* [📖](#) ... ¹⁵⁴*Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise!* [📖](#)

Ps 144:7-8 *Stretch out your hand from on high; rescue me and deliver me from the many waters, from the hand of foreigners,* ⁸*whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* [📖](#)

Ps 25:17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged; *bring me out of my distresses.* [📖](#)

Ps 35:23 *Awake and rouse yourself for my vindication, for my cause, my God and my Lord!* [📖](#)

‡ Ask God to act so as to make you glad:

Ps 90:14-15 *Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. ¹⁵Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil.* [📖](#)

In Psalms 86:4 David similarly asks in a difficult time that God would bring joy to him: "Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul."

Ask God to hear and answer your prayer . . .

Neh 1:6a ... *let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night* for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. [📖](#)

Ps 4:1 *Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!* You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and *hear my prayer!* [📖](#)

In the first sentence David appears to be appealing to God as the one who establishes his righteousness (cf. AMP) and/or vindicates him (cf. NET, NLT, NRSV).

Ps 5:1 *Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning.* [📖](#)

Ps 13:3 *Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;* light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, ... [📖](#)

Ps 27:7, 9 *Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me!* [📖](#) ... ⁹*Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!* [📖](#)

David pleads with God to hear and answer his prayer (v. 7), as opposed to rejecting him (v. 9).

Ps 28:1-2 To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, *be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. ²Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help,* when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary.^z [📖](#)

^z Hebrew *your innermost sanctuary*

Ps 55:1-2 *Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! ²Attend to me, and answer me;* I am restless in my complaint and I moan, ... [📖](#)

Ps 88:2 *Let my prayer come before you; incline your ear to my cry!* [📖](#)



Ps 102:1-2 *Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you! ²Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call!* 

Ps 130:2 *O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!* 

Ps 141:1-2 *O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you! ²Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!* 

In v. 2 David asks that his prayer be acceptable to God like the stipulated daily incense offerings and evening sacrifice.

Dan 9:17-18 *Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord,^a make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. ¹⁸O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.* 

^a Hebrew for the Lord's sake

1Ki 8:28-30, 44-45, 52 *Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O LORD my God, listening to the cry and to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, ²⁹that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. ³⁰And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.  ... ⁴⁴'If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ⁴⁵then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.  ... ⁵²Let your eyes be open to the plea of your servant and to the plea of your people Israel, giving ear to them whenever they call to you.* 

Here just prior to the actual dedication of the temple, Solomon asks God to hear and answer his people's prayers for help. Note that the temple signified God's presence amongst his people, particularly as it contained the ark of the covenant. As such, when the people prayed to God, they prayed toward the temple (cf. [Ps 28:2](#) ↑).

Ps 83:1 *O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God!* 

... Ask God to quickly answer and help you

Ps 143:7 *Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit.* 

Ps 69:17 *Hide not your face from your servant; for I am in distress; make haste to answer me.* 

Ps 102:1-2 *Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you! ²Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call!* 

Ps 40:13, 17 *Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!  ... ¹⁷As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!* 

Ps 70:1, 5 *Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!  ... ⁵But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!* 

Ps 141:1 *O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you!* 

Dan 9:19 *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.* 

✦ Prayer that God would answer at "an acceptable time":

Ps 69:13 *But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness.* 

Persist in prayer to God

See also:

▪ [Ask persistently](#) + ref., p. 1227

Ps 55:17 *Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.* 



Ps 77:2 In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; *in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying*; my soul refuses to be comforted. 

The psalmist tirelessly lifted up his hands in prayer (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT).

Ps 86:3 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for *to you do I cry all the day*. 

Ps 88:1, 9 O LORD, God of my salvation; *I cry out day and night before you*.  ... ⁹my eye grows dim through sorrow. *Every day I call upon you, O LORD*; I spread out my hands to you. 

Ps 109:4 In return for my love they accuse me, but *I give myself to prayer*.^b 

^b Hebrew *but I am prayer*

1Sam 15:11 “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.” And Samuel was angry, and *he cried to the LORD all night*. 

Neh 1:4-6a As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and *I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven*. ⁵And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear *the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night* for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. 

Luke 18:7-8 And will not God give justice to his elect, who *cry to him day and night*? Will he delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? 

1Tim 5:5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and *continues in supplications and prayers night and day*, ... 

✦ Denunciation of not turning to God in trouble:

Job 35:9-11 *Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out; they call for help because of the arm of the mighty*.^c ¹⁰But none says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night,’ ¹¹who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’ 

^c Or *the many*

Verse 9 is most likely not speaking of crying/calling out to God. As such this is censuring people for not calling on God (v. 10) in times of trouble (v. 9). But if v. 9 is speaking of crying out to God (cf. CEV), then Elihu would be condemning people for only calling on God in trouble without any intention of turning to him and his ways.

Note: Prayer asking for retribution for wicked enemies

In some respects at least, the following verses would appear to be at odds with some NT teaching – such as loving one’s enemies. But Christians can concur with these verses in at least the following aspects: the disdain of ungodliness; the acknowledgment of the ultimate fate of the ungodly who do not repent; and the desire for God’s justice to be manifested and vindicated.

Neh 4:4-5 Hear, O our God, for we are despised. *Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives*. ⁵*Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight*, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders. 

The reference is the wicked adversaries of those rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Ps 28:4 *Give to them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds; give to them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward*. 

Ps 35:4-8, 26 *Let them be put to shame and dishonor who seek after my life! Let them be turned back and disappointed who devise evil against me!* ⁵*Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away!* ⁶*Let their way be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them!* ⁷For without cause they hid their net for me; without cause they dug a pit for my life.^d ⁸*Let destruction come upon him when he does not know it! And let the net that he hid ensnare him; let him fall into it—to his destruction!*  ... ²⁶*Let them be put to shame and disappointed altogether who rejoice at my calamity! Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves against me!* 

^d The word *pit* is transposed from the preceding line; Hebrew *For without cause they hid the pit of their net for me; without cause they dug for my life*

Ps 54:5 He will return the evil to my enemies; *in your faithfulness put an end to them*. 



Ps 69:21-28 They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. ²²*Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap.*^e ²³*Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually.* ²⁴*Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them.* ²⁵*May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents.* ²⁶For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. ²⁷*Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you.*^f ²⁸*Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.* 

^e Hebrew; a slight revocalization yields (compare Septuagint, Syriac, Jerome) *a snare, and retribution and a trap*

^f Hebrew *may they not come into your righteousness*

In v. 22 "their own table before them" may well allude to the food metaphors depicting their ill treatment of the psalmist in v. 21. In v. 26 the psalmist speaks of the wicked persecuting those already suffering God's punishment.

Ps 109:29 *May my accusers be clothed with dishonor; may they be wrapped in their own shame as in a cloak!* 

Ps 140:9-11 *As for the head of those who surround me, let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!* ¹⁰*Let burning coals fall upon them! Let them be cast into fire, into miry pits, no more to rise!* ¹¹*Let not the slanderer be established in the land; let evil hunt down the violent man speedily!* 

Jer 11:20 But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart and the mind, *let me see your vengeance upon them*, for to you have I committed my cause. 

Jer 12:3 But you, O LORD, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you. *Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter.* 

Jer 15:15 O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me, and *take vengeance for me on my persecutors*. In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach. 

Jer 17:18 *Let those be put to shame who persecute me*, but let me not be put to shame; *let them be dismayed*, but let me not be dismayed; *bring upon them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction!* 

✦ David prayed against the deeds of the wicked:

Ps 141:5b *Yet my prayer is continually against their evil deeds.* 

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Ask God for Help (II): Things to Appeal To

Subsections

- God's righteousness
- God's steadfast love and faithfulness . . .
- . . . along with God's mercy
- Your devotion to and relationship with God . . .
- . . . and God's promises to his people
- The sake of God's "name"
- Note: Believe that God will hear you and answer your prayer – and tell him so

God's righteousness

See also:

- Ps 143:1 

Ps 31:1 In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; *in your righteousness deliver me!* 

Ps 35:24 *Vindicate me, O LORD, my God, according to your righteousness*, and let them not rejoice over me! 

Ps 71:2 *In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me*; incline your ear to me, and save me! 

Ps 119:40 Behold, I long for your precepts; *in your righteousness give me life!* 

Ps 143:11 For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! *In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!* 



Dan 9:16 *O Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among all who are around us.* 📖

God's steadfast love and faithfulness . . .

See also:

- [Ps 40:11](#) ↴; [Ps 25:6](#) ↴; [Ps 69:16](#) ↴; [Ps 86:14-16](#) ↴

Note that the fact that God's love is often referred to as "steadfast" points to his faithfulness.

Ps 17:7 *Wondrously show^g your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.* 📖

^g Or *Distinguish me by*

Ps 25:7 Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; *according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!* 📖

Ps 44:26 Rise up; come to our help! *Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!* 📖

David appears to appeal to God to act in accordance with his steadfast love, in part at least for the sake of its reputation.

Ps 69:13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, *O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness.* 📖

Ps 86:4-5 Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. ⁵*For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.* 📖

Ps 109:21, 26 But you, O GOD my Lord, deal on my behalf for your name's sake; *because your steadfast love is good, deliver me!* 📖 ... ²⁶*Help me, O LORD my God! Save me according to your steadfast love!* 📖

Ps 119:76, 88 *Let your steadfast love comfort me* according to your promise to your servant. 📖 ... ⁸⁸*In your steadfast love give me life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth.* 📖

Ps 143:12 *And in your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies, and you will destroy all the adversaries of my soul, for I am your servant.* 📖

Ps 89:49 *Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?* 📖

Ps 54:5 He will return the evil to my enemies; *in your faithfulness put an end to them.* 📖

Ps 143:1 Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! *In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!* 📖

. . . along with God's mercy

Dan 9:18 O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. *For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.* 📖

Ps 25:6 *Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.* 📖

Ps 69:16 *Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.* 📖

Ps 86:14-16 O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them. ¹⁵*But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.* ¹⁶*Turn to me and be gracious to me;* give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. 📖

Ps 119:77, 156 *Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight.* 📖 ... ¹⁵⁶*Great is your mercy, O LORD; give me life* according to your rules. 📖

Ps 40:11 *As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!* 📖

‡ David appealed to God's "abundant mercy" for forgiveness:

Ps 51:1 Have mercy on me,^h O God, according to your steadfast love; *according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.* 📖

^h Or *Be gracious to me*



Your devotion to and relationship with God . . .

See also:

- [Ps 119:77](#) ↑
- [Neh 1:10-11](#) ↓
- *The sake of God's "name"*, p. 1968

2Ki 20:1-3 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover.'" ²Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, ³"Now, O LORD, please remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. 

2Chr 14:11 And Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." 

In the final sentence Asa appears to indicate that as the LORD was Judah's God, defeat for Judah would in effect be equivalent to defeat for the LORD.

Ps 5:2 Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. 

In the last clause David quite possibly means that God was the only one that he would ever pray to (cf. NLT).

Ps 26:1-3, 6-8 Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. ²Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and my mind.ⁱ ³For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness.  ... ⁶I wash my hands in innocence and go around your altar, O LORD, ⁷proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds. ⁸O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. 

ⁱ Hebrew *test my kidneys and my heart*

Along with the other things mentioned here, David's blamelessness (vv. 1, 6) is indicative of his devotion to God. In v.3a, David appears to mean that he persistently kept God's love in view. In v.3b, he is likely speaking either of being faithful to God (cf. AMP, CEV, NRSV) or living in a manner consistent with God's faithfulness, which likewise implies faithfulness to God.

Ps 28:9 Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever. 

In describing God's people as God's "heritage", David was emphasizing that they belonged to God as his "special possession" (NLT).

Ps 31:2-4 Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! ³For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; ⁴you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge. 

As is implied in some of the other references (e.g. [Ps 5:2](#) ↑; [Ps 40:17](#) ↓; [Ps 71:5-6](#) ↓; [Ps 86:4](#) ↓), David seems to claim that God alone is the one to whom he has always looked for help and protection. And it is in part to this exclusive reliance on God that David appeals.

Ps 40:17 As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God! 

Ps 44:4 You are my King, O God; ordain salvation for Jacob! 

Ps 71:4-6 Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man. ⁵For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. ⁶Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. 

Ps 86:2, 4, 16 Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.  ... ⁴Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.  ... ¹⁶Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. 

Ps 119:94, 121, 153, 173-174 I am yours; save me, for I have sought your precepts.  ... ¹²¹I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors.  ... ¹⁵³Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget your law.  ... ¹⁷³Let your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. ¹⁷⁴I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight. 

In conjunction with his devotion to and relationship with God, in v. 121 the psalmist appeals to his righteous ways.

Jer 17:14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise. 



... and God's promises to his people

Ps 119:28, 38, 41, 49, 58, 76, 116, 154, 170 My soul melts away for sorrow; *strengthen me according to your word!* ...³⁸*Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared.* ...⁴¹*Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise;* ...⁴⁹*Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope.* ...⁵⁸*I entreat your favor with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.* ...⁷⁶*Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant.* ...¹¹⁶*Uphold me according to your promise, that I may live, and let me not be put to shame in my hope!* ...¹⁵⁴*Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise!* ...¹⁷⁰*Let my plea come before you; deliver me according to your word.*

Gen 32:11-12 *Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.*¹²*But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'*

Ex 32:12-13 Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? *Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.*¹³*Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'*

Neh 1:5-6, 8-11 And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,⁶*let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.* ...⁸*Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples,*⁹*but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'*¹⁰They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.¹¹*O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the*

prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Twice Nehemiah appeals to promises of God (vv. 5, 8-9) before asking God to answer his prayer (vv. 6, 11).

Ps 74:19-20 *Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts; do not forget the life of your poor forever.*²⁰*Have regard for the covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.*

Note that it is Israel that is referred to here as God's "dove" (v. 19), or "turtledove" (AMP, NASB, NRSV). As such the term appears to allude to God's love for Israel and possibly also to her defenselessness (cf. GNT).

Jer 14:21b ... *remember and do not break your covenant with us.*

This was part of an appeal to God for help (cf. vv. 7, 21 ↓).

The sake of God's "name"

The general thrust of the following prayer excerpts is that as the petitioners are God's people, for God to not save them and allow them to continue in their suffering – or be destroyed – would be a great slight on his name.

Ps 79:9-10a *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!*¹⁰*Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"*

Ps 109:21 But you, O GOD my Lord, *deal on my behalf for your name's sake; because your steadfast love is good, deliver me!*

Ps 143:11a *For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life!*

Jer 14:7, 21 Though our iniquities testify against us, *act, O LORD, for your name's sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against you.* ...²¹*Do not spurn us, for your name's sake; do not dishonor your glorious throne; remember and do not break your covenant with us.*

In v. 21a, "your glorious throne" refers to the temple in Jerusalem, amidst and identified with his people who were enduring great hardship.

Dan 9:19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. *Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.*



Josh 7:8-9 O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! ⁹For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. *And what will you do for your great name?* 📖

In view of Israel's defeat (v. 8) and subsequent increased vulnerability (v. 9a), Joshua effectively appeals to God to act on their behalf for the sake of his great name.

Ps 74:10, 22 *How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever?* 📖 ... ²²*Arise, O God, defend your cause; remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!* 📖

This was written sometime after the Babylonian defeat of Judah. With his people in exile and his temple destroyed (cf. vv. 3-7), the psalmist appeals to God to act – in part at least – for the sake of his name.

Ps 83:16, 18 *Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O LORD.* 📖 ... ¹⁸*that they may know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.* 📖

Deut 9:27-28 Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin,* ²⁸*lest the land from which you brought us say, "Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness."* 📖

In the face of God's threat to destroy the people because of their wickedness, Moses in effect appeals to the sake of God's name and reputation. He reasoned that if God destroyed the people the Egyptians may claim that he had done so because he was not able to take them into the land he had promised them.

✦ David asked God to exalt himself by saving him:

Ps 57:4-5 My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts— the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. ⁵*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!* 📖

David implies that by delivering him from his predicament (v. 4), God would be exalted and glorified (v. 5).

Note: Believe that God will hear you and answer your prayer – and tell him so

See also:

- *Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted,* p. 1228

The psalmists often concluded prayers for help by asserting that their requests would not go unheeded – as is the case with most, if not all, of the following references. Note that the following section – *Praise and Rejoice in God* – contains a number of verses that similarly reflect belief that God would hear and answer prayer in hard times.

Ps 6:7-9 My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. ⁸Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for *the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.* ⁹*The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer.* 📖

Ps 22:19, 23-24 But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! 📖 ... ²³You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴*For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.* 📖

Ps 55:16-18 But *I call to God, and the LORD will save me.* ¹⁷Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and *he hears my voice.* ¹⁸*He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me.* 📖

Ps 17:6 *I call upon you, for you will answer me,* O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words. 📖

Ps 38:15 But for you, O LORD, do I wait; *it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.* 📖

Ps 86:7 *In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.* 📖

Although David speaks in general terms, this note of confidence in God's deliverance was written during a time of distress (cf. vv. 1-6, 14-17).

Ps 57:1-3 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; *in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.* ²*I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.* ³*He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!* 📖



Ps 71:12, 20-21 O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! ... ²⁰You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. ²¹You will increase my greatness and comfort me again.

Ps 109:26, 28 Help me, O LORD my God! Save me according to your steadfast love! ... ²⁸Let them curse, but you will bless! They arise and are put to shame, but your servant will be glad!

2Chr 20:9 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment,^j or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.'

^j Or the sword of judgment

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Praise and Rejoice in God

See also:

- c) *Rejoice* [in persecution], p. 2015

Subsections

- Praise and thank God amidst trouble
- Rejoice in God amidst trouble
- Determine and promise to praise and thank God for deliverance
- Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times
- Rejoice in God's deliverance from hard times

Praise and thank God amidst trouble

2Chr 20:15, 18-22 And he [Jahaziel] said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. ... ¹⁸Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem

fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. ¹⁹And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. ²⁰And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." ²¹And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever." ²²And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.

Presumably the worship, praise and thanksgiving would have had God's sure deliverance at least partly in view.

Job 1:20-21 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

Ps 59:3, 16-17 For behold, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men stir up strife against me. For no transgression or sin of mine, O LORD, ... ¹⁶But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. ¹⁷O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love.

Ps 66:17 I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on^k my tongue.¹

^k Hebrew *under*

¹ Or *and he was exalted with my tongue*

The psalmist cried out to God for help, but also praised God in his prayer for help.

Ps 71:4-8, 14-20 Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man. ⁵For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. ⁶Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. ⁷I have been as a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge. ⁸My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day. ... ¹⁴But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. ¹⁵My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. ¹⁶With the mighty deeds of the



Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. ¹⁷O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. ¹⁸So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. ¹⁹Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you? ²⁰You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. 📖

In v. 7a, the psalmist speaks of appearing to other people to be an example or a wonder, either as someone: who has suffered significantly, apparently in being punished by God; or who has been delivered by God from much trouble. In v. 15, the psalmist says that God had done far more in righteously bringing salvation than the psalmist could know (cf. AMP, CEV, NASB, NRSV).

Ps 109:1, 30-31 Be not silent, O God of my praise! 📖 ... ³⁰With my mouth I will give great thanks to the LORD; I will praise him in the midst of the throng. ³¹For he stands at the right hand of the needy one, to save him from those who condemn his soul to death. 📖

This concludes a psalm involving petition for help in great need (cf. vv. 1-5, 21-29). As such amidst his trouble, the psalmist speaks of praising God in light of his readiness to save the needy.

Acts 16:22-25 The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ... 📖

✦ Give thanks in all circumstances:

1Thes 5:18 ... give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 📖

Rejoice in God amidst trouble

See also:

- *Rejoice and take pride "in" Jesus Christ* [in persecution], p. 1081

Ps 13:1-2, 5-6 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ²How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? 📖 ... ⁵But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ⁶I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me. 📖

Despite God's apparent lack of concern and his troubles (vv. 1-2), the psalmist trusts in God's steadfast love, confident of God's salvation (v. 5). This leads the psalmist to rejoice (v. 5b) and sing praises to God for his goodness (v. 6).

Ps 28:1, 6-7 To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me, lest, if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit. 📖 ... ⁶Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. ⁷The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. 📖

The tone of vv. 6-7 and particularly the phrase "my heart exults" (v. 7b) indicate that the psalmist rejoices, confident that God has heard his cry for mercy (v. 6b).

Ps 34:2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. 📖

David asserts that hearing of what God had done for him in adversity (cf. vv. 4-6) gives similarly afflicted people reason to be glad or "rejoice" (NASB, NIV) – not least because of the hope it provides them in their predicament.

Hab 3:17-19a Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. 📖

2Cor 6:10 ... as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. 📖

Even amidst the sorrow Paul encountered in his work, Paul always had reason to rejoice.

Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 📖



1Thes 5:16 *Rejoice always, ...* 📖

✦ “The joy of the LORD is your strength”:

Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for *the joy of the LORD is your strength.*” 📖

The people – who had been weeping as they listened to the law (v. 9) – would draw strength from the joy they had in the LORD, with all the blessings that come from their relationship with God.

Determine and promise to praise and thank God for deliverance

Ps 42:10-11 As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” ¹¹Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for *I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.* 📖

Ps 43:1, 4 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, *from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!* 📖 ... ⁴*Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.* 📖

Ps 51:14-15 *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.* ¹⁵*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.* 📖

“O Lord, open my lips” (v. 15) appears to be a plea from David to answer his earlier requests for forgiveness and restoration (vv. 1-2, 7-14) so as to enable him to give praise to God with his mouth.

Ps 71:20-24 You who have made me see many troubles and calamities *will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.* ²¹*You will increase my greatness and comfort me again.* ²²*I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.* ²³*My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed.* ²⁴*And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long, for they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me hurt.* 📖

As with vv. 20-21, in vv. 23-24 the psalmist is probably confidently speaking of God redeeming him (cf. CEV, NCV) –

at which such time he will praise God – rather than indicating that his redemption has already occurred.

Ps 79:9, 13 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; *deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!* 📖 ... ¹³*But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.* 📖

Ps 35:9-10, 17-18 *Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD, exulting in his salvation.* ¹⁰*All my bones shall say, “O LORD, who is like you, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, the poor and needy from him who robs him?”* 📖 ... ¹⁷How long, O Lord, will you look on? *Rescue me from their destruction, my precious life from the lions!* ¹⁸*I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you.* 📖

1Chr 16:35 Say also: “Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and *deliver us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise.*” 📖

The phrase “glory in your praise” speaks of exulting in praising God.

Ps 9:13-14 *Be gracious to me, O LORD!* See my affliction from those who hate me, O you who lift me up from the gates of death, ¹⁴*that I may recount all your praises, that in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in your salvation.* 📖

Ps 119:175 *Let my soul live and praise you,* and let your rules help me. 📖

Ps 142:7 *Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name!* The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me. 📖

Ps 88:10-11 Do you work wonders for the dead? *Do the departed rise up to praise you?* Selah ¹¹*Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon?* 📖

In the face of death, the psalmist implies that in contrast to the dead he will praise God if he is delivered from his precarious predicament.

✦ The psalmist promised that if God delivered him, he would obey God:

Ps 119:134, 145-146 *Redeem me from man's oppression, that I may keep your precepts.* 📖 ... ¹⁴⁵*With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! I will keep your statutes.* ¹⁴⁶*I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies.* 📖



Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times

See also:

- [Ps 30:11-12](#) ↴; [2Chr 20:27-28](#) ↴
- *Further testimony to God answering prayers in suffering and trouble*, p. 1979
- *Further specific examples of God answering prayers in suffering and trouble*, p. 1979

Ps 30:1-4 *I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. ²O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. ³O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.^m ⁴Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.ⁿ*

☞

^m Or to life, that I should not go down to the pit

ⁿ Hebrew to the memorial of his holiness (see Exodus 3:15)

Ps 34:1-4 *I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. ²My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. ³Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! ⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.* ☞

Ps 40:1-3 *I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. ²He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. ³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.* ☞

Ps 66:19-20 *But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. ²⁰Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!* ☞

Ps 107:5-16, 18-22, 27-31 ... hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. ⁶Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ⁷He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. ⁸Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! ⁹For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things. ¹⁰Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, ¹¹for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. ¹²So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. ¹³Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ¹⁴He

brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart. ¹⁵Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! ¹⁶For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron. ☞ ... ¹⁸they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. ¹⁹Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ²⁰He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. ²¹Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! ²²And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy! ☞ ... ²⁷they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end.^o ²⁸Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. ²⁹He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. ³⁰Then they were glad that the waters^p were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. ³¹Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! ☞

^o Hebrew and all their wisdom was swallowed up

^p Hebrew they

Ps 118:21 *I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.* ☞

Dan 2:17-20, 23 Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ☞ ... ²³To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter." ☞

Luke 17:12-18 And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers,^a who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ☞



^q *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

Luke 18:41-43 “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me recover my sight.” ⁴²And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.” ⁴³And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

2Cor 1:10-11 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that *he will deliver us again*. ¹¹You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Here Paul speaks of other people giving thanks for his deliverance in response to prayer (cf. [Luke 18:43](#) ↑).

Ps 50:15 ...and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

Rejoice in God’s deliverance from hard times

See also:

- [Ps 107:22](#) ↑
- ... in which one should rejoice, p. 1277

1Sam 2:1 And Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the LORD; my strength^r is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because *I rejoice in your salvation*.

^r Hebrew *horn*

Hannah rejoiced in God, delighting in his deliverance from both torment (cf. 1:6) and the humiliation of her childlessness, through the birth of Samuel.

Ps 14:7b When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

Ps 30:11-12 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, ¹²that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Note that “my glory” (v. 12) alludes to one’s whole self.

Ps 126:1-3 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. ²Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.” ³The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

Isa 51:11 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isa 52:7-9 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” ⁸The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. ⁹Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.

Joel 2:20-23 I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his vanguard^s into the eastern sea, and his rear guard^t into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for *he has done great things*. ²¹“Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things!” ²²Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit; the fig tree and vine give their full yield. ²³“Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before.

^s Hebrew *face*

^t Hebrew *his end*

The “northerner” (v. 20) refers to an incredibly great plague of locusts that had brought desolation to the land.

Zeph 3:14-15 Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.

Ps 35:27 Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, “Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant!”

Here David calls upon others to rejoice in God’s deliverance of him from hard times. Similarly Isaiah 49:13 below figuratively calls on creation to rejoice in God’s deliverance of his people, reflective of their own joy.

Isa 49:13 Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.



‡ Judah's rejoicing over God's miraculous deliverance, in answer to their prayer:

2Chr 20:12, 24, 27-28 *O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.* ☞ ... ²⁴When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, *they looked toward the horde, and behold, there^u were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped.* ☞ ... ²⁷Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat at their head, *returning to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies.* ²⁸*They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD.* ☞

^u Hebrew they

Pray for persecuted Christians

e) Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering and Cries

See also:

- *God's discipline and testing can be intense, but God brings his people through*, p. 878
- *19. God's Care of His People*, p. 901
- *In spite of his people's troubles, God will fulfill his plans and purposes for them*, p. 958

Subsections

- God is near us in hard times and when we pray
- God does not ignore the suffering and cries of the afflicted
- God comforts his people in hard times, and in delivering them
- God hears the cries of the godly and rescues them . . .
- . . . God has compassion on his people, saving and blessing them
- Further testimony to God answering prayers in suffering and trouble
- Further specific examples of God answering prayers in suffering and trouble

God is near us in hard times and when we pray

See also:

- *God is always with his people*, p. 1125

Obviously God is always near us – or with us. However the following verses largely seem to suggest that in prayer and hard times we are more open to a deeper awareness or experience of God's presence.

Ps 34:18 *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.* ☞

Ps 119:150-151 They draw near who persecute me with evil purpose; they are far from your law. ¹⁵¹*But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true.* ☞

Ps 145:18 *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.* ☞

Lam 3:57 *You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!'* ☞

Deut 4:7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? ☞

God does not ignore the suffering and cries of the afflicted

Ps 22:24 *For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.* ☞

Ps 9:12 *For he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.* ☞

Ps 31:22 I had said in my alarm,^v "I am cut off from your sight." *But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help.* ☞

^v Or in my haste

Ps 69:33 *For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.* ☞

Ps 102:17 *... he regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer.* ☞

Ex 2:23-25 During those many days the king of Egypt died, and *the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to*



God. ²⁴And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

Ex 3:7 Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ...

Ex 22:22-23, 26-27 You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. ²³If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, ... ²⁶If ever you take your neighbor’s cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, ²⁷for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And *if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.*

Job 34:28 ... so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to him, and *he heard the cry of the afflicted*—

Ps 106:44 Nevertheless, *he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry.*

God comforts his people in hard times, and in delivering them

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

^w Or *the valley of deep darkness*

The shepherd’s rod and staff were used to rescue, protect and guide the sheep. In this most famous of psalms, where God is spoken of as a shepherd, they are used to allude to God’s protection and guidance – which bring comfort to his people.

Ps 94:19 *When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.*

The term “consolations” is indicative of “comfort” (GNT, NLT; cf. CEV, NCV).

Ps 119:50, 76 *This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.* ... ⁷⁶*Let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant.*

God’s promise gave the psalmist reason to hope and so ask that God’s steadfast love would comfort him (v. 76).

Isa 12:1 You^x will say in that day: “I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, *your anger turned away, that you might comfort me.*

^x The Hebrew for *you* is singular in verse 1

Isa 40:1-2 *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare^y is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.*

^y Or *time of service*

Isa 49:13 Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For *the LORD has comforted his people* and will have compassion on his afflicted.

Isa 51:3, 12 For *the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places* and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. ... ¹²*I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass, ...*

Isa 52:9 Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for *the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem.*

Isa 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;^z he has sent me *to bind up the brokenhearted*, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;^a ²to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; *to comfort all who mourn;* ³*to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.*^b

^z Or *afflicted*

^a Or *the opening* [of the eyes] *to those who are blind; Septuagint and recovery of sight to the blind*

^b Or *that he may display his beauty*

Verses 1-2a of this prophecy were fulfilled by Jesus as he stated in Luke 4:18-21. References to the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives and the like may well have a literal application but they are usually viewed in a spiritual sense (cf. [Matt 5:4](#) ↓). Most commentators interpret Jesus concluding his quotation immediately prior to “the day of vengeance of our God” to indicate that he will fulfill the remainder of the prophecy on his second coming.

Isa 66:13 *As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*



Jer 31:13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. *I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.* 📖

Matt 5:4 *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* 📖

2Cor 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* ⁵*For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.*^c 📖

^c Or *For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ*

Verse 5 is speaking of God's comfort overflowing into our lives through Christ (cf. NCV, NLT).

2Cor 7:6 *But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ...* 📖

Phil 2:1 So if there is any encouragement *in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ...* 📖

This appears to be speaking of comfort from Christ's love (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT). In referring to this comfort, Paul may well have had in view the hard time that the Philippians were enduring, spoken of in the verses immediately preceding this (cf. 1:29-30).

✦ A blessing pertaining to Christ's and God's comfort:

2Thes 2:16-17 *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.* 📖

Paul prays that they would be comforted and given strength in everything they do and say for the Lord.

God hears the cries of the godly and rescues them . . .

See also:

- *God answers those who obey and please him . . .*, p. 1230
- *. . . For God saves and protects those who take refuge in him*, p. 1947

- *Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times*, p. 1973

- *Rejoice in God's deliverance from hard times*, p. 1974

Ps 4:3 But know that *the LORD has set apart the godly for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.* 📖

Ps 32:6 *Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.* 📖

Ps 34:15, 17 *The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.* 📖 ... ¹⁷*When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.* 📖

Ps 50:14-15 *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,^d and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.* 📖

^d Or *Make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*

Ps 55:17-18, 22 *Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.* ¹⁸*He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me.* 📖 ... ²²*Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.* 📖

Ps 91:14-15 *Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name.* ¹⁵*When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.* 📖

Ps 145:18-19 *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.* ¹⁹*He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.* 📖

The phrase "in truth" may refer to one or more of: sincerity (cf. CEV, GNT, NLT); righteous integrity; and genuine faith.

Luke 18:7-8 *And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?* ⁸*I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.* Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? 📖

Note that v. 8b points to the need to persist in faith (cf. AMP) – as is required in persistence in prayer – doing so until Christ's return.

Ps 18:6, 16-21, 24-27 *In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.* 📖 ... ¹⁶*He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters.* ¹⁷*He rescued me from my strong enemy and from those who hated me, for*



they were too mighty for me. ¹⁸They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. ¹⁹He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me. ²⁰The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. ²¹For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. ... ²⁴So the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight. ²⁵With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; ²⁶with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous. ²⁷For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. ...

David cried to the LORD (v. 6), who rescued him (vv. 16-19), according to David's righteousness (vv. 20-27).

... God has compassion on his people, saving and blessing them

See also:

- Ps 116:5-6 ↓

Deut 32:36 For the LORD will vindicate^e his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone and there is none remaining, bond or free. ...

^e Septuagint judge

In association with his vindication of his people, God would have compassion on them and take action accordingly. Note that "there is none remaining, bond or free" may well have exile in view.

Judg 2:18 Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. ...

Note that "pity" (cf. Ps 102:13 ↓; Isa 49:10 ↓; Isa 63:9 ↓) is akin to "compassion", but also involves a sense of sorrow. Similarly "mercy" (cf. Ps 103:4 ↓) involves compassion.

Ps 102:13 You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come. ...

Ps 103:4 ... who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ...

The second part of the verse speaks of the blessing and enrichment that God's love and mercy bring to his people.

Isa 49:10, 13-15 ... they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. ... ¹³Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. ¹⁴But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." ¹⁵"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. ...

Note that Psalms 136:23 also speaks of God not forgetting his people in hard times – "It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever; ..."

Isa 54:7-8 For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. ⁸In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer. ...

Isa 63:7, 9 I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. ... ⁹In all their affliction he was afflicted,^f and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. ...

^f Or he did not afflict

"In all their affliction he was afflicted" (v. 9) underlines God's empathy for his people, a key factor motivating his compassionate acts (vv. 7, 9).

Jer 12:15 And after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land. ...

The reference is actually to ungodly nations, who God would pluck out of their lands, sending them into exile. God's compassion on them is aimed at their repentance (cf. vv. 16-17).

Lam 3:22, 32 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;^g his mercies never come to an end; ... ³²but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; ...

^g Syriac, Targum; Hebrew Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off



Zec 10:6 *I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back because I have compassion on them, and they shall be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.* 📖

✦ **God heals the brokenhearted:**

Ps 147:3 *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.* 📖

Further testimony to God answering prayers in suffering and trouble

Gen 35:3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the *God who answers me in the day of my distress* and has been with me wherever I have gone. 📖

Ps 10:17-18 *O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear* ¹⁸*to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.* 📖

Ps 22:5 *To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.* 📖

Ps 34:4, 6 *I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.* 📖 ... ⁶*This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.* 📖

Ps 116:1-9 *I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. ²Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. ³The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. ⁴Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!" ⁵Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful. ⁶The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. ⁷Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. ⁸For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; ⁹I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* 📖

The "simple" (v. 6) are those who have "childlike faith" (NLT). Note that v. 2 points out that God's answering of prayer for help gives good reason to continue to call on him for help in the future.

Ps 118:5 *Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free.* 📖

Ps 138:3 *On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased.*^h 📖

^h Hebrew *you made me bold in my soul with strength*

Lam 3:53-58 ... they flung me alive into the pit and cast stones on me; ⁵⁴water closed over my head; I said, 'I am lost.' ⁵⁵*"I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; ⁵⁶you heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help!' ⁵⁷You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' ⁵⁸"You have taken up my cause, O Lord; you have redeemed my life.* 📖

Jonah 2:2 ... saying, "*I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.*" 📖

Judg 10:11-12 And the LORD said to the people of Israel, "Did I not save you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites and from the Philistines? ¹²*The Sidonians also, and the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you, and you cried out to me, and I saved you out of their hand.*" 📖

Here and in Ps 81:7a below God himself testifies to answering his people's calls for help.

Ps 81:7 *In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah* 📖

✦ **God blessed Joseph greatly following his suffering:**

Gen 41:52 The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For *God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.*"ⁱ 📖

ⁱ *Ephraim* sounds like the Hebrew for *making fruitful*

Further specific examples of God answering prayers in suffering and trouble

See also:

- *Examples and affirmations of God answering prayer*, p. 1233
- *Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times*, p. 1973
- *Rejoice in God's deliverance from hard times*, p. 1974

Ex 3:7-10 *Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and*



broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

Deut 26:6-8 And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. ⁷Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror,^j with signs and wonders.

^j Hebrew with great terror

Judg 3:9, 15a But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ... ¹⁵Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man.

1Sam 1:10-11, 19-20, 27 She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. ¹¹And she vowed a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.” ... ¹⁹They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. ²⁰And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the LORD.”^k ... ²⁷For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him.

^k Samuel sounds like the Hebrew for heard of God

2Ki 13:4-5 Then Jehoahaz sought the favor of the LORD, and the LORD listened to him, for he saw the oppression of Israel,

how the king of Syria oppressed them. ⁵(Therefore the LORD gave Israel a savior, so that they escaped from the hand of the Syrians, and the people of Israel lived in their homes as formerly.)

2Chr 32:18-21 And they shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, in order that they might take the city. ¹⁹And they spoke of the God of Jerusalem as they spoke of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men's hands. ²⁰Then Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed because of this and cried to heaven. ²¹And the LORD sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword.

Neh 9:9, 11 And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea, ... ¹¹And you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on dry land, and you cast their pursuers into the depths, as a stone into mighty waters.

Acts 4:29, 31 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants¹ to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ... ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

¹ Greek bondservants

Acts 12:5, 11 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. ... ¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

Pray for persecuted Christians



Persecution

I. The Persecution of God's People

- a) God's People Face Persecution 1982
- b) Types of Persecution 1986
- c) The Antichrist and the Final Persecution 1992
- d) God's Care of Persecuted Believers 2000

II. What to Do in Persecution

- a) Be Faithful to God and Endure 2006
- b) Have Faith in God and Pray 2011
- c) Rejoice 2015
- d) Epilogue: Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution 2018

I. The Persecution of God's People

The Bible warns that faithfully following God inevitably results in persecution and difficulties. In fact in a number of countries today severe persecution of Christians is common. Additionally, the Bible speaks of a time just prior to Jesus Christ's return when persecution will be severe worldwide. But along with such warnings, the Bible gives wonderful and powerful promises of God's care for his people in the face of persecution.

a) God's People Face Persecution

Subsections

- Following God and Jesus Christ results in persecution . . .
- . . . It brings all kinds of hardships and suffering
- Spreading the gospel can lead to opposition . . .
- . . . and spreading the gospel can result in persecution
- God's people are hated
- God's people may face plots against them

Following God and Jesus Christ results in persecution . . .

2Tim 3:12 *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ...* 

Matt 10:25b *If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign^a those of his household.* 

^a Greek lacks *will they malign*

Jesus is referring primarily to himself and his disciples (cf. [John 15:20-21](#) ↓).

John 15:20-21 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' *If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.* If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹*But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.* 

John 16:1-4 *I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ²They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed,*

the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. 

"I have said all these things to you" (v. 1) refers to what Jesus had told his disciples towards the end of the preceding chapter regarding the world's hatred of them (cf. 15:18-25). Jesus warned his disciples of coming persecution so as to prepare them for it (vv. 1, 4).

Acts 8:1, 3 And Saul approved of his execution. And *there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*  ... ³*But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.* 

Acts 26:9, 11 I myself was convinced that I ought *to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*  ... ¹¹*And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.* 

Opposing the name of Jesus (v. 9) primarily involved persecuting his followers (cf. NLT), as reflected in v. 11b.

Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how *I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.* 

Gal 4:29 But just as at that time *he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.* 

Ishmael who was born to Abraham in the ordinary way mocked Isaac (cf. Gen 21:9) who was born to Abraham by the power of the Spirit, with God having enabled barren Sarah to conceive him. Similarly the legalistic Jews who advocated following the law so as to earn righteousness, persecuted the believers whose righteousness was through the Spirit. Furthermore, this points to the general principle that those who are of the world persecute those who are reborn by the Spirit.

Gal 6:12 It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be *persecuted for the cross of Christ.* 



1Thes 3:3-4, 7 ... that no one be moved by *these afflictions*. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. ⁴For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. ... ⁷for this reason, brothers,^b in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.

^b Or *brothers and sisters*

1Pet 4:16-18 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"^c

^c Greek *where will the ungodly and sinner appear?*

The judgment of the family of God (v. 17) refers to the persecution that believers experience (v. 16), a form of disciplinary or purifying judgment. This testing judgment endured by believers as they follow the path of salvation, appears to be what Peter has in view in referring to the righteous being "scarcely saved" (v. 18).

Rev 12:17a Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The "dragon" is Satan. In making war against God's people, one of Satan's main tactics is to persecute them.

Ps 119:86 All your commandments are sure; they persecute me with falsehood; help me!

The persecution that the psalmist suffered may well have been related to his devotion to God's word and ways.

Matt 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,^d and the violent take it by force.

^d Or *has been coming violently*

The phrase "has suffered violence" seemingly refers to persecution of believers. Accordingly, the following clause – "the violent take it by force" – may be speaking of violent people attacking the kingdom. Alternatively, the first phrase could be speaking of the kingdom "going forward in strength" (NCV™; cf. ESV text note), with the latter phrase then likely referring to fervent people pressing their way into the kingdom.

... It brings all kinds of hardships and suffering

The hardships and suffering referred to in the following verses are largely ones resulting from persecution, but in some verses other things are possibly also in view – such as appears to be the case in Romans 8:35.

Acts 14:22 ...strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that *through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God*.

Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For *I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name*."

Acts 20:23 ... except that *the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me*.

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

Likely the things listed were mentioned as things that the believers were possibly to face because of their faith.

2Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers,^e of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

^e Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Phil 1:29-30 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Heb 10:32-33 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

1Pet 1:6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ...



1Pet 5:9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that *the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.* 

Note that this shows that believers should draw strength in the knowledge that they are not alone, but part of a fellowship of suffering believers.

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and *partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus*, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 

Gal 6:17 From now on let no one cause me trouble, for *I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.* 

The term “marks of Jesus” alludes to the markings that identified slaves as belonging to a particular master. Paul is implying that likewise his scars from his sufferings identified him as belonging to Jesus (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

✦ Suffering as being part of God’s will for a believer:

1Pet 4:19 Therefore let *those who suffer according to God’s will* entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. 

Similarly 3:17 indicates that suffering for simply doing good can be God’s will – “For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.”

Spreading the gospel can lead to opposition . . .

See also:

- . . . *and many Jews strongly opposed the spreading of the gospel*, p. 630

Acts 13:7-8 He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who *summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.* ⁸*But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.* 

Acts 14:1-2 Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and *spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.* ²*But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.*^f 

^f Or *brothers and sisters*

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, *they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.* 

Acts 19:8-9 And he entered the synagogue and for three months *spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.* ⁹*But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.*^g 

^g Some manuscripts add *from the fifth hour to the tenth* (that is, from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M.)

1Cor 16:8-9 But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹*for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.* 

Phil 1:27-28a Only let your manner of life be worthy^h of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind *striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,* ²⁸*and not frightened in anything by your opponents.* 

^h Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy*

The segment “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” probably refers primarily to spreading the gospel (cf. CEV, NIV).

Phil 3:18 For *many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.* 

Many live in opposition to the gospel, that is centered on “the cross of Christ” (cf. 1Cor 16:8-9 ↑).

1Thes 2:2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, *we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.* 

1Thes 2:14-16 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵*who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind* ¹⁶*by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved*—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God’s wrath has come upon them at last!ⁱ 

ⁱ Or *completely, or forever*

This appears to indicate that the opposition of the Jews to the gospel was not only displeasing to God, but even produced hostility towards unconverted Gentiles who were potential respondents to the gospel.

2Tim 4:15 Beware of him yourself, for *he strongly opposed our message.* 



... and spreading the gospel can result in persecution

See also:

- [1Thes 2:2](#) ↑
- [Continue to tell people the gospel despite suffering for doing so](#), p. 1736

Acts 4:1-3 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because *they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead*. ³And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 📖

Acts 5:40 ... and when they had called in the apostles, *they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus*, and let them go. 📖

Acts 6:8-13 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, *rose up and disputed with Stephen*. ¹⁰But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹²And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, ¹³and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, ... 📖

No doubt Stephen's ministry (v. 8) involved spreading the gospel, which is also possibly in view in v. 10; hence the opposition.

Acts 13:49-50 And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. ⁵⁰But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, *stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district*. 📖

Col 4:3 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, *to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison*— 📖

2Tim 1:8, 11-12a Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in *suffering for the gospel* by the power of God, 📖 ... ¹¹*for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher*, ¹²*which is why I suffer as I do*. 📖

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, *was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus*. 📖

Patmos is a small island and was apparently used as a penal colony. John was imprisoned there because of his faithfulness to the gospel.

Rev 6:9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar *the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne*. 📖

Rev 17:6a And I saw the woman, *drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*.^j 📖

^j Greek *the witnesses to Jesus*

The "woman" referred to here is the symbolic "Babylon the Great". As the text note indicates, "the martyrs of Jesus" were witnesses to Jesus.

God's people are hated

Matt 10:22 ... and *you will be hated by all for my name's sake*. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 📖

Here "all" could be hyperbole, but more likely refers to all types or classes of people (cf. "all nations", [Matt 24:9](#) ↓).

Matt 24:9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and *you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake*. 📖

John 15:18-19 *If the world hates you*, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because *you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you*. 📖

John 17:14 I have given them your word, and *the world has hated them because they are not of the world*, just as I am not of the world. 📖

1Jn 3:13 *Do not be surprised, brothers,^k that the world hates you*. 📖

^k Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In



New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church; also verses 14, 16

Luke 6:22 *Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!* 📖

1Ki 22:8 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, *"There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but I hate him, for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil."* And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." 📖

Ahab hated Micaiah because he prophesied faithfully God's word, rather than tailor his message to what the king wanted to hear.

Isa 66:5 Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: *"Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame.* 📖

God's people may face plots against them

2Chr 24:21 *But they conspired against him* [Zechariah son of Jehoiada], and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. 📖

Neh 6:2 *Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm.* 📖

Jer 11:18-19 *The LORD made it* [a plot] *known to me* and I knew; then you showed me their deeds. ¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know *it was against me they devised schemes, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more."* 📖

Jer 18:18, 23a *Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not pay attention to any of his words."* 📖 ... ²³Yet you, O LORD, know *all their plotting to kill me.* 📖

Note that in v. 18 Jeremiah's opponents appear to imply that they could do without him, for they still would have their priests, wise men and supposed prophets.

Acts 9:23-24 When many days had passed, *the Jews plotted to kill him,* ²⁴*but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, ...* 📖

Acts 20:3 There he spent three months, and when *a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria,* he decided to return through Macedonia. 📖

Acts 20:18b-19 You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹*-serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ...* 📖

Acts 23:12-15 When it was day, *the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.* ¹³*There were more than forty who made this conspiracy.* ¹⁴They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. ¹⁵Now therefore you, *along with the council, give notice to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near.*" 📖

✚ Amidst their scheming, many waited for Jeremiah to slip:

Jer 20:10 *For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! "Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" say all my close friends, watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him."* 📖

"Terror is on every side" could be a description (possibly a derisive one) of Jeremiah and his predicament, effectively calling him "The Man Who Lives in Terror" (NLT). The use of "friends" is either sarcasm or referring to former friends – "old friends" (NLT), "so-called friends" (CEV).

Pray for persecuted Christians

b) Types of Persecution

Subsections

- Ridicule
- Verbal abuse
- Lies and slander
- Ostracism and expulsion



- Imprisonment
- Beatings and violence
- Threat of death . . .
- . . . and even death
- Further forms of persecution

Ridicule

2Chr 36:16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

Neh 4:1-3 ¹ Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. ²And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves?^m Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?" ³Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!"

¹ Ch 3:33 in Hebrew

^m Or *Will they commit themselves to God?*

On returning from exile, the Jews faced ridicule when rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Ps 22:6-8 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. ⁷All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸"He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"

Ps 42:10 As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"

With their taunt the psalmist's foes appear to ridicule him, probably calling into question the capacity of his God in whom he trusted to help him.

Ps 69:7-12 For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. ⁸I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. ⁹For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. ¹⁰When I wept and humbledⁿ my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. ¹¹When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to

them. ¹²I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me.

ⁿ Hebrew lacks *and humbled*

The use of "reproach" here is suggestive of insults (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Jer 17:15 Behold, they say to me, "Where is the word of the LORD? Let it come!"

Sarcasm is evident here.

Jer 20:7b-8 I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. ⁸For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.

Jeremiah's warnings of coming judgment brought him derision from the unrepentant people of Jerusalem.

Acts 2:4, 13 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ... ¹³But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

Acts 17:32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

Verbal abuse

See also:

- [Matt 5:11](#) ; [1Pet 3:16](#)

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

Acts 18:6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

1Cor 4:12b When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ...

1Pet 4:4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; ...

Jer 15:10 Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.



In a sense cursing is a form of verbal abuse – as per the theme of this subsection – particularly if unwarranted.

Lies and slander

Matt 5:11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and *utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.* 📖

Acts 6:11-14 Then they secretly instigated men who said, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.”¹²And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council,¹³and they set up false witnesses who said, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law,¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.” 📖

Acts 24:5-6, 9 For we have found this man a plague [Paul], one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.⁶He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.⁹...⁹The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so. 📖

° Some manuscripts add *and we would have judged him according to our law. 7But the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took him out of our hands, 8commanding his accusers to come before you.*

Rom 3:8 And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just. 📖

1Cor 4:13 ... when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. 📖

1Pet 2:12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. 📖

1Pet 3:16 ... having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 📖

3Jn 1:10a So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, *talking wicked nonsense against us.* 📖

Rev 2:9 I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and *the slander*^ρ of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 📖

^ρ Greek *blasphemy*

Jesus Christ knew the afflictions of the church in Smyrna, including the slandering that their opponents did of them.

Ezra 4:7, 12-13 In the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia. The letter was written in Aramaic and translated.⁹ 📖 ...¹²be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding *that rebellious and wicked city.* They are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations.¹³Now be it known to the king that *if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be impaired.* 📖

⁹ Hebrew written in Aramaic and translated in Aramaic, indicating that 4:8-6:18 is in Aramaic; another interpretation is *The letter was written in the Aramaic script and set forth in the Aramaic language*

Although they could claim some past history as evidence – i.e. the attempts of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to break away from the rule of Babylon – at best what was said by the opponents of the Jews was conjecture; basically it was a lie (as was the case below in Amos 7:10).

Amos 7:10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words.” 📖

Ostracism and expulsion

Amos 7:12-13 And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there,¹³but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.” 📖

Amaziah was a priest in charge of the sanctuary at Bethel and carried a significant amount of authority. The prophet Amos was originally from Judah, but God had called him to prophesy in the northern kingdom of Israel. Amaziah’s directive would have meant Amos was expelled from the sanctuary at Bethel and would have effectively labeled him as being unwelcome in Israel (cf. NSB).



Luke 6:22-23 Blessed are you when people hate you and when *they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!* ²³Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so *their fathers did to the prophets.* 📖

Here Jesus speaks of his followers being excluded and rejected (along with being insulted), just as the prophets had been.

John 9:22 (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for *the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus^r to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.*) 📖

^r Greek *him*

John 12:42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be *put out of the synagogue*; ... 📖

Acts 13:50 But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and *drove them out of their district.* 📖

1Thes 2:14b-15 For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, ¹⁵who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and *drove us out*, and displease God and oppose all mankind ... 📖

Imprisonment

See also:

▪ [Acts 22:19](#) ↴; [2Cor 11:23](#) ↴

1Ki 22:26-27 And the king of Israel said, "Seize Micaiah, and take him back to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son, ²⁷and say, "Thus says the king, "*Put this fellow in prison and feed him meager rations of bread and water, until I come in peace.*"” 📖

Ahab, the king of Israel, said this in response to Micaiah's prophecy from God that Ahab would be killed (cf. vv. 17-23).

2Chr 16:9b-10a [Hanani:] You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars." ¹⁰*Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this.* 📖

Jer 38:6 So *they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern, but only mud, and Jeremiah sank in the mud.* 📖

Matt 14:3-4 For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife,^s ⁴because John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." 📖

^s Some manuscripts *his brother's wife*

Acts 5:18 ... *they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.* 📖

Acts 8:3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, *he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.* 📖

Acts 16:23-24 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, *they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.* ²⁴*Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.* 📖

Acts 20:23 ... except that *the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.* 📖

Acts 22:4-5 I persecuted this Way to the death, *binding and delivering to prison both men and women,* ⁵as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus *to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem* to be punished. 📖

Phil 1:13 ... so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard^t and to all the rest that *my imprisonment is for Christ.* 📖

^t Greek *in the whole praetorium*

2Tim 2:8-9 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in *my gospel,* ⁹*for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.* But the word of God is not bound! 📖

Heb 11:36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and *even chains and imprisonment.* 📖

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, *was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* 📖



As noted earlier, Patmos was used as a penal colony.

Rev 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, *the devil is about to throw some of you into prison*, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 

Beatings and violence

See also:

- [Acts 16:23](#) ; [Heb 11:36](#) 

Matt 10:17 Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and *flog you in their synagogues*, ... 

Acts 5:40 ... and when they had called in the apostles, *they beat them* and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 

Acts 14:19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, *they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city*, supposing that he was dead. 

Acts 21:30-32 Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. *They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple*, and at once the gates were shut. ³¹And as *they were seeking to kill him*, word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³²He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, *they stopped beating Paul*. 

Acts 22:19 And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and *beat those who believed in you*. 

2Cor 11:23-25a Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, *with countless beatings, and often near death*. ²⁴*Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one*. ²⁵*Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned*. 

Gal 6:17 From now on let no one cause me trouble, for *I bear on my body the marks of Jesus*. 

As noted earlier in the chapter, in using the term “marks of Jesus” Paul is implying that his scars from inflicted wounds identify him as belonging to Jesus (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NLT).

Heb 11:35b *Some were tortured*, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. 

Threat of death . . .

See also:

- [Acts 21:31](#) 
- [1Ki 19:14](#) 
- [God’s people may face plots against them](#), p. 1986

1Ki 19:1-2 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “*So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow*.” 

Note that Elijah had earlier ordered the execution of the pagan prophets of Baal.

Jer 26:8, 11 And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then *the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die!*”  ... ¹¹Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “*This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.*” 

Acts 9:1 But *Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord*, went to the high priest ... 

Acts 9:29 And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists.^u But *they were seeking to kill him*. 

^u That is, Greek-speaking Jews

Acts 14:5 When *an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them*, ... 

Rom 8:35-36 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or *danger, or sword*? ³⁶*As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”* 

Here Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 to underline the fact that the threat of death – along with the other difficulties and persecution he referred to (v. 35) – was a part of his and his companions’ lives.

2Cor 1:8-9 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers,^v of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For *we were so*



utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. 

^v Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

Heb 12:4 *In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.* 

Here “sin” presumably refers to opposition arising from or out of sin (cf. v. 3) – which can lead to death, as the writer alludes to.

... and even death

See also:

- ... *Martyrdom will be prominent*, p. 1997

1Ki 19:14 He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and *killed your prophets with the sword*, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” 

Matt 10:21 *Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ...* 

Matt 24:9 *Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.* 

John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues. *Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.* 

John 21:18-19 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but *when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.* ¹⁹*(This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.)* And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” 

Acts 7:59-60 *And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”* ⁶⁰*And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.* 

Acts 12:2 *He killed James the brother of John with the sword, ...* 

Acts 22:4 *I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ...* 

Acts 26:10 And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when *they were put to death* I cast my vote against them. 

1Cor 13:3 If I give away all I have, and *if I deliver up my body to be burned*,^w but have not love, I gain nothing. 

^w Some manuscripts *deliver up my body [to death] that I may boast*

Here Paul refers to being burnt at the stake because of one’s faith – a sacrifice which brings one no benefit without love.

Heb 11:37a *They were stoned, they were sawn in two,^x they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—* 

^x Some manuscripts add *they were tempted*

1Jn 3:12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and *murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.* 

Cain’s killing of Abel illustrates how the righteous are at times killed by evil people.

Rev 2:10b *Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.* 

Rev 13:15 And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might *cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.* 



Further forms of persecution

See also:

- ... *Endure associated persecution and hardships*, p. 1411

Ezra 4:4-5 Then the people of the land *discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build* ⁵*and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose*, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. 

Luke 21:12 But before all this *they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake.* 

This is speaking of what would happen before signs of the end of the age. Such persecution would/will involve believers being put on trial before kings and governors (cf. CEV).

Acts 26:11 And I punished them often in all the synagogues and *tried to make them blaspheme*, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities. 

Heb 10:34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted *the plundering of your property*, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. 

✦ **Jesus said that his mission would cause division and conflict:**

Matt 10:34-36 *Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.* ³⁵*For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.* ³⁶*And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.* 

Jesus came to bring peace between people and God, and gave spiritual peace to his disciples as well. But Jesus knew his coming would also inevitably result in division and conflict – even the persecution of some believers by members of their own household. This is reflected in Luke 21:16 – “You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death.”

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) The Antichrist and the Final Persecution

See also:

- *God will ultimately save believers from the persecution of the end times*, p. 2003

The Bible speaks of a figure of the end times that is opposed to God and Jesus Christ, and persecutes their people. Daniel has visions which contain figures that appear to be ultimately representative of such an individual. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10 Paul clearly speaks of such a “man”. In his letters John refers to an “antichrist”. Most prominently, in Revelation John speaks of two “beasts” – accomplices of Satan – arising in the end times. The predominant first beast is correlated by many with a final antichrist, though others consider it and the second beast to represent evil world systems rather than individual persons. See also the comment on Revelation 13:1-2, 5-7 below in *The antichrist will be of Satan and opposed to God*, p. 1993.

The portrayals in both Daniel and Revelation are in apocalyptic literature and thus are highly symbolic. As such much of what is written is open to interpretation. The purpose is not to give precise details but enough knowledge so that when such events occur, believers will be able to recognize them for what they are. Furthermore the general concepts involved give encouragement to all God's people, giving reason for hope amidst persecution in all eras.

Subsections

- Scripture speaks of the coming of an antichrist
- The antichrist will be of Satan and opposed to God
- The antichrist will have great authority and be worshiped
- Persecution of God's people will increase in the end times – especially due to the antichrist . . .
- . . . Martyrdom will be prominent
- “Three and a half years” is given for the rule of the antichrist and intense persecution
- The end of the antichrist
- The contrasting outcomes for submitting and not submitting to the antichrist

Scripture speaks of the coming of an antichrist

2Thes 2:3, 6-8 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and *the man of lawlessness^y is revealed, the son of destruction,^z*  ... ⁶*And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be*



revealed in his time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.



^y Some manuscripts *sin*

^z Greek *the son of perdition* (a Hebrew idiom)

This "man of lawlessness" is quite likely the antichrist. There are a number of theories as to what or who is restraining him (vv. 6-7). The "mystery of lawlessness" (v. 7) appears to refer to evil power in rebellion (cf. v. 3) against God, which is limited for now but still influential (cf. [1Jn 4:3](#) ↓).

1Jn 2:18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that *antichrist is coming*, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

The final antichrist will be preceded by many others who are anti-Christ – "even now many antichrists have come". False teachers could be primarily in view, but the designation is applicable at least to some degree to anyone who actively denies that Jesus is the Christ (cf. [1Jn 4:3](#) ↓). This is asserted by v. 22 – "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son."

1Jn 4:3 ... and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. *This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.*

The reference to "the spirit of the antichrist" coming probably has the coming of the antichrist himself ultimately in view (cf. CEV, NIV, NLT). Note that in conjunction with the teaching above in 2 Thessalonians 2:7a and 1 John 2:18, this verse indicates that even now the antichrist exerts influence in the world – with the spirit of the antichrist's work through false teachers primarily being in view.

Rev 17:7-8 But the angel said to me, "Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit^a and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

^a Greek *the abyss*

This beast is quite probably the beast of ch. 13 (cf. [Rev 13:1-2, 5-7](#) ↓; [Rev 16:13](#) ↓). While its "seven heads and ten horns" (v. 7) contrast with the "ten horns and seven heads" (13:1) of the latter, they match the description of Satan in 12:3 as "a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns" –

reinforcing the beast's association with Satan (as per the following subsection) and thus the correlation of this beast with the beast of ch. 13. The expression "was and is not and is to come" (v. 8b; cf. v. 11) – along with the similar expression earlier in v. 8 – suggests that the beast with his power was once apparent, although presently not, but will come again and exercise authority. The woman is "Babylon the Great". The most prominent views of what this represents are: Rome, with its decadence and oppression of Christians; an actual rebuilt city of Babylon, characterized by the power and ungodliness of the original; and all worldly political and religious opposition to the true God.

Dan 7:7-8, 20, 23-24 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. ⁸I considered the horns, and *behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.* ... ²⁰and about the ten horns that were on its head, and *the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions.* ... ²³"Thus he said: 'As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. ²⁴As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and *another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.*

In this vision of Daniel's, the "fourth beast" (v. 7) does not itself appear to be the antichrist. Rather the little "horn" that comes from it and becomes so dominant is generally thought to portray the coming antichrist. The "fourth beast" could represent the Roman Empire. Note that it has ten horns (v. 7b; cf. [Rev 17:7-8](#) ↑). The reference to the little "horn" speaking "great things" (vv. 8, 20) denotes boasting.

The antichrist will be of Satan and opposed to God

See also:

- [Rev 17:7-8](#) ↑

Rev 13:1-2, 5-6 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ²And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its



mouth was like a lion's mouth. And *to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.*  ... ⁵*And the beast has given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. ⁶It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling,^b that is, those who dwell in heaven.* 

^b Or *tabernacle*

The dragon is Satan. The verse preceding this passage (12:17) ends by saying of the dragon: "And he stood on the sand of the sea." Immediately following on from this, v. 1 implies that the beast "rising out of the sea" is of Satan – as further indicated by v. 2b. In addition to (or arguably instead of) a final antichrist, this first beast may symbolize various evil powers of different eras, with its heads and horns possibly symbolizing empires or rulers. The blasphemous names on the heads are possibly titles either claiming deity or blaspheming God. Another view is that the beast represents the Roman Empire, with its emperor worship – the ancient one or a revived, future one. Quite possibly "the sea" (v. 1) symbolizes the Abyss (cf. 11:7; 17:8), which is understood to be a prison or abode for demons.

2Thes 2:9-10 *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.* 

Dan 7:25 *He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.* 

The "times" is often understood to speak of the times set for "sacred feasts and holy days" (AMP; cf. CEV, GNT, NLT, NRSV). In conjunction with this, "the laws" is often interpreted as referring to God's law in particular.

Dan 11:36a "And the king shall do as he wills. *He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods.* 

2Thes 2:3-4 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and *the man of lawlessness^c is revealed, the son of destruction,^d ⁴who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.* 

^c Some manuscripts *sin*

^d Greek *the son of perdition* (a Hebrew idiom)

Dan 9:27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week,^e and *for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.* 

^e Or *seven*; twice in this verse

Many commentators consider that the antichrist is most likely the ruler spoken of here – as seems to be the case in the other passages in this subsection. His actions here show his opposition to God. The last statement is difficult to translate. Many understand the first part of it as speaking of desecration of the temple in Jerusalem by the setting up of a sacrilegious object (cf. GNT, NLT).

✦ **The gathering of evil forces against God at Armageddon:**

Rev 16:13-16 *And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. ¹⁴For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") ¹⁶And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.* 

This is most likely portraying the beast – along with Satan and the false prophet (cf. [Rev 13:11-14](#) ↓) – gathering forces to battle against the forces of God – illustrating the beast's opposition to God and Jesus Christ. There is a place in Israel that many identify with "Armageddon" (v. 16), but this identification is not without its critics. This reference to "Armageddon" may simply signify the event of God's defeat of evil (cf. [Rev 19:19-20](#)), rather than also being its geographical location.

The antichrist will have great authority and be worshiped

See also:

- [Rev 13:2, 5](#) ↑
- [Dan 11:36](#) ↓

Dan 11:39-43 *He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.^f ⁴⁰"At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack^g him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into*



countries and shall overflow and pass through. ⁴¹He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. ⁴²He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ⁴³He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. 

^f Or land as payment

^g Hebrew thrust at

This appears to be speaking of an all-conquering antichrist figure, particularly if "the time of the end" (v. 40) is understood to refer to the end of the age – "the end time" (NASB). Verse 40 seemingly refers to this ruler as "the king of the North", resoundingly responding to the attack of a "king of the South" (cf. CEV, NCV, NIV). The "glorious land" (v. 41) is Israel. Note that the "foreign god" (v. 39a) possibly refers to "the god of fortresses ... A god whom his fathers did not know" (v. 38), but what it refers to exactly is open to conjecture.

Rev 13:3-4, 7b-8 One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and *the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast*. ⁴And they worshiped the dragon, for *he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"*  ... ⁷ ... *And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,* ⁸*and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.* 

Note that there are various theories regarding the "mortal wound" (v. 3a; cf. [vv. 12, 14](#) ↓). Whatever its precise meaning, it is something which the beast has miraculously survived and seems to be at least part of the reason why the whole world is so awed by the beast and follows it (v. 3b; cf. NLT).

Rev 13:11-14 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. ¹²*It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence,*^h *and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.* ¹³It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, ¹⁴*and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of^f the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.* 

^h Or on its behalf

ⁱ Or on behalf of

This second beast who exercises the first beast's authority on its behalf (cf. ESV text note, CEV, NIV, NLT) and instigates

worship of it (vv. 12, 14), is quite likely "the false prophet" of 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10. As with the first beast, there are a number of viewpoints regarding its identity, including: a human associate of the final antichrist; persecuting powers of all eras; and the priesthood of the cult of the emperor in the Roman Empire.

Rev 17:3, 9-13 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a *scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.*  ... ⁹This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while. ¹¹As for *the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth* but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. ¹²And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but *they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.* ¹³*These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast.* 

There are various theories regarding the identity of the seven hills and seven kings (vv. 9-11), including the Roman Empire and Roman emperors. In v. 11, "it belongs to the seven" (v. 11b) may mean that the beast is one of the seven kings (cf. CEV, GNT, NASB), or closely associated with at least one of them. The ten kings (vv. 12-13) appear to be rulers of the end times. They are only given authority for a short time (v. 12b), and will give their power and authority to the beast (v. 13), thus adding to his authority.

† Many will receive the number of the beast, in submission to him:

Rev 13:16-18 Also it [the second beast] *causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave,^j to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,* ¹⁷*so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.* ¹⁸This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate *the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.*^k 

^j Greek bondservant

^k Some manuscripts 616

Having the number of the beast is indicative of being in submission to him, even belonging to him. There are various interpretations of the number 666 (v. 18). In view of v. 17b, many see it as indicative of the name of the final antichrist. In line with this view, 666 has been derived from names through numerical values correlated with letters. Another prominent interpretation is that as 6 is one short of the perfect number 7, the number 666 represents the inferior "trinity" of Satan, the beast and the false prophet.



Persecution of God's people will increase in the end times – especially due to the antichrist . . .

See also:

- *Siege, suffering and deliverance of Jerusalem – followed by judgment on its attackers*, p. 993

Dan 7:21-22, 25 As I looked, *this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them*, ²²until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom. ☞ ... ²⁵*He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.* ☞

Dan 11:36 And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. *He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done.* ☞

The “indignation” appears to refer to God’s indignation or wrath. It implies that God will use the destruction wreaked by this king, an antichrist figure, as a form of punishment. As well as perhaps impacting many non-believers, this punishment will presumably be in part for the purification of God’s own people (cf. **Dan 12:10** ↓) – possibly Israel in particular. As such it alludes to or encompasses the persecution of God’s people by this king.

Dan 12:1, 9-10 At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And *there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.* But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ☞ ... ⁹He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until *the time of the end*. ¹⁰*Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.* ☞

Generally commentators interpret v. 1 to be referring to the end days as a time of distress primarily for God’s people – some understanding “your people” to be referring in particular to Israel – from which they will be delivered. The work of the antichrist is most likely in view, with him being spoken of in the preceding verses (cf. **Dan 11:36** ↑). Verse 10a speaks of the purification of God’s people in such a time of distress or persecution in “the time of the end” (v. 9b).

Matt 24:9-14, 21-22 *Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.* ¹⁰*And then many will fall away^l and betray one another and hate one another.* ¹¹*And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.* ¹²*And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.* ¹³*But the one who endures to the end will be saved.* ¹⁴*And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.* ☞ ... ²¹*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.* ²²*And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.* ☞

^l Or *stumble*

The teaching of vv. 9-13 was applicable to the disciples and has been to all believers since, but given the context it appears to pertain in particular to the end days (v. 14). The increase of “lawlessness” (v. 12) may not be referring specifically to persecution of believers, but it would appear to be inclusive of it, as is the case with the subsequent reference to standing firm until the end (v. 13). Similarly, the “great tribulation” (v. 21) may well be a period of distress for all people (cf. **Rev 3:10** ↓; *a) Prologue: Judgments Preceding Jesus Christ’s Return*, p. 692) but include increased, intense persecution of believers (cf. **Rev 7:14** ↓) just prior to Christ’s return. Note that some think that vv. 21-22 may primarily be referring to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Rev 12:13, 15-17 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, *he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.* ☞ ... ¹⁵*The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood.* ¹⁶*But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.* ¹⁷*Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood^m on the sand of the sea.* ☞

^mSome manuscripts *And I stood*, connecting the sentence with 13:1

This may well portray the intense persecution of the church in the last days by Satan, with a number of commentators believing the woman (cf. vv. 1-6) to be symbolic of the church. Alternatively the woman may symbolize primarily Israel or believing Jews.

Rev 13:7a Also *it [the first beast] was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.*ⁿ ☞

ⁿ Some manuscripts omit this sentence



Zec 11:15-16 Then the LORD said to me, "Take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs. 

This "foolish" or "worthless" (CEV, GNT, NLT) shepherd is understood by a number of commentators to symbolize the final antichrist. As such these verses would appear to speak of him ruling over and mistreating Israel in particular.

... Martyrdom will be prominent

See also:

- [Matt 24:9](#) 

Rev 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants^o and their brothers^p should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. 

^o Greek *fellow bondservants*

^p Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

Similar to Matthew 24:9-13 in the previous subsection, this may refer to believers in general since the beginning of Christianity – and is certainly applicable to them. But again the context suggests that the time of the end may well be primarily in view.

Rev 7:9, 14 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,  ... ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 

Martyrdom is most likely the reason for this great multitude "coming out" of the great tribulation.

Rev 11:7 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit^q will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, ... 

^q Or *the abyss*

A number of commentators consider that the "two witnesses" (cf. [v. 3](#) ) spoken of here are representative of the church, and that these verses speak of a concentrated attack on the church by the beast of the end days, no doubt involving a significant number of deaths. Note that the beast's apparent victory over them is followed by God's vindication of them (cf. vv. 11-13).

Rev 13:10 If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. 

This implies that many of God's people will undergo captivity and/or death during the reign of the beast.

Rev 13:15 And [the second beast] it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. 

Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.^r When I saw her, I marveled greatly. 

^r Greek *the witnesses to Jesus*

The "woman" is the symbolic "Babylon the Great".

Rev 20:4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 

✚ The end will be preceded by a time of trial for all the people of the world:

Rev 3:10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. 

Note that to "keep you from" could mean either to keep from undergoing it or to protect during it.



“Three and a half years” is given for the rule of the antichrist and intense persecution

In regard to the duration of the antichrist’s rule and the future period of intense persecution of believers, the Bible speaks of periods of time which are equivalent to three and a half years. Whether or not this is a literal three and half years, such specifications are indicative of the period being predetermined by God. In view of Daniel 9:27 below, this three and half years of domination may commence half way through a seven-year period of considerable power for the antichrist. See also the comment on Daniel 12:6-7 below.

Dan 7:25 He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and *they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.* 

The expression “a time, times and half a time” (cf. **Dan 12:7** ↓) can be equated with three and a half years (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, Nlrv) – “a year, two years, and half a year” (CEV text note).

Dan 9:27 And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week,^s and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. 

^s Or seven; twice in this verse

The “week” or “seven” (cf. text note) is often understood to mean a seven-year period, but again it may be symbolic. Assuming the antichrist is in view here, a number of commentators interpret the first statement to mean that the antichrist will make a covenant with Israel. Half way through this period he will break the covenant and “set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration” (NLT), presumably in the temple in Jerusalem. Such actions would set the scene for intense persecution of God’s people for the following three and a half years, i.e. the second half of the seven-year period.

Dan 12:6-7, 11-12 And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream,^t “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?”⁷ And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that *it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished.*  ... ¹¹And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. ¹²Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. 

^t Or *who was upstream*; also verse 7

The question in v. 6 appears to be regarding the duration of the aforementioned events of the end time, including the rule of an antichrist figure (cf. 11:36-45) and great distress (cf. v. 1) particularly for God’s people (v. 7; cf. v. 10). Verse 1 may be speaking of events of the antichrist’s reign on assuming virtually unchallengeable power. The 1,290 days (cf. **Rev 11:3** ↓) is quite close to three and a half years of 365 days (1277.5 days) and possibly corresponds to the period given in v. 7. There are various explanations regarding the significance of the extra 45 days making up the 1,335 days (v. 12). One is that it is a period between the end of the intense persecution and the consummation of Jesus Christ’s reign.

Rev 13:5 And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. 

Rev 11:1-3 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,² but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.³ And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” 

In v. 1, “the temple of God” may signify God’s people or church. As such v. 1 possibly figuratively speaks of protection for God’s people (cf. **Rev 12:6, 13-14** ↓) – more likely spiritual than physical – amidst great persecution and wickedness perpetrated by heathen nations (v. 2), who will trample on that which is God’s for “forty-two months”. Some commentators take a more literal interpretation, understanding that a literal temple, Jerusalem and the Jews in particular are in view. Note that 1,260 days (v. 3; cf. **Rev 12:6** ↓) is equal to 42 months (of 30 days each) – i.e. three and a half years.

‡ The protection of the “woman” from Satan for three and a half years:

Rev 12:6, 13-14 ... and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.  ... ¹³And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. ¹⁴But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. 

As noted earlier, the “woman” is quite possibly symbolic of the church, though some think that Israel is in view. Three



and a half years is indicated by both 1,260 days (v. 6) and "a time, times and half a time" (v. 14).

The end of the antichrist

See also:

- [Dan 9:27](#) ↑

Dan 7:11, 26 *I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.* ☞ ... ²⁶But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. ☞

As noted earlier, the "horn" (v. 11) is likely the antichrist and the "beast" is the fourth "beast" (v. 11b), from which the "horn" appears to have come (cf. vv. 7-8). Because of the connection between the "horn" and this "beast", the slaying of the "beast" (v. 11b) may be indicative also of the end of the "horn"; the end of its power is certainly in view in v. 26.

Dan 11:44-45 But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. ⁴⁵And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him. ☞

Zec 11:17 "Woe to my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded!" ☞

The final Antichrist may be at least primarily in view.

2Thes 2:3, 8 Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and *the man of lawlessness^u is revealed, the son of destruction,^v* ☞ ... ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. ☞

^u Some manuscripts *sin*

^v Greek *the son of perdition* (a Hebrew idiom)

The title "the son of destruction" appears to speak of being "destined for destruction" (NRSV; cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV).

Rev 17:8a, 11-14 *The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit^w and go to destruction.* ☞ ... ¹¹As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and *it goes to destruction.* ¹²And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. ¹³These are of

one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴*They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.* ☞

^w Greek *the abyss*

The destruction of the beast (vv. 8a, 11) may well also be in view in the reference to the defeat of the ten kings who give their power and authority to him (vv. 13-14). As such this would appear to refer to Jesus Christ's triumph over the beast and his forces in 19:19-20 below (cf. [2Thes 2:8](#) ↑).

Rev 19:19-20 *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.* ²⁰*And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence^x had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.* ☞

^x Or *on its behalf*

Rev 20:10 ...and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into *the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* ☞

The contrasting outcomes for submitting and not submitting to the antichrist

See also:

- [God will ultimately save believers from the persecution of the end times](#), p. 2003

Rev 14:9-11 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name." ☞

Rev 16:2, 10-11 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. ☞ ... ¹⁰The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into



darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish ¹¹and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds. 

The “throne of the beast” (v. 10a) appears to refer to the heart of his authority. The “darkness” may not necessarily be physical darkness. Quite possibly it depicts major problems besetting the beast’s kingdom, presumably adversely affecting those who submit to the beast – already in agony because of the sores inflicted on them (vv. 2, 10b-11).

Rev 15:2-4 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also *those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.* ³And they sing the song of Moses, the servant^y of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!^z ⁴Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” 

^y Greek *bondservant*

^z Some manuscripts *the ages*

The faithful believers are pictured as worshiping God in heaven. They are said to have “conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name” (v. 2) as, in faithfulness to God, they had refused to worship the beast or his image and had not submitted to receiving his mark or number (v. 2; cf. 13:16-17; [Rev 20:4 ↓](#)).

Rev 20:4-6 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶*Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.* 

For comment, see both the comment on [Rev 20:1-6](#) and the introductory comment for the subsection it is under – [Prelude: The thousand years](#), p. 718.

[Pray for persecuted Christians](#)

d) God’s Care of Persecuted Believers

See also:

- [Do not worry about what to say – you will be given what to say](#), p. 2013

Subsections

- [God’s all-surpassing purpose, work and love for his people – despite adversity](#)
- [God and Jesus Christ strengthen their people amidst trials](#)
- [God and Jesus Christ will rescue their people from trials . . .](#)
- [. . . Examples of God and Jesus Christ rescuing believers from trials](#)
- [God will ultimately save believers from the persecution of the end times](#)
- [Note: God will take vengeance on those who persecute his people](#)

God’s all-surpassing purpose, work and love for his people – despite adversity

Rom 8:28-31 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^a for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be^b against us? 

^a Some manuscripts *God works all things together for good, or God works in all things for the good*

^b Or *who is*

The phrase “all things” (v. 28) probably primarily has in view adverse experiences, in particular persecution (cf. v. 18; [vv. 35-36 ↓](#)). In vv. 29-30 Paul proceeds to look beyond any suffering to the purpose and work of God for the believer that overshadows all difficulties we might experience in this life. Verse 31 is implying that if God is for us – as Paul has emphatically shown (vv. 28-30) – there is no one (and no thing) of comparable significance that can be against us.

Rom 8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?* ³⁶As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as



sheep to be slaughtered.”³⁷*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* ³⁸*For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹*nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

This passage indicates that no difficulties or persecution can separate believers from Jesus Christ's and God's love (cf. [2Cor 4:8-9](#) ↓). In fact through Christ they “are more than conquerors” (v. 37) – they keep on being conquerors, having “overwhelming victory” (NLT, cf. GNT, NCV) over such adversity.

✦ **When believers are facing persecution, God does not abandon them:**

[2Cor 4:8-9](#) We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹*persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ...*

In persecution “God does not leave us” (NCV™; cf. CEV, Nlrv, NLT).

God and Jesus Christ strengthen their people amidst trials

[Rom 15:5](#) *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ...*

In alluding to God giving endurance and encouragement to his people – and thus strengthening them – Paul may well have times of persecution at least partly in view.

[2Cor 4:16-17](#) So we do not lose heart. *Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.* ¹⁷*For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ...*

^c Greek *man*

Although Paul's “affliction” (v. 17) – including persecution and hardship (vv. 8-9) – were taking a toll on him physically, his spirit or inner being was being daily renewed (v. 16). Possibly Paul has primarily in view his ongoing experience of Christ's resurrection life, with its power (cf. vv. 11-12).

[2Cor 12:9-10](#) But he said to me, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* ¹⁰*For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

In weakness, hardship and/or persecution (v. 10a) Christ's power was perfected in Paul (v. 9). As such Paul could then say: “I am strong” (v. 10b).

[Col 1:11](#) *May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ...*

Note that persecution is not necessarily primarily in view here, but obviously this is readily applicable to it.

[2Thes 3:2-5](#) ... and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. ³*But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.*^d ⁴*And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command.* ⁵*May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.*

^d Or *evil*

“He will establish you” (v. 3) refers to the Lord establishing – and so strengthening (cf. AMP, CEV, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV) – the Thessalonians in the faith. The reference to being “delivered from wicked and evil men” (v. 2) implies that the Lord's strengthening (v. 3) has strengthening in the face of persecution in view. In regard to “the steadfastness of Christ” (v. 5), Paul appears to be speaking of the same perseverance as Christ showed (cf. CEV) and/or of the perseverance that comes from him (cf. GNT, NLT).

[2Tim 1:8](#) Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in *suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ...*

By his power God gives Christians the strength (cf. GNT, NCV, NLT) to take part in suffering for the sake of the gospel.

[2Tim 4:16-17](#) At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! ¹⁷*But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.*

[1Pet 5:9-10](#) Resist him [the devil], firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

The reference to suffering “a little while” (v. 10) is possibly alluding to the temporal nature of our sufferings in comparison to the “eternal glory” to come. The list of verbs in the final clause emphasizes and assures Peter's readers



that God himself will enable them to endure trials and reinvigorate them, particularly spiritually, making them stronger in the faith than they were prior to such trials.

✦ God comforts his people amidst trials:

2Cor 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of mercies and God of all comfort*, ⁴*who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* ⁵*For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.*^e 

^e Or *For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ*

Verse 5 is speaking of receiving God's comfort through Christ (cf. NCV, NLT). One way in which God strengthens people during trials is by comforting them. See also [God comforts his people in hard times, and in delivering them](#), p. 1976.

God and Jesus Christ will rescue their people from trials . . .

See also:

- [2Thes 3:2-5](#) ; [1Pet 5:9-10](#) 
- [2Cor 1:8-10](#) 

Jer 15:20-21 And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; *they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD.* ²¹*I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.* 

Luke 21:18 *But not a hair of your head will perish.* 

The earlier reference to being put to death in v. 16 suggests that this is speaking metaphorically of not ultimately losing anything of spiritual worth (cf. [Phil 1:19](#) ; [2Tim 4:18](#) .

Acts 26:16-17 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷*delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ...* 

Phil 1:19 ... for I know that *through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...* 

The word "deliverance" may refer to deliverance from prison or final spiritual salvation.

2Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.* To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. 

In light of vv. 6-8, which indicate that his death was near, it appears that Paul is not referring here to a physical rescue but a spiritual one – where the Lord would bring him "safely into his heavenly kingdom".

. . . Examples of God and Jesus Christ rescuing believers from trials

Acts 12:6-11 Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷*And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands.* ⁸*And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."* ⁹*And he went out and followed him.* He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰*When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him.* ¹¹*When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."* 

2Cor 1:8-10 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers,^f of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰*He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.* On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 

^f Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

2Cor 4:7-9 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that *the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* ⁸*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;* ⁹*persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ...* 



In vv. 8-9 Paul appears to be illustrating how God's all-surpassing power (v. 7) has preserved him in the midst of great persecution and hardship, despite him being one of the vulnerable "jars of clay" (v. 7a), containing the "treasure" of the gospel (cf. v. 6). Note that the context (cf. vv. 1-15) indicates that "the surpassing power" from God not only preserved Paul but was behind his effectiveness in spreading the gospel.

2Tim 3:10-11 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹*my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.*

☞

2Tim 4:17 *But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.*

☞

Dan 3:17, 27-28 If this be so, *our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.*^g ☞ ... ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that *the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them.* ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside^h the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God." ☞

^g Or *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king.*

^h Aramaic and changed

✦ **The Lord knows how to rescue godly people from trials:**

2Pet 2:4-9 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hellⁱ and committed them to chains^j of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; ⁵*if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;* ⁶*if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;*^k ⁷*and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked* ⁸(for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he

was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); ⁹*then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials;*^l and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ... ☞

ⁱ Greek *Tartarus*

^j Some manuscripts *pits*

^k Some manuscripts *an example to those who were to be ungodly*

^l Or *temptations*

God will ultimately save believers from the persecution of the end times

Dan 7:21-22, 25-27 As I looked, *this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them,* ²²*until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.* ☞

... ²⁵He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and *they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.* ²⁶*But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end.* ²⁷*And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'*^m ☞

^m Or *his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him*

Dan 12:1 *At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.* ☞

It is the archangel Michael who is spoken of in the first sentence, as protecting God's people. The eternal deliverance of those whose names are "written in the book" is probably in view (cf. vv. 2-3). As such these verses speak of deliverance out of the trouble rather than necessarily from experiencing any of it.

Matt 24:12-13 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³*But the one who endures to the end will be saved.* ☞

Mark 13:20 *And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.* ☞



Rev 11:1-3, 7-12 Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “*Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,*”²but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.³And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”
 ¶ ...⁷And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit^a will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,⁸and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically^o is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.⁹For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb,¹⁰and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.¹¹*But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.*¹²*Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.* ¶

^a Or *the abyss*

^o Greek *spiritually*

That God will ultimately save believers from the persecution of the end times appears to be illustrated in v. 1 and also vv. 11-12. As noted earlier, v. 1 possibly speaks of spiritual protection for God’s people or church amidst great persecution and wickedness perpetrated by heathen nations (v. 2). A number of commentators consider that the “two witnesses” (v. 3) are representative of the church. The beast’s apparent victory over them is followed by God’s vindication of them (vv. 11-12). Note that “the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt” (v. 8), may be Jerusalem, it being “where their Lord was crucified.” It has also been identified with Rome and the symbolic Babylon spoken of elsewhere in Revelation. Quite possibly it is symbolic for the world forces as a whole that oppose God’s people. Being called “Sodom” signifies its immorality, while “Egypt” points to its idolatry – or possibly its apostasy – as well as its persecution of God’s people.

‡ **Jesus Christ’s faithful followers will share in his victory over the beast and its allies:**

Rev 17:13-14 These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast.¹⁴They will make war on the Lamb, and *the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.* ¶

Note: God will take vengeance on those who persecute his people

See also:

- ... *and to exact just vengeance*, p. 424
- *In due time God does take action . . .*, p. 455
- *God will take vengeance on those who persecute Israel*, p. 992

Rom 12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it^p to the wrath of God, for it is written, “*Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.*” ¶

^p Greek *give place*

This is not speaking of persecution because of one’s faith in particular, but obviously is applicable to it.

2Thes 1:6-7 ... since *indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you,*⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, *when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ...* ¶

2Tim 4:14 *Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.* ¶

Rev 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.¹⁰They cried out with a loud voice, “*O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*”¹¹Then they were each given a white robe and *told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants^q and their brothers^r should be complete*, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. ¶

^q Greek *fellow bondservants*

^r Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

Rev 16:5-6 And I heard the angel in charge of the waters^s say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for *you brought these judgments.*”⁶*For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!*” ¶

^s Greek *angel of the waters*

Verse 6 refers to the judgment in vv. 3-4 where the sea and fresh waters were turned into blood, an apt judgment for shedding the blood of believers.



Rev 18:19-20, 24 And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste. ²⁰Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" ²¹... ²⁴And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth." ²²

This and 19:1-2 immediately below concern God's vengeance on "Babylon the Great"; see *The guilt and consequent judgment of "Babylon the Great"*, p. 695.

Rev 19:1-2 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, ²for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." ³

^t Greek *bondservants*; also verse 5

Deut 32:43 "Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods,^u for he avenges the blood of his children^v and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him^w and cleanses^x his people's land."^y ⁴⁴

^u Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text *Rejoice his people, O nations*

^v Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text *servants*

^w Dead Sea Scroll, Septuagint; Masoretic Text lacks *He repays those who hate him*

^x Or *atones for*

^y Septuagint, Vulgate; Hebrew *his land his people*

Jer 51:1-2, 24, 35-37, 49 Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon, against the inhabitants of Leb-kamai,^z ²and I will send to Babylon winnowers, and they shall winnow her, and they shall empty her land, when they come against her from every side on the day of trouble. ³... ²⁴"I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the LORD. ³⁵... ³⁵The

violence done to me and to my kinsmen be upon Babylon," let the inhabitant of Zion say. "My blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea," let Jerusalem say. ³⁶Therefore thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you. I will dry up her sea and make her fountain dry, ³⁷and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins, the haunt of jackals, a horror and a hissing, without inhabitant. ³⁸... ⁴⁹Babylon must fall for the slain of Israel, just as for Babylon have fallen the slain of all the earth. ⁴⁰

^z A code name for Chaldea

This and Ezekiel 25:14-17 below speak of God's vengeance on particular enemies of Israel. They illustrate that God does and will take vengeance on those who persecute his people.

Ezek 25:14-17 And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath, and they shall know my vengeance, declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁵"Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the Philistines acted revengefully and took vengeance with malice of soul to destroy in never-ending enmity, ¹⁶therefore thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the rest of the seacoast. ¹⁷I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I lay my vengeance upon them." ¹⁸

Ps 18:46-47 The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation— ⁴⁷the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, ... ⁴⁸

† The death of his people is of great importance to God:

Ps 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. ¹⁶

Pray for persecuted Christians



II. What to Do in Persecution

The Bible provides practical teaching on what to do when faced with persecution. Moreover, the Bible even provides good reasons to rejoice in spite of the suffering often involved in persecution. Not least of these reasons are the blessings that we can experience amidst such hardship – and those that we will receive in the future for enduring it.

Note that, as was the case in the first half of the chapter, a few of the verses in this second half speak of other hardships in addition to persecution that believers may face because of their faith.

a) Be Faithful to God and Endure

See also:

- [a\) Be Faithful to God](#), p. 1782

Subsections

- [Remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ](#)
- [Continue to do what God wants](#)
- [Endure persecution and suffering](#)
- [Endure persecution and suffering patiently](#)
- [Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering . . .](#)
- [. . . and share Jesus Christ's sufferings](#)
- [Note: Be on your guard against persecutors and avoid persecution when appropriate](#)

Remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ

See also:

- [2Tim 4:7](#) ↓

Dan 3:17-18 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.^a ¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that *we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.* 📖

^a Or *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king.*

In the face of death, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego defiantly declare their refusal to be unfaithful to God.

Rev 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. *Be faithful unto death*, and I will give you the crown of life. 📖

"Be faithful unto death" likely means be faithful "even if it means death" (GNT; cf. AMP, NCV, NIV, NLT).

Rev 2:13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. *Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith^b even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you*, where Satan dwells. 📖

^b Or *your faith in me*

The clauses "where Satan's throne is" and "where Satan dwells" apparently refers to the city of Pergamum as a center of pagan worship, no doubt a hostile place to Christians. Note Antipas's example of being faithful "unto death" (v. 10b ↑).

Rev 3:8 I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet *you have kept my word and have not denied my name.* 📖

⚡ **Superficial Christians (who have "no root") fall away in trouble or persecution:**

Matt 13:20-21 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹*yet he has no root in himself; but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.*^c 📖

^c Or *stumbles*

Having "no root" points to a shallowness from having no real commitment to God's word. Perhaps more precisely it portrays a failure to allow God's word to permeate one's life (cf. GNT, NCV).

Continue to do what God wants

See also:

- [Rev 3:8](#) ↑
- [Continue to tell people the gospel despite suffering for doing so](#), p. 1736
- [Keep meditating on God's word and obeying it – living righteously](#), p. 1944



Jer 26:11-13 Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.” ¹²Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. ¹³Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. 

Despite the threat of death (v. 11), Jeremiah continued to do what God had sent him to do (vv. 12-13).

2Tim 4:6-7 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 

In v. 6 Paul pictures his life as being poured out as an offering to God, particularly in view of the apparent likelihood of his execution. He then declares that – despite all his troubles – he had fought on to the finish, doing God’s will and firmly holding to the faith (v. 7).

Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, *let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ...* 

The context shows that these instructions were given largely in reference to persecution (cf. 11:35-38; 12:2-4).

1Pet 2:12, 15 *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*  ... ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 

1Pet 3:16 ... *having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.* 

In 2:12, 15 above Peter calls on his readers to do good in the face of false accusations – in accordance with God’s will. In conjunction with doing good, here the phrase “having a good conscience” alludes to the need to avoid doing any wrong in such circumstances (as always).

1Pet 4:19 Therefore *let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* 

Rev 2:19 I know *your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.* 

The mention of the “endurance” of the believers in Thyatira suggests that they were facing trials – in which they not only maintained the amount of work they were doing for the kingdom, but actually increased it (v. 19b).

Rev 14:12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, *those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*^d 

^d Greek *and the faith of Jesus*

2Cor 8:2 ... *for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.* 

Amidst severe persecution and even extreme poverty, the Macedonian churches (cf. v. 1) nevertheless showed great generosity.

Endure persecution and suffering

See also:

- [Heb 12:1](#) ; [Heb 12:1](#) ; [Rev 14:12](#) 
- *Share together in the sufferings that come because of Jesus Christ*, p. 1308
- ... *Faith enables one to endure persecution and suffering*, p. 2012

Matt 10:22 ... and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. *But the one who endures to the end will be saved.* 

1Cor 4:12b When reviled, we bless; *when persecuted, we endure; ...* 

1Cor 13:7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, *endures all things.* 

The reference to enduring may not be referring specifically to enduring persecution from others, but it is at least applicable to it (cf. NLT).

2Cor 6:4 ... *but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ...* 

2Thes 1:4 Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for *your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.* 



2Tim 2:8-10 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰*Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect*, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

In v. 10 Paul states that he endures everything for the sake of those chosen by God, in order to ensure their salvation.

Heb 12:7, 12 *It is for discipline that you have to endure*. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ... ¹²*Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ...*

In v. 12 the writer uses figurative language in calling on his readers to strengthen themselves spiritually, so as to endure (v. 7).

Rev 13:10 If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. *Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.*

Heb 10:32 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, *you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ...*

1Pet 2:18-20 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹*For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.* ²⁰*For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.*

Peter appears to be speaking of unjust suffering generally, not only that which is because of one's faith.

Endure persecution and suffering patiently

See also:

- *Wait for God patiently and quietly*, p. 1952

2Tim 2:24 And the Lord's servant^e must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, *patiently enduring evil, ...*

^e Greek *bondservant*

Rev 2:3 I know *you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.*

Rev 2:19 I know *your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance*, and that your latter works exceed the first.

Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope, *be patient in tribulation*, be constant in prayer.

2Cor 1:6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you *patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.*

Note that Paul indicates here that comfort and encouragement from other believers helps enable one to patiently endure suffering.

James 5:7-8, 10-11 *Be patient, therefore, brothers,^f until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.* ⁸*You also, be patient.* Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ... ¹⁰*As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.* ¹¹*Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

^f Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 9, 10, 12, 19

This is possibly referring to patience in the face of suffering at the hands of rich oppressors (cf. vv. 1-6) that is not necessarily due to one's faith. Even so, it is applicable to all suffering of believers, no matter what the reason.

‡ Endure suffering in a way that glorifies God:

1Pet 4:16 *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*

Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering . . .

Heb 12:1-3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and *let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,* ²*looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,* and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³*Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*

The phrase "the founder and perfecter of our faith" is usually taken to indicate that Jesus Christ is the one who instigates



each believer's faith and perfects it or brings it to completion. But some commentators, pointing out that "our" does not appear in the Greek (cf. NASB, NIRV), raise the possibility that it is actually referring to Jesus as the one who originated and perfected the way of faith. This meaning – very pertinent to this subsection – would comfortably fit the context.

1Pet 2:20b-23 But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* ²²*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.* ²³*When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* 

Verse 23 speaks of aspects of Jesus Christ's patient endurance that we ought to emulate. The reference in v. 22 to Christ's blamelessness may similarly be speaking of it as another aspect of his example in suffering that we should emulate. However it could instead refer to Christ's blamelessness in his life prior to his suffering, in parallel to the earlier reference to doing good leading to suffering (v. 20b).

1Pet 4:1 *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,^g arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,* for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ... 

^g Some manuscripts add *for us*; some *for you*

Believers are to "arm" themselves with the same attitude as Jesus Christ had in the face suffering. This involved a steely resolve to do God's will – being willing to patiently endure suffering (cf. [Heb 12:2-3](#) ), trusting in God rather than retaliating (cf. [1Pet 2:20b-23](#) .

2Thes 3:5 *May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.* 

As noted earlier in the chapter, with the reference to being directed into "the steadfastness of Christ" (v. 5), Paul appears to be speaking of the same perseverance as Christ showed (cf. CEV) and/or the perseverance that comes from him (cf. GNT, NLT).

... and share Jesus Christ's sufferings

See also:

- [Share together in the sufferings that come because of Jesus Christ](#), p. 1308

It was necessary for Christ to suffer in order to achieve God's objectives for him. Likewise those who are "in" him, being a part of his body (the church), must also be prepared to suffer

in order to advance his cause. Quite possibly the NT writers had such a concept in mind when they wrote of sharing in Christ's sufferings. (See also the comments below on [2 Corinthians 4:10](#) and [Colossians 1:24](#).)

Rom 8:16-17 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided *we suffer with him* in order that we may also be glorified with him. 

Phil 3:10-11 ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and *may share his sufferings*, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 

1Pet 4:13 But rejoice insofar as you *share Christ's sufferings*, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 

2Cor 1:5 For as *we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings*, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.^h 

^h Or *For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ*

2Cor 4:8-11 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰*always carrying in the body the death of Jesus*, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹*For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake*, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 

Verses 8-9 clearly indicate that endurance of suffering is in view in this passage. In vv. 10-11, Paul alludes to the sufferings he undergoes for Jesus' sake (v. 11a), by which he identifies with and shares in – metaphorically speaking – the death of Jesus (v. 10a). In both verses Paul says he does this so that Jesus Christ's resurrection life may be revealed in his mortal body.

Col 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh *I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body*, that is, the church, ... 

Paul considered that what he suffered was a necessary part in the completion (cf. GNT, NLT) or continuation (cf. CEV) of Christ's sufferings for his people.

Heb 13:13 Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and *bear the reproach he endured.* 

This is a reference to leaving Judaism ("the camp") for Christ. This is applicable to the situation of anyone who leaves another religion or set of beliefs for Christ, including atheism. They are looked down upon and even despised by those who



adhere to the former belief – and are often treated accordingly.

Mark 10:38-39 Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. *Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?*”³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, ...”

Jesus was asking James and John figuratively if they could partake in and endure the suffering that he would. Note that in its context Jesus’ challenging question was actually somewhat of a rebuke and a warning in response to a selfish request (cf. vv. 35-37).

✦ When his people are persecuted, Christ is persecuted:

Acts 9:1-5 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.⁴ And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”

Note: Be on your guard against persecutors and avoid persecution when appropriate

We are to be faithful to God in what we do even if it means that we will draw persecution. Having said this, we should also guard against those who would persecute us (cf. **Matt 10:16-17** ↓; **Mark 13:9** ↓; **Neh 4:8-9** ↓) and avoid persecution (cf. **Matt 10:16** ↓; **Acts 9:23-25** ↓; **Acts 11:19** ↓; **Acts 20:3** ↓) when doing so does not involve being unfaithful to God and Jesus Christ.

Matt 10:16-17 Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ...

Verse 16a illustrates the need to be on one’s guard (v. 17a) – reflected also in the two subsequent directives (v. 16b).

Mark 13:9 But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them.

Neh 4:8-9 And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.⁹ And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

Matt 10:23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Acts 9:23-25 When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him,²⁴ but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him,²⁵ but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall,ⁱ lowering him in a basket.

ⁱ Greek through the wall

Acts 11:19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.

Presumably the believers were “scattered because of the persecution” by traveling elsewhere to avoid it.

Acts 14:5-7 When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them,⁶ they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country,⁷ and there they continued to preach the gospel.

Acts 20:3 There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

✦ Prepare for the hardships and opposition ahead:

Luke 22:36 He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.”

The reference to buying a sword is unlikely to have been intended to be taken literally (cf. v. 38). Probably it is hyperbole, to stress to the disciples the harrowing nature of what lay ahead and the need to be prepared.

Pray for persecuted Christians



b) Have Faith in God and Pray

See also:

- *l. Faith and Hope*, p. 1084
- *d) Trust in God* [in hard times], p. 1945

Subsections

- Have faith and hope in God and Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Faith enables one to endure persecution and suffering
- Do not be afraid of persecutors or suffering
- Do not worry about what to say – you will be given what to say
- Pray to God, asking for help
- Pray for and bless those who persecute you

Have faith and hope in God and Jesus Christ . . .

See also:

- *Have faith that God will care for you*, p. 1092

Dan 3:17, 28 If this be so, *our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.*^j ¶ ... ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered *his servants, who trusted in him*, and set aside^k the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ¶

^j Or *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king.*

^k Aramaic *and changed*

2Cor 1:8-10 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers,^l of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was *to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.* ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. *On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.* ¶

^l Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

Phil 1:18b-19 Yes, and I will rejoice,¹⁹for *I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...* ¶

Paul’s faith in God providing his deliverance is clearly indicated by the phrase “I know”. As noted earlier, “deliverance” could refer either to deliverance from prison or to final spiritual salvation.

2Tim 1:12 ... which is why I suffer as I do. But *I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*^m ¶

^mOr *what I have entrusted to him*; Greek *my deposit*

If the alternative rendering in the text note is to be preferred (cf. NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV), then Paul would appear to be speaking of trusting God to guard his ministry and its fruits, along with himself – even through death.

1Pet 2:23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but *continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* ¶

Heb 11:32-34 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of *Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—* ³³*who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.* ¶

Persecution for being God’s people is apparent in most of the things listed in vv. 33-34, with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s renowned faith (cf. **Dan 3:17, 28 ↑**) probably in view in the first clause of v. 34. Through faith these people of faith were able to overcome such strife. Note that in the subsequent verses in Hebrews 11 (cf. **vv. 35b-39 ↓**), the focus is on enduring persecutions rather than overcoming them in a physical sense.

1Pet 4:19 Therefore *let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* ¶

Rev 13:10 If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. *Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.* ¶

Rev 14:12 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, *those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*ⁿ ¶

ⁿ Greek *and the faith of Jesus*



Note that the last clause could be referring to one's belief in Jesus in regard to what the NT says about him, rather than to trusting him during persecution. (The same can be said of 13:10 above.)

... Faith enables one to endure persecution and suffering

See also:

▪ [Rev 2:10](#) ↓

Most of the following verses/passages do not state or necessarily imply that faith enables one to endure, but they do clearly associate faith and endurance, arguably suggesting that the former leads to or supports the latter.

2Thes 1:4 Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for *your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.* 📖

Heb 11:24-27 *By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.* 📖

Note that the writer may be alluding to his definition of faith in v. 1 ("the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen") in the descriptions of Moses' actions of faith – "he was looking to the reward" (v. 26) and "he endured as seeing him who is invisible" (v. 27) (cf. NBC).

Heb 11:35b-39 *Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two,^o they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, ...* 📖

^o Some manuscripts add *they were tempted*

These people's faith in God (v. 39a) is evident in their endurance of such suffering and hardship, their faith facilitating their endurance. The goal mentioned in the last clause of v. 35b also reflects faith.

Rev 2:19 *I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.* 📖

Rev 14:12 *Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*^p 📖

^p Greek *and the faith of Jesus*

↳ The "steadfastness of hope" in Jesus Christ:

1Thes 1:3 ... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and *steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.* 📖

The phrase "steadfastness of hope" may well mean that their steadfastness came from hope (cf. NCV, NIV). As such the verse would be pertinent to this subsection. Alternatively, it may be speaking of their hope itself as being steadfast (cf. CEV, GNT). Having such "steadfastness" in the midst of suffering appears to be in view (cf. v. 6).

Do not be afraid of persecutors or suffering

See also:

- [Heb 11:27](#) ↑
- *b) Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions*, p. 1119
- *c) Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons*, p. 1124
- *Do not fear anyone or anything but God*, p. 1148
- *Spread the gospel boldly . . .*, p. 1749
- *. . . Spread the gospel boldly with God's help*, p. 1749

Ezek 2:6 And you, son of man, *be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions.*^q *Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.* 📖

^q Or *on scorpion plants*

Matt 10:26-31 *So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.^r ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?^s And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.* 📖

^r Greek *Gehenna*



^s Greek *assarion*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/16 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a laborer)

The disciples were not to be afraid of those who would hate and persecute them (cf. vv. 21-23). Rather they were to fearlessly declare publicly what Jesus had told them in private (vv. 26-27).

Acts 4:13 Now when *they saw the boldness of Peter and John*, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. 

The reference is to Peter and John being questioned before the religious leaders (cf. vv. 5-7), after having been jailed the previous night (cf. v. 3) for teaching the people about Jesus Christ (cf. vv. 1-2).

Heb 13:6 So we can confidently say, "*The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?*" 

1Pet 3:14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. *Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ...* 

Rev 2:10 *Do not fear what you are about to suffer.* Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 

John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. *In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* 

In Jesus Christ believers have peace, irrespective of the trouble they experience from being in the world – in fact Jesus Christ has overcome the world. So rather than be afraid, his followers should "take courage" (AMP), "be brave" (GNT, NCV) and "cheer up" (CEV, NIRV). Note that in making the final statement not long before the cross, Jesus may have been claiming the victory over the world that would be his through his death and resurrection. Alternatively he may have been referring to related concepts such as his instituting of God's kingdom in the world or his overpowering of Satan – things which in one sense at least had already been accomplished (cf. Matt 12:28-29).

Acts 23:10-11 And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him away from among them by force and bring him into the barracks. ¹¹The following night *the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."* 

✚ Paul urged the Ephesians not to be discouraged because of his sufferings for them:

Eph 3:13 So *I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you*, which is your glory. 

Paul's sufferings were because of what he had done for them in propagating the kingdom of God among them. Note that the last phrase may mean that his sufferings brought them glory – either the glory resulting from being in the kingdom or the glory of the afterlife.

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

See also:

▪ *d) Do Not Worry*, p. 1130

Matt 10:18-20 ... and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they deliver you over, *do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.* ²⁰*For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.* 

Mark 13:11 And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, *do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.* 

Luke 21:14-15 *Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer,* ¹⁵*for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.* 

The instruction "not to meditate beforehand how to answer" (v. 14) means that we should not worry about what to say (cf. CEV, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT) and even "not to prepare beforehand" (NASB; cf. NRSV) what to say.

Acts 6:9-10 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰*But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.* 

This illustrates the above promises (cf. Matt 10:18-20; Mark 13:11) that the Holy Spirit will speak through believers in times of persecution and trial.



‡ God's promise that his servants will refute every tongue that rises against them:

Isa 54:17 ... no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and *you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment*. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication^t from me, declares the LORD. ☞

^t Or *righteousness*

This promise is made to Jerusalem in its time of future renewal, but Luke 21:15 above makes a similar promise, suggesting that this promise from Isaiah is also applicable to believers now.

Pray to God, asking for help

See also:

- *II. Praying in Hard Times*, p. 1954

Acts 4:23-24, 29-30 When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴And when they heard it, *they lifted their voices together to God and said*, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ☞ ... ²⁹And now, *Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants^u to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* ☞

^u Greek *bondservants*

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

Acts 16:23-25 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God*, and the prisoners were listening to them, ... ☞

Matt 26:36-39, 42-44 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." ³⁷And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch^v with me." ³⁹And going a little farther *he fell on his face and prayed, saying*, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." ☞ ... ⁴²Again, for the second time,

he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." ⁴³And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So, leaving them again, *he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again*. ☞

^v Or *keep awake*; also verses 40, 41

‡ Pray regarding future persecution:

Luke 21:36 But stay awake at all times, *praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man*. ☞

The phrase "all these things that are going to take place" probably ultimately refers to events just prior to Jesus Christ's return. Traumatic events or judgments that all mankind will be exposed to may be in view, rather than only persecution of Christians. Here "escape" may have the sense "go safely through" (GNT), rather than meaning to avoid altogether.

Pray for and bless those who persecute you

See also:

- *Pray for those facing persecution*, p. 1323
- *Love your enemies and do good to them . . .*, p. 1541
- *. . . Do not repay evil with evil, but with good*, p. 1541

The benefits of responding as follows to those who persecute us include: we do not leave ourselves open to the negative effects that the natural response of hatred has on a person who hates; we do not expose ourselves to the ramifications of not having forgiven others (cf. . . . *Forgive and God will forgive you*, p. 1550); and we give a wonderful witness to others.

Matt 5:44-45 But I say to you, Love your enemies and *pray for those who persecute you*, ⁴⁵*so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven*. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ☞

Praying for those who persecute us imitates God, as he graciously blesses evil people along with the good people. For believers to do so is indicative that they are children of God.

Luke 6:27-28 But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸*bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you*. ☞

Rom 12:14 *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them*. ☞



Prayer – such as praying for spiritual enlightenment – may well be one thing in view in this exhortation to “bless”. In support of this, note that the NLT, GNT and CEV interpret this verse as meaning that we should pray that God will bless those who persecute us.

1Cor 4:12b *When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ...* 

Acts 7:59-60 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰And falling to his knees *he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”* And when he had said this, he fell asleep. 

✦ The lesser person is blessed by the greater:

Heb 7:7 *It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.* 

The context is Melchizedek’s blessing of Abraham – as opposed to any reference to persecution. The writer may have made this statement as a general rule, or he may have had primarily in view blessings being given in a formal and authoritative way (cf. ZBC). As applied to believers blessing those who persecute them, due to their position in and riches in God’s kingdom that they have in Jesus Christ, they are indeed in such a position so as to condescend to graciously bestow blessing on their persecutors.

Pray for persecuted Christians

c) Rejoice

See also:

- *Trusting in God brings joy and peace*, p. 1104
- *e) How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing*, p. 1261
- *d) Praise and Rejoice in God* [in hard times], p. 1970

Subsections

- Rejoice because trials develop Christian character and virtues
- Rejoice because of rewards for suffering and enduring persecution . . .
- . . . and look forward to these rewards

- Other reasons to rejoice in persecution and difficulties
- Further examples of rejoicing during persecution and difficulties

Rejoice because trials develop Christian character and virtues

Rom 5:3-4 More than that, *we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ...* 

Here “character” speaks of character that has been tried and proved (cf. AMP, GNT), evidencing a “strength of character” (NLT).

James 1:2-4 *Count it all joy, my brothers,^w when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* 

^w Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church; also verses 16, 19

1Pet 1:6-7 *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* 

“In this you rejoice” (v. 6) is actually referring to the promises of the previous verses, rather than to the trials. Thus this passage does not actually say to rejoice because of the trials or their effects. The passage has been included here as it implies that believers should rejoice amidst suffering and also it points to the fact that trials develop our faith – as alluded to with the reference to gold being refined by fire (v. 7; cf. [Dan 12:10 ↓](#)).

Dan 12:10 *Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.* 

The trials of the end times (cf. vv. 1, 7) will lead to many of God’s people being purified. No mention is made of rejoicing here or in 1 Peter 5:9-10 immediately below, but these extracts further point to the fact that trials develop Christian character and virtue.



1Pet 5:9-10 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰And *after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.* 

The Greek rendered here as “restore” (v. 10) means to “perfect” (GNT, NASB, NKJV) or to “complete *and* make you what you ought to be” (AMP; cf. CEV).

✦ **Trials lead believers to focus their faith and hope on God:**

2Cor 1:8-10 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers,^x of *the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.* ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 

^x Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God’s family, the church

Rejoice because of rewards for suffering and enduring persecution . . .

Matt 5:11-12 *Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.* ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 

Luke 6:22-23 *Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!* ²³Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. 

1Pet 4:12-13 Beloved, do not be surprised at *the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you*, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But *rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* 

Sharing in the sufferings of Christ, suffering on his behalf, gives believers reason to rejoice. For sharing Christ’s suffering identifies believers with him, which means we will naturally be overjoyed on his glorious return and triumph –

which will include “the wonderful joy of sharing his glory” (NLT), which Peter may have in mind here.

Heb 10:34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you *joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.* 

Note that this is not necessarily saying that the reward – “a better possession and an abiding one” – were in particular for enduring the aforementioned persecution. However such endurance is certainly one reason why faithful believers will receive such rewards.

. . . and look forward to these rewards

See also:

- [1Pet 1:3-6](#) 
- [Look forward to what is to come in the afterlife . . .](#), p. 1202

2Cor 4:17-18 For *this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,* ¹⁸*as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.* For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. 

Heb 11:26 *He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.* 

This points to the fact that the believer’s reward is of greater value than anything that this world can offer. Bearing this in mind stimulates one to look forward to their reward.

Heb 13:13-14 Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and *bear the reproach he endured.* ¹⁴*For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.* 

In this context, to “seek” the city that is to come involves looking forward to it (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NIV, NLT, NRSV).

✦ **Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with our glory in the afterlife:**

Rom 8:18 For *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* 

Note that this truth is reflected in 2 Corinthians 4:17 above – and complemented by the teaching in Hebrews 11:26 above, as per the comment there.



Other reasons to rejoice in persecution and difficulties

See also:

- *The joy is present even in trouble*, p. 892
- *d) Epilogue: Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution*, p. 2018

Acts 5:40-41 ... and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.* 

The apostles rejoiced in part because they considered it to be an honor to suffer for “the name” of Jesus Christ (cf. NCV, NIRV). Furthermore, being “counted worthy” by God and/or Jesus Christ is indicative of being accepted by them – a thought that the apostles may have also had in mind.

2Cor 12:9-10 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for *my power is made perfect in weakness.*” *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* ¹⁰*For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* 

The more aware we are of our weaknesses and of our limitations in facing persecutions and difficulties, the more we are open to depending on Christ’s power – in which we are truly made strong. This is ample reason to gladly boast about such things (v. 9) and be content with them (v. 10) – even delighting in them (cf. AMP, NIV, NKJV).

Phil 1:18b-19 *Yes, and I will rejoice,* ¹⁹*for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ...* 

Despite his imprisonment and the attempts of some preachers to stir up trouble for him (cf. vv. 12-17), Paul continued to rejoice – knowing that all that had happened would turn out for his deliverance. As noted earlier, his final spiritual salvation may be in view.

Col 1:24 *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ...* 

Paul could have in mind here both that his sufferings were greatly helping Christ’s body, and that they were a necessary part in the completion (cf. GNT, NLT) or continuation (cf. CEV) of Christ’s sufferings for his people. As such Paul had reason to rejoice in these sufferings.

2Cor 7:4-7 *I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.* ⁵For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as *he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.*



This and 1 Peter 1:3-6 below speak of reasons to rejoice despite persecution and difficulties – as opposed to rejoicing because of persecution/difficulties and their implications, which is the case in the above verses and previous subsections. The spiritual growth of young Christians – alluded to in v. 4a – and the concern of other believers (v. 7b), gives one great joy amidst troubles. This is particularly so for leaders, as was the case here with Paul. Note that the first clause in v. 4, appears to reflect Paul’s confidence in his relating to his readers (cf. AMP, GNT, NASB, NCV, NIV, NLT), with him apparently being confident of their faith and warm feelings towards him.

1Pet 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! *According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴*to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,* ⁵*who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* ⁶*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ...* 

“In this” (v. 6) certainly refers to the contents of vv. 3b-4; that which is in v. 5 may also be encompassed. These things give great reason to rejoice no matter what one’s current circumstances.

Further examples of rejoicing during persecution and difficulties

Phil 2:17-18 *Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.* ¹⁸Likewise you also should *be glad and rejoice with me.* 

As was noted earlier in regard to the use of the phrase in 2 Timothy 4:6, “poured out” may well have in view the possibility of Paul dying as a martyr. As such it would portray Paul’s life, part of which he spent on building up the faith of the Philippians, being “poured out” as an offering accompanying the sacrificial service that came from their



faith. In v. 18, Paul's exhortation to "be glad and rejoice" may have partly in view the Philippians' own difficulties, with them facing opposition and suffering (cf. 1:27-31)

2Cor 6:10 ... as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. 

Even amidst the sorrow that persecution and difficulties bring, believers have great reasons to persistently rejoice – notably those discussed in the above subsections and in the following section on God's blessings for persecuted believers. Note that while sorrow may make rejoicing harder to do, it also creates a greater need for it.

2Cor 8:2 ... for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 

1Thes 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ... 

✦ Praying and singing hymns during persecution:

Acts 16:23-25 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ... 

Pray for persecuted Christians

d) Epilogue: Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution

Note that some of the subsections in the previous section also speak of blessings for faithfulness in persecution. These are included in cross references in the subsections below.

Subsections

- Blessings amidst suffering and in the present life
- The future rewards of: eternal life; . . .
- . . . God's kingdom; and glory

- Other blessings in the afterlife . . .
- . . . Blessings for "one who conquers"

Blessings amidst suffering and in the present life

See also:

- *Rejoice because trials develop Christian character and virtues*, p. 2015

Rom 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that *through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*. 

Believers gain hope through endurance, largely due to God's faithfulness in such times giving hope and reason to believe that he will likewise faithfully bring them through future trials. Believers also gain hope through the encouragement of the Scriptures. In this Paul may have in view God's promises and the experience of past saints, which give the hope of God's blessings and ultimate deliverance to those who endure.

2Cor 1:3-7 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.^y ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. 

^y Or For as the sufferings of Christ abound for us, so also our comfort abounds through Christ

In suffering we receive God's comfort ourselves and as a result are equipped to help others who suffer, with God's comfort overflowing from us to others. As such our sufferings bring blessing to others as well as to ourselves.

2Cor 4:8-11 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 



Jesus' "life" refers to his resurrection life – with its spiritual power for those who share in his suffering, suffering on his behalf.

2Cor 4:16 So we do not lose heart. *Though our outer self^z is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.* ☞

^z Greek *man*

In speaking of outwardly "wasting away" Paul has his afflictions (cf. v. 17) in view, which go hand in hand with his daily renewal.

1Pet 4:1-2 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,^a arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for *whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ²so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.* ☞

^a Some manuscripts add *for us; some for you*

Those who suffer for God are finished with sin – "no longer involved with sin" (GNT). Such suffering causes one to see sin to be more unpalatable and pointless than before – even undesirable. Furthermore, the actions of enduring great suffering for God and needlessly displeasing him by sinning are incompatible.

1Pet 4:14 *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory^b and of God rests upon you.* ☞

^b Some manuscripts insert *and of power*

Peter appears to indicate that suffering for Jesus Christ brings with it a rich experience of God's Spirit.

Rev 2:9 *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander^c of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.* ☞

^c Greek *blasphemy*

Although they were very poor, these faithful believers had spiritual riches (and also were heirs to the glorious riches of the afterlife). Such riches were theirs amidst their afflictions partly due to their endurance of these afflictions.

James 5:11 *Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.* ☞

As was Job's experience, those who persevere are blessed by God's compassion and mercy. Note that blessing following persecution, for those who have persevered through it, appears to be in view – as opposed to blessing amidst persecution, prominent in the above references.

✦ **Blessings given to the church in Philadelphia which had endured patiently:**

Rev 3:8-10 I know your works. *Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—*behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I have loved you.* ¹⁰Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.* ☞

The "open door, which no one is able to shut" (v. 8) is probably the door to God's kingdom. Another possibility is that it represents an opportunity for service.

The future rewards of: eternal life; . . .

Luke 21:19 *By your endurance you will gain your lives.* ☞

Note that Jesus makes this statement after speaking of coming persecutions (cf. vv. 12-17).

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.* ☞

Rev 2:7, 10 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. *To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.* ☞ ... ¹⁰Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. *Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.* ☞

The "tree of life" (v. 7) and the "crown of life" (v. 10; cf. **James 1:12** ↑) symbolize and/or point to eternal life.

Rev 3:5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and *I will never blot his name out of the book of life.* I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. ☞

The Bible refers to "the book of life" (cf. Ex 32:32; Dan 12:1; Rev 20:12, 15; 21:27; cf. Mal 3:16; Luke 10:20), in which are listed only the names of those who will receive eternal life.

Heb 11:35b *Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.* ☞

This speaks of being raised from the dead to "a better life" (cf. AMP, GNT, NCV, NirV, NLT) – eternal life.



Matt 10:22 ... and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But *the one who endures to the end will be saved.* 

This also points to the reward of eternal life, encompassing being saved from "death in the world to come" (AMP).

Phil 3:10-11 ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and *may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,* ¹¹*that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.* 

The resurrection from the dead – and correspondingly everlasting life – is partially a product of sharing in Christ's sufferings.

... God's kingdom; and glory

Matt 5:10 *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* 

Note that this teaching probably has a present application as well as a future one.

2Thes 1:4-5 Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for *your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.* ⁵*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—* 

In accordance with God's righteous judgment, the Thessalonians' steadfastness and faith would result in them being counted worthy of God's kingdom.

Rom 8:17-18 ... and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.* ¹⁸*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* 

Note that this also associates the wonderful blessing of being "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" with suffering with Christ, which largely involves being faithful in persecution.

2Cor 4:17 *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ...* 

✦ Those who endure will reign with Jesus Christ:

2Tim 2:12 ... *if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; ...* 

The Bible speaks of a future reign that believers will participate in with Jesus Christ (cf. [Rev 20:4](#) ↓). This is discussed in [God's people will reign with Jesus Christ](#), p. 724.

Other blessings in the afterlife . . .

See also:

- [Rom 8:17](#) ↑
- [The contrasting outcomes for submitting and not submitting to the antichrist](#), p. 1999
- [Rejoice because of rewards for suffering and enduring persecution . . .](#), p. 2016
- [. . . and look forward to these rewards](#), p. 2016

2Tim 4:6, 8 *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.*  ... ⁸*Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.* 

The term "crown of righteousness" could refer to being pronounced right with God or being made completely righteous – or even to a reward for a righteous life.

Heb 13:13-14 *Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.* ¹⁴*For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.* 

The reference appears to be to the New Jerusalem that believers will inhabit with God and Jesus Christ.

1Pet 3:14a *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.* 

Peter does not actually specify any particular blessings here. But for a number of commentators the use of "blessed" recalls Matthew 5:10-12, which says that those persecuted because of righteousness are blessed because "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" ([Matt 5:10](#) ↑), with great reward in heaven (v. 12).

Rev 6:11 Then *they were each given a white robe* and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants^d and their brothers^e should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. 

^d Greek *fellow bondservants*

^e Or *brothers and sisters*. The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") refers to siblings in a family. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, *adelphoi* may refer either to men or to both men and women who are siblings (brothers and sisters) in God's family, the church

The white robes (cf. [Rev 7:14](#) ↓) given to the martyrs appears to signify purity and the glorified state of the righteous.



Rev 7:14-17 I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “*These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* ¹⁵“*Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.* ¹⁶*They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.* ¹⁷*For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*”

The “springs of living water” (v. 17) are “springs of the water of life” (NASB, NRSV). As such v. 17 is also pertinent to *The future rewards of: eternal life; . . .*, above.

Rev 14:12-13 Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.^f ¹³And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.*” “*Blessed indeed,*” says the Spirit, “*that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!*”

^f Greek and the faith of Jesus

The phrase “who die in the Lord” (v. 13) is not necessarily speaking of believers martyred for their faith, but v. 12 – and the preceding verses – make it clear that they have certainly at least remained faithful under pressure. The phrase “from now on” (v. 13) probably refers to the time of the Great Tribulation in the end times, although the promise that follows is applicable to all faithful believers. They will be able to rest from their labor, for their good deeds will be remembered and “rewarded” (CEV, cf. NCV).

Rev 20:4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. *They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

This is interpreted by many to be speaking of a literal thousand-year reign. For discussion of this concept see the introductory comments on *f) Jesus Christ's Universal Rule*, p. 717, and its first subsection, *Prelude: The thousand years*.

... Blessings for “one who conquers”

All of the blessings spoken of below are applicable to all God's people who conquer the challenges of the “world”. The background to some of the following references involves overcoming persecution, with the remainder involving other worldly challenges to faithfulness.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. *To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

Rev 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. *The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.*

The second death is eternal suffering in the lake of fire.

Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. *To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.*

There are various ideas about what is meant by the hidden manna, the white stone and the new name (cf. [Rev 3:12 ↓](#)) – although all are clearly significant rewards for faithfulness. (Likewise there are various interpretations of “the morning star” in 2:28 below.)

Rev 2:26-28 *The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.* ²⁸*And I will give him the morning star.*

Verses 26-27 – and 3:21 below – may have in view the reign of believers with Jesus Christ that is spoken of in Revelation 20:4 in the previous subsection.

Rev 3:4-5 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵*The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.*

As per the references to white robes in the previous subsection (cf. [Rev 6:11 ↑](#); [Rev 7:14-17 ↑](#)), being dressed in white (vv. 4b-5a) signifies purity and quite possibly also the glorified state of the righteous.

Rev 3:12 *The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.*

Being “a pillar in the temple of my God” probably involves a permanent and prominent position in the coming kingdom. Having the names of God and the city of God written on them, signify that believers belong to God and are citizens of the city. Having Jesus Christ's “new name” written on them



may simply signify that also they belong to him; but it being a "new" name may also allude to their perfected state.

Rev 3:21 *The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.* 📖

Rev 21:7 *The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.* 📖

The believer who overcomes will inherit all the blessings of the new Jerusalem. The second part of the statement refers to a prime aim of God's covenant with Israel – that he would be their God and they would be his people.

✦ **Blessed are those who persevere to the end of the 1,335 days:**

Dan 12:12 *Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days.* 📖

Although the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C. could possibly be in view, this might well be referring to – or at least be inclusive of – enduring the period of tribulation prior to Jesus Christ's return.

Pray for persecuted Christians



REFERENCE SECTIONS

Major Headings

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Unit A. God and Spiritual Powers

1. God's Being

I. Basics ▾

- a) God's Form
- b) God's Glory
- c) God's Personhood
- d) God's Eternity

II. God's Pre-Eminence ▾

- a) God's Greatness
- b) God's Power (I): Ultimate Power
- c) God's Power (II): His Deeds
- d) God's Knowledge and Wisdom
- e) Addendum: God's 'Name'

2. God's Character

I. Holy Characteristics ▾

- a) Holiness
- b) Righteousness and Justice
- c) Faithfulness
- d) Anger

II. Loving Characteristics ▾

- a) Love
- b) Mercy
- c) Benevolence
- d) Jealousy

3. Jesus Christ

I. General ▾

- a) Jesus Christ's Eternity
- b) Jesus Christ's Pre-Eminence
- c) Jesus Christ's Character
- d) Jesus Christ's 'Name'

II. Jesus Christ and God ▾

- a) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General
- b) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (II): Testimony
- c) Jesus Christ Is Identified with God
- d) Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is
- e) Jesus Christ Is Under God's Authority

4. The Holy Spirit

I. General ▾

- a) The Holy Spirit of God
- b) The Holy Spirit's Being
- c) The Holy Spirit's Personhood

II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit ▾

- a) Mutual Association
- b) Mutual Divine Attributes
- c) Mutual Divine Roles

5. Angels, Satan and Demons

I. Angels ▾

- a) Attributes of Angels
- b) Angels and God
- c) Angels and God's People
- d) Further Teaching about Angels

II. Satan and Demons ▾

- a) Satan's Evilness
- b) Satan's Power
- c) Satan's Work against God's People
- d) Demons



Unit B. God and the World: Basics

6. God's Creation

I. General ▾

- a) God Made All Things
- b) God Maintains Creation
- c) How God Made and Maintains Creation
- d) Implications of God Being Creator

II. God's Creation of People ▾

- a) Life and Death
- b) The Human Spirit
- c) The Uniqueness of People
- d) Epilogue: God's Self-Revelation to People

7. God's Sovereignty

I. God's Supreme Authority ▾

- a) The LORD Is God – the Only God
- b) God Reigns Supreme
- c) God Has Power over All Things
- d) God Defeats His Enemies
- e) God Fulfills His Plans

II. God's Control over the World ▾

- a) God Has Control over Evil
- b) God Has Control over Nature
- c) God Has Control over the Nations
- d) God Has Control over Each Person
- e) Addendum: God's Early Dealings with Humankind

8. God's Word

I. General ▾

- a) What God's Word Comprises
- b) God's Communication of His Word
- c) Characteristics of God's Word
- d) Functions of God's Word (I): General
- e) Functions of God's Word (II): Blessings

II. Key Old Testament Covenants ▾

- a) God's Covenant with Abraham
- b) God's Making of Israel as His People
- c) God's Covenant with Israel and the Law
- d) The Ark of the Covenant and God's Presence
- e) God's Faithfulness to His Covenant with Israel
- f) God's Dealings and Covenant with David

9. The Problem of Sin

I. General ▾

- a) What Sin Is
- b) Sin Is against God
- c) Sin Is Universal
- d) Sin's Intrinsic Ill Effects
- e) Sin Brings God's Judgment – Ultimately Death

II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin ▾

- a) Offerings for Atonement for Sinners
- b) Aspects of Making Offerings for Sin
- c) The Role of the Priests
- d) Ceremonial Cleanness
- e) Epilogue: Israel's Persistence in Sin

10. God's Judgment

I. Basics ▾

- a) God Is the Judge of the World
- b) Reasons for God's Judgment
- c) God's Judgment Is Just
- d) God's Judgment Reveals God

II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment ▾

- a) Means of God's Judicial Retribution
- b) Characteristics of God's Judicial Retribution
- c) The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment
- d) Repayments for the Wicked and the Righteous
- e) Epilogue: God's Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy



Unit C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

11. God's Promised Messiah

I. The Messiah's Identity ▾

- a) The Promise of a Messiah in OT Scripture
- b) Jesus Is the Promised Messiah
- c) Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus
- d) Further Testimony to Jesus Being the Messiah

II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person ▾

- a) Jesus Christ's Mission from God
- b) Jesus Christ's Humanity
- c) Jesus Christ's Personality
- d) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ

12. Jesus Christ's Mission

I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ ▾

- a) Jesus Christ's Authority from God
- b) Jesus Christ's Power from God
- c) Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God
- d) Jesus Christ's Direction from God

II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection ▾

- a) Jesus Christ's Miracles
- b) Jesus Christ's Teaching
- c) Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death
- d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

13. Salvation through Jesus Christ

I. Salvation from Sin ▾

- a) Jesus Christ's Death as an Offering for Sin
- b) Jesus Christ's Death and Atonement for Sin
- c) Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin
- d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Salvation

II. Salvation for the World ▾

- a) The Savior of the World
- b) Life through Jesus Christ
- c) Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ
- d) The Gentiles as Part of God's People
- e) Epilogue: Jesus Christ's Mission and Israel

14. The New Order

I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role ▾

- a) Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ
- b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ
- c) Release from the Law through Jesus Christ
- d) The Relevance of the Law

II. Key Elements of the New Order ▾

- a) God's New Covenant
- b) Jesus Christ as High Priest
- c) The Kingdom of God
- d) Jesus Christ as Lord of All

15. 'The Last Things'

I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment ▾

- a) Prologue: Judgments Preceding Jesus Christ's Return
- b) The Timing of Jesus Christ's Return
- c) Jesus Christ's Return
- d) The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes
- e) The Final Judgment (II): The Process
- f) Jesus Christ's Universal Rule

II. The Afterlife ▾

- a) The New Creation
- b) Eternal Life
- c) The Heavenly State of God's People
- d) Being with God
- e) The Punishment for the Ungodly



Unit D. God and His Own People

16. The Standing of God's People

I. Basics ▾

- a) Prologue: God Draws People to Himself
- b) God's People Belong to God
- c) God's People Are His Family
- d) God's People Are His Church

II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ ▾

- a) God's People Are 'in' Jesus Christ
- b) The Significance of Being 'in' Jesus Christ
- c) God's People Are One Body 'in' Jesus Christ
- d) Epilogue: God's People Relate to God through Jesus Christ

17. Keys to God's Interaction

I. Basics ▾

- a) God Is Always with His People
- b) God Knows His People and They Know Him
- c) God Loves His People
- d) God Is Faithful to His People
- e) God Shows Grace to His People

II. God's Holy Spirit in His People ▾

- a) God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People
- b) God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit
- c) God Loves His People
- d) The Holy Spirit Helps God's People

18. God's Transformation of His People

I. General ▾

- a) God Makes His People Spiritually Alive
- b) God Makes His People Holy
- c) God Teaches His People
- d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons
- e) God Disciplines His People (II): Insights

II. Spiritual Attributes ▾

- a) Love, Faith and Hope
- b) Peace
- c) Joy
- d) Wisdom and Knowledge

19. God's Care of His People

I. God's Saving of His People ▾

- a) God's Capacity to Save His People
- b) God Saves His People – from All Things
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- d) God Helps His People against Enemies
- e) God Is Revealed in Saving His People

II. God's Preservation of His People ▾

- a) God Meets His People's Needs
- b) God Strengthens His People
- c) God Protects His People (I): General
- d) God Protects His People (II): Depictions
- e) Epilogue: God's Care of the Needy

20. God's Plans for His People

I. General ▾

- a) God Has Plans and Purposes for His People
- b) God Works through His People (I): General
- c) God Works through His People (II): Empowerment
- d) God Guides His People

II. God's Plans for Israel ▾

- a) Return to the Land
- b) Physical Renewal
- c) Deliverance and Everlasting Peace
- d) Spiritual Renewal
- e) A Renewed Relationship with God
- f) Exaltation and Glorification



Unit E. Relating to God

21. Being Right with God

I. Getting Right with God ▾

- a) God's Invitation
- b) Repentance
- c) Belief in Jesus Christ (I): General
- d) Belief in Jesus Christ (II): Reasons to Believe
- e) Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes
- f) Reasons for Assurance

II. Staying Right with God ▾

- a) The Need to Obey God
- b) The Need for Good Deeds
- c) Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit
- d) Epilogue: Living 'in' Jesus Christ

22. Having Faith in God

I. Faith and Hope ▾

- a) Have Faith in God
- b) What Faith in God Involves Doing
- c) The Importance of Faith (I): Godly Living
- d) The Importance of Faith (II): Blessings
- e) Have Hope in God
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II. What Not to Do ▾

- a) Do Not Lack Faith
- b) Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions
- c) Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons
- d) Do Not Worry
- e) Do Not Trust in Other Things

23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

I. Loving and Fearing God ▾

- a) Love God
- b) The Importance of Loving God
- c) Fear God
- d) Why God Should Be Feared
- e) The Importance of Fearing God (I): Godly Living
- f) The Importance of Fearing God (II): Blessings



II. Obeying God ▾

- a) Obey God
- b) Learn God's Commands – and All His Word
- c) How to Obey God
- d) Blessings of Obeying God
- e) Epilogue: Follow Jesus Christ

24. Connecting with God

I. Being Close to God ▾

- a) Seek God
- b) Focus on God
- c) Meet with God and Live before Him
- d) Know God

II. Praying to God ▾

- a) The Importance of Prayer
- b) Praying before God
- c) Physical Aspects of Prayer
- d) Making Requests
- e) Epilogue: God's Response to Requests

25. Exalting God

I. Instructions ▾

- a) Glorify and Honor God
- b) Do Not Dishonor God
- c) Praise and Thank God
- d) How to Give Praise and Thanks (I): General
- e) How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing

II. Reasons to Exalt God ▾

- a) Aspects of God's Being
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- c) What God Does in the World
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- e) Epilogue: God's Vast Blessing of His People

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26. Being One Body

I. General ▾

- a) The Church as One Body
- b) Be in Unison
- c) Be in Fellowship
- d) Love Each Other (I): General
- e) Love Each Other (II): How

II. Caring for the Body ▾

- a) Pray for Each Other (I): General
- b) Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask
- c) Encourage Each Other
- d) Help Each Other

27. Worshiping God

I. General ▾

- a) Worship God
- b) Worshiping before God
- c) Worshiping Together (I): General
- d) Worshiping Together (II): OT Feasts and Festivals

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- a) Reasons to Give to God
- b) What to Give to God
- c) How to Give to God
- d) Righteousness and Making Offerings

28. Serving God

I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights ▾

- a) Be Prepared to Serve God
- b) Be Devoted to God's Work
- c) Reasons to Serve God
- d) Being Guided by God

II. Doing God's Work ▾

- a) Do God's Work – the Best You Can
- b) Do the Work through God
- c) The Manner in Which to Serve God
- d) Working with Other Believers
- e) Spiritual Gifts

29. Significant Practices

I. Symbolic Rites ▾

- a) Baptism
- b) The Lord's Supper
- c) Circumcision: Its Needlessness

II. Other Significant Practices ▾

- a) Confession of Jesus Christ
- b) Keeping the Sabbath Holy
- c) Fasting
- d) The Laying on of Hands

30. Church Leadership

I. General ▾

- a) Introductory Insights
- b) Required Characteristics
- c) Managing the Church
- d) Caring for Church Members
- e) Dealing with Sin in the Church
- f) Women in Leadership
- g) Church Members' Duties to Leaders

II. Teaching in the Church ▾

- a) What to Teach: God's Word
- b) How to Teach
- c) Traits of False Teachers (I): Their Teaching
- d) Traits of False Teachers (II): Characteristics
- e) Guarding against False Teachers



Unit G. Relating to People

31. Love

I. Loving Qualities ▾

- a) Love
- b) Generosity
- c) Mercy
- d) Gentleness

II. Antitheses of Love ▾

- a) Selfish Attitudes
- b) Ill Feelings
- c) Adverse Speech
- d) Adverse Force

32. Justice

I. Justice in Action ▾

- a) Do What Is Just and Right
- b) Administering Justice
- c) Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions
- d) Justice and the Needy (II): Insights
- e) OT Structured Provisions for the Needy

II. Being True ▾

- a) Faithfulness
- b) Truthfulness
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- d) Dishonest Gain
- e) Addendum: Oaths

33. Wisdom

I. Being Wise ▾

- a) Prologue: The Precedence of Godly Wisdom
- b) Wisdom through God
- c) Wisdom through Others
- d) Wise Speech (I): Instructions
- e) Wise Speech (II): Insights
- f) Wise Personal Practices

II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge ▾

- a) Foolishness
- b) Foolish and Ungodly Practices
- c) Spiritual Ignorance (I): Causes and Results
- d) Spiritual Ignorance (II): Knowledge Lacked
- e) Epilogue: Blessings of Wisdom

34. Common Relationships

I. Family Relationships ▾

- a) Prologue: Getting Married
- b) Spouses (I): General
- c) Spouses (II): Romantic Love
- d) Parents' Duties to Children (I): Love and Care
- e) Parents' Duties to Children (II): Godly Training
- f) Children's Duties to Parents

II. Civil Relationships ▾

- a) Citizens' Duties to Authorities
- b) Authorities' Duties to Citizens (I): General
- c) Authorities' Duties to Citizens (II): Justice
- d) Servants and Masters

35. Spreading the Gospel

I. Instructions ▾

- a) Tell People the Gospel
- b) What Things to Explain
- c) How to Spread the Message
- d) Supplementary Actions

II. Insights ▾

- a) Insights on the Gospel Message
- b) The Need to Spread the Gospel
- c) God and the Gospel's Effectiveness
- d) Further Insights regarding the Gospel



Unit H. Persevering

36. Standing Firm

I. General ▾

- a) Be Faithful to God
- b) Remember God and His Word
- c) Hold to the Faith
- d) Persist until the End
- e) Be Ready for Jesus Christ's Return

II. Spiritual Warfare ▾

- a) The Existence of Spiritual Warfare
- b) Engaging in Spiritual Warfare
- c) Counteraction of Demons
- d) Ungodly Spiritualistic Practices

37. Rejecting Sin

I. Encountering Sin ▾

- a) Consequences of Sin for God's People
- b) Addressing Sin (I): Return from Sin to God
- c) Addressing Sin (II): Deal with Sin before God
- d) God's Response to Repentance

II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy ▾

- a) Avoiding Sin
- b) Alternatives to Sin
- c) Be Holy (I): General
- d) Be Holy (II): Being Set Apart

38. Major Pitfalls

I. Pride ▾

- a) Pride in Thought
- b) Pride in Action: Self-Exaltation and Boasting
- c) Outcomes of Pride
- d) Antithesis of Pride: Humility

II. Riches and Sex ▾

- a) Riches and Godliness
- b) Further Warnings about Riches
- c) Sexual Sin
- d) Prohibited Forms of Sex
- e) Epilogue: Be Wary

39. Hard Times

I. General ▾

- a) Prologue: God's People Still Have Hard Times
- b) Mourn Loss
- c) Keep in Mind God and His Word
- d) Trust in God
- e) Hope in God and Wait for Him

II. Praying in Hard Times ▾

- a) Express Your Anguish to God
- b) Ask God for Help (I): General
- c) Ask God for Help (II): Things to Appeal To
- d) Praise and Rejoice in God
- e) Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering and Cries

40. Persecution

I. The Persecution of God's People ▾

- a) God's People Face Persecution
- b) Types of Persecution
- c) The Antichrist and the Final Persecution
- d) God's Care of Persecuted Believers

II. What to Do in Persecution ▾

- a) Be Faithful to God and Endure
- b) Have Faith in God and Pray
- c) Rejoice
- d) Epilogue: Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution



All Headings

Click on a chapter heading below to go to a list of its headings. From there, click on a subheading or any other heading to go to the where the heading is in the text. For each chapter there is also a link ([△](#)) to its listing in the *Major Headings* list.

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1. God's Being



I. Basics

a) God's Form

- God is one
- God is spirit
- God cannot be seen by people . . .
- . . . In some sense, God is said to have been "seen"
- God is everywhere, not just in temples
- Visions of God
- God's presence has been manifested in a cloud
- God's presence has been manifested with fire
- Note: God primarily dwells in heaven . . .
- . . . God's temple is in heaven

b) God's Glory

- Glory is a prominent and key attribute of God
- God's glory is an integral aspect of God's presence
- God's glory manifests his presence . . .
- . . . God's glory is spoken of as manifesting his presence in his temples
- God is resplendent with light
- God has great splendor and majesty
- God's glory is reflected in his powerful deeds
- God's glory is evidenced throughout the earth and the heavens
- God's glory will be explicitly revealed throughout the earth, to all nations

c) God's Personhood

- God has a mind – knowing and comprehending things
- God has a will
- God has feelings and character . . .
- . . . God feels emotional pain
- God is active
- God communicates . . .
- . . . and people can communicate with God
- God interacts with people, responding to their requests and needs

d) God's Eternity

- God is alive
- God has always been alive, the first of all things . . .
- . . . God existed before the world began
- God will live forever
- God transcends time
- God is self-existing
- God does not change



II. God's Pre-Eminence

a) God's Greatness

- God is great and awesome
- God is greater than all others
- God is exalted above all others
- There is no one like God . . .
- . . . Things God does which show that there is no one like him
- God is in fact beyond our comprehension

b) God's Power (I): Ultimate Power

- God is mighty in power . . .
- . . . God is Almighty
- God can do all things – nothing is too hard
- God does whatever pleases him
- God's power is far superior to that of anyone else . . .
- . . . No being can do what God can do
- Power in fact belongs to God

c) God's Power (II): His Deeds

- God's great power is shown in his deeds
- God performs great and awesome deeds
- God's deeds are largely incomprehensible
- God's deeds are uncountable
- God's deeds are glorious
- God is exalted and glorified in his powerful deeds

d) God's Knowledge and Wisdom

- God knows everything
- God sees all people, seeing and knowing all that they do . . .
- . . . No one can hide themselves or what they do from God
- God knows all people's "hearts" and minds
- God knows the future
- God has incredible wisdom
- God's knowledge and wisdom is far superior to that of people – beyond our comprehension . . .
- . . . God knows much that people do not know
- Note: God can frustrate and take away worldly wisdom – and bring down the wise

e) Addendum: God's 'Name'

- God's "name" is synonymous with God himself
- God's "name" is synonymous with his presence
- God's "name" is synonymous with God in him helping his people
- God's "name" is synonymous with God in people relating to him
- God's "name" is correlated with his authority and power
- God's "name" is holy
- God's "name" is great
- God's "name" is glorious and exalted
- God's "name" is praised and blessed
- God acts for the sake of his "name"
- Note: God declared his actual name to be the "LORD"



2. God's Character

I. Holy Characteristics

a) Holiness

- God is holy
- There is nothing bad in God – and he cannot tolerate evil
- There is no one holy like God
- God shows himself to be holy by what he does
- Places where God dwells are also holy . . .
- . . . and God only dwells with those who are holy
- Things of God are likewise holy
- Note: God and his ways are perfect

b) Righteousness and Justice

- God is righteous
- God is just
- God's righteousness and justice are great – and everlasting
- God's ways are right and just . . .
- . . . Examples of God's righteous and just ways
- All God does is right and just . . .
- . . . God does no wrong
- God is truthful
- God does not show favoritism
- Note: God loves righteousness and justice

c) Faithfulness

- God is faithful
- God's faithfulness is great
- God's faithfulness lasts forever
- God never forsakes
- God does not lie nor change his mind – he keeps his promises

d) Anger

- God's anger and its consequences are awesome . . .
- . . . This has been and will be evident upon all nations and the whole earth
- God's anger cannot be quenched
- God's anger cannot be withstood
- God is slow to anger and often holds it back
- God does not stay angry
- God's anger arises in response to sin and disobedience
- God's anger arises in response to people forsaking him
- Other things that arouse God's anger



II. Loving Characteristics

a) Love

- God is love – as epitomized in him giving his only Son, to save us
- God's love is great
- God's love is steadfast
- God's love lasts forever

b) Mercy

- God is merciful
- God's mercy is great and never ending
- Along with being merciful, God is gracious
- God is compassionate
- Due to his mercy, graciousness and compassion: God is long-suffering; . . .
- . . . and God is forgiving
- Note: God is patient – allowing people to repent

c) Benevolence

- God is good
- God shows great goodness
- God exercises kindness
- God is generous
- God gives good gifts . . .
- . . . God is the ultimate source of all gifts

d) Jealousy

- God is a jealous God
- God's jealousy arises in response to his people's sin
- God's jealousy arises particularly in response to unfaithfulness
- God is jealous for his people and their well-being . . .
- . . . and God is zealous in working for his people's cause
- Note: In his jealousy and zeal God punishes his enemies and the ungodly



3. Jesus Christ



I. General

a) Jesus Christ's Eternity

- Jesus Christ is alive
- Jesus Christ existed in the beginning . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ was before all things
- Further references to Jesus Christ existing prior to his advent
- Jesus Christ will be alive forever
- Jesus Christ is self-existing – he is “the life”
- Jesus Christ remains the same

b) Jesus Christ's Pre-Eminence

- Jesus Christ is greater than all people
- Jesus Christ is greater than all things
- Jesus Christ has divine glory
- Visions of Jesus Christ, indicative of his surpassing greatness and glory
- Jesus Christ has mighty, sovereign power
- Jesus Christ has superlative knowledge and wisdom
- Jesus Christ is everywhere

c) Jesus Christ's Character

- Jesus Christ is holy
- Jesus Christ is righteous . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ judges in righteousness and with justice
- Jesus Christ is faithful
- Jesus Christ is loving
- Jesus Christ shows grace . . .
- . . . and Jesus Christ is merciful
- Jesus Christ can display anger and jealousy

d) Jesus Christ's 'Name'

- Jesus Christ's “name” signifies Jesus Christ himself
- Jesus Christ's “name” is correlated with his authority and power
- Jesus Christ's “name” signifies him in his attainment of forgiveness of sins
- Jesus Christ's “name” signifies him in his attainment of salvation and eternal life
- Jesus Christ's “name” signifies him in his gospel and cause – with Christians being devoted to it
- Note: God has given Jesus Christ a name that is superior to all others



II. Jesus Christ and God

a) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (I): General

- Jesus Christ is the Son of God . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ is God's only Son
- God is Jesus Christ's Father
- Jesus Christ is the image of God
- Jesus Christ has the form and fullness of God – equality in nature
- Note: The Father loves his Son

b) Jesus Christ Is the Son of God (II): Testimony

- God testifies to Jesus Christ being his Son
- The Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ being the Son of God
- Jesus Christ himself testified to being the Son of God – which is why he was crucified
- Others also testified to Jesus Christ being the Son of God
- Jesus Christ's deeds are evidence that he is the Son of God
- Other events of Jesus Christ's incarnation are evidence that he is the Son of God

c) Jesus Christ Is Identified with God

- Jesus Christ and the Father are one – each is in the other
- To know or see Jesus Christ is to know or see the Father
- Jesus Christ is called "God" . . .
- . . . and Jesus' usage of "I am" quite possibly alludes to God's name
- Titles of God are applied to Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Other OT references to God are applied to Jesus Christ
- Some actions are attributed to both God and Jesus Christ
- Some things are said to be both God's and Jesus Christ's
- Further evidence of Jesus Christ's identification with God
- Note: There is one God, the Father – and one Lord, Jesus Christ

d) Jesus Christ Is Treated like God Is

- Jesus Christ is worshiped
- Jesus Christ is honored and glorified
- Jesus Christ is offered praise and blessing
- People pray to Jesus Christ
- People obey, follow and serve Jesus Christ
- People believe and have faith in Jesus Christ
- People put their hope in Jesus Christ

e) Jesus Christ Is Under God's Authority

- God is both Jesus Christ's God and his Father
- Jesus Christ is portrayed as being subordinate to God's authority . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ's authority was even granted to him by his Father
- Jesus Christ was God's to give – as a sacrifice for sin
- Jesus Christ was chosen, anointed and sent by God
- Jesus Christ is God's servant, largely spoken of in reference to his mission
- Jesus Christ is also spoken of as being God's servant following his ascension
- God continues to be glorified in and through Jesus Christ and his work
- God the Father's seniority is reflected by things he has done for Jesus Christ
- Note: God's will is the prominent will in Scripture – sovereign in all the world, throughout the ages



4. The Holy Spirit



I. General

a) The Holy Spirit of God

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God . . .
- . . . God refers to the Holy Spirit as his Spirit
- The Holy Spirit is correlated with God's presence
- The Holy Spirit is from God
- God and the Holy Spirit know each other's mind

b) The Holy Spirit's Being

- The Holy Spirit is everywhere
- The Holy Spirit is eternal
- The Holy Spirit has great power . . .
- . . . and the Holy Spirit can enable people to do great things
- The Holy Spirit has great wisdom and knowledge . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit even has knowledge of the future

c) The Holy Spirit's Personhood

- The Holy Spirit is distinguished from God and Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit has a mind
- The Holy Spirit is referred to with personal pronouns
- The Holy Spirit has personal characteristics
- The Holy Spirit communicates . . .
- . . . and the Holy Spirit interacts in other ways
- Note: Like a person, the Holy Spirit can be treated wrongly



II. God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

a) Mutual Association

- God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are very closely associated
- The Holy Spirit is identified with God . . .
- . . . and the Holy Spirit is identified with Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit is described as both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ
- God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together in unity of purpose . . .
- . . . Most prominently, they work together in saving people
- Note: Possible references to God in plural form

b) Mutual Divine Attributes

- Omnipresence – God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere
- Omnipotence – they each have infinite, sovereign power
- Omniscience – they each have complete knowledge
- Divine glory
- Eternal existence
- Holiness

c) Mutual Divine Roles

- God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are each ascribed a primary role in creation
- They each give spiritual or eternal life
- They each sanctify God's people
- They each are constantly with God's people, living in them
- They each strengthen and empower God's people
- They each guide and teach God's people
- They each give God's people joy and peace



5. Angels, Satan and Demons



I. Angels

a) Attributes of Angels

- Angels have human-like features, but are very awesome in appearance
- Angels have wings and can fly
- Angels are very powerful
- Angels have great wisdom and knowledge – but their knowledge is limited
- Angels can communicate and interact with others
- Angels have a will and emotions – notably joy
- Angels are holy – but not perfect
- Further attributes of angels

b) Angels and God

- Angels are with God, surrounding him and even standing in his presence
- Angels worship God and Jesus Christ
- Angels serve God . . .
- . . . Angels carry out judgments of God
- Angels serve Jesus Christ
- Note: “The angel of the LORD” is identified with God

c) Angels and God’s People

- Angels help and care for God’s people
- Examples of angels, sent by God, saving God’s people
- Angels give God’s people messages, such as instructions
- Angels also give messages about future events
- Note: Angels played a role in the introduction of the Mosaic Law

d) Further Teaching about Angels

- Angels are very important
- There are different kinds and ranks of angels
- There are thousands upon thousands of angels
- Angels reside in heaven
- Angels are not to be worshiped
- Other teachings about angels



II. Satan and Demons

a) Satan's Evilness

- Satan is evil – and is opposed to God's kingdom
- Satan is opposed to Jesus Christ
- Satan is deceitful . . .
- . . . Those who follow Satan likewise are deceitful
- Note: Possible references to Satan's original state and his fall

b) Satan's Power

- Satan is very powerful
- Satan has great power and authority in the world
- Satan works in and through unbelievers
- Satan is not as powerful as God . . .
- . . . and Satan is not as powerful as Jesus Christ
- Note: Satan stands condemned

c) Satan's Work against God's People

- Satan schemes and fights against God's people
- Satan tempts God's people . . .
- . . . and Satan can lead God's people astray
- Satan can afflict God's people
- Satan can only tempt and afflict as God permits
- Satan accuses God's people before God
- Note: Satan hurled down from heaven to the earth

d) Demons

- Demons are evil and powerful spiritual beings
- Demons are aligned with Satan
- Demons are deceitful, propagating what is false
- Demons can possess people . . .
- . . . Demons can cause people they possess much harm
- Demons both fear and have to submit to God and Jesus Christ
- Demons face eternal punishment



6. God's Creation



I. General

a) God Made All Things

- God has made all things
- God made the earth . . .
- . . . God made the heavens as well as the earth
- Along with making the earth and the heavens, God made everything in them
- God made light, alongside the darkness
- God made the sky
- God made land and sea – partitioning the land off from the sea
- God made vegetation
- God made the sun, moon and stars
- God made all creatures and people
- Note: All that God makes is good

b) God Maintains Creation

- Every creature's life is dependent on God
- God provides food for all creatures
- God sends rain on the earth, making it productive
- God's provision of rain and food is abundant . . .
- . . . God's provision satisfies his creation
- God regulates all aspects of the weather
- God controls the cycle of day and night
- God controls the seasons
- God regulates and maintains the other aspects of nature
- Note: God made the earth and all creation to last

c) How God Made and Maintains Creation

- God made all things with his wisdom
- God made all things with his power
- God made and maintains all things by his word or command
- God made and sustains all things through Jesus Christ
- The Holy Spirit played a role in creation – and still does

d) Implications of God Being Creator

- God is the Father of all things, notably of all people
- God is sovereign over all things
- All things belong to God
- All things exist for God
- Creation attests to God's greatness and glory
- Creation attests to God's power
- Creation and God's control over it show his power and wisdom to be incomparable . . .
- . . . God made this point very clear to Job



II. God's Creation of People

a) Life and Death

- God creates people . . .
- . . . Children ultimately come from God
- God creates the various aspects of people's beings
- God gives people life and breath
- Human life is of great value
- People's lives are very brief
- Each person is destined to die . . .
- . . . All people die no matter who or what they are
- Once a person dies, they do not return
- Note: Blood signifies life – and a person's life is taken by the shedding of their blood

b) The Human Spirit

- God has made people with a spirit
- The spirit is distinguished from one's body
- The spirit and the soul are closely associated – along with one's "heart"
- The spirit and soul are at the core of one's being . . .
- . . . They embody and are central to one's state of mind – as often depicted in hardship
- The spirit and soul are linked with one's emotions
- The spirit and soul are linked with one's desires
- The spirit is involved in one's thinking
- The spirit is fundamental to one's attitude and actions
- People are dead without their spirit
- People's spirits and souls exist after death

c) The Uniqueness of People

- God has made people in his own image
- People have an able mind, with which to think and reason intelligently . . .
- . . . People can make judgments
- People have the moral capacity to know good from evil and right from wrong . . .
- . . . People can choose between good and evil
- People are of much more value than other creatures
- God has made people ruler over all other creatures
- People are to care for other creatures
- People are to act responsibly towards all creation

d) Epilogue: God's Self-Revelation to People

- People cannot in themselves perceive or know God
- God reveals himself to people
- God reveals himself by what he does
- God's creation of the world and heavens perpetually evidence and reveal God to all people . . .
- . . . God's ongoing control over nature likewise testifies to him
- God is revealed in his acts of judgment and of salvation
- God is revealed and known through Jesus Christ
- Note: God reveals his plans and will



7. God's Sovereignty

I. God's Supreme Authority

a) The LORD Is God – the Only God

- The LORD is God
- The LORD is God of heaven and earth
- The Lord is God of all people
- The LORD is the true and living God . . .
- . . . He is the one and only God
- God's deeds show that he is the only God . . .
- . . . God's deeds show that he is indeed the LORD

b) God Reigns Supreme

- God reigns . . .
- . . . God is enthroned in heaven
- God rules over all – over all the earth
- God rules over all nations and authorities
- God will reign forever
- God will impose his absolute rule on all
- Note: All things belong to God

c) God Has Power over All Things

- God has power over the forces of evil
- God has power over death, to raise the dead
- God has power over all aspects of nature, including: the earth; the skies; . . .
- . . . and the waters
- God has power over nations . . .
- . . . God can devastate or destroy nations
- God has power over rulers and can bring them down . . .
- . . . Examples of God bringing rulers down

d) God Defeats His Enemies

- No one can effectively oppose God . . .
- . . . The plans of God's enemies cannot succeed against him
- God takes vengeance on his enemies
- God repays his enemies for their deeds
- God destroys his enemies

e) God Fulfills His Plans

- God carries out his purposes and plans
- God's plans were determined long ago – from the beginning
- When the time comes, God's plans are promptly fulfilled
- God does not change his purposes and plans . . .
- . . . though God may have reason to alter something he did – or relent from something he proposed
- No one can thwart God's purposes and plans . . .
- . . . Nor can anyone alter what God does
- God works everything for his purposes and plans



II. God's Control over the World

a) God Has Control over Evil

- God exerts control over evil
- God can use evil
- God can use evil to fulfill his purposes
- God can use evil and wrongdoing to punish
- God can use evil for the benefit of people

b) God Has Control over Nature

- God directs nature
- Nature serves God
- God can control the elements of nature to bring plentiful provision . . .
- . . . and God can control nature so as to bring depravation
- God has control over all creatures
- God can perform miracles of nature . . .
- . . . God can miraculously use nature for his purposes

c) God Has Control over the Nations

- God is in control of the nations
- God has been in control of the nations throughout history
- God appoints times for events affecting the nations
- God has control over the outcome of conflicts between nations
- God can thwart the plans of the nations
- God establishes all ruling authorities
- God has control over rulers . . .
- . . . God can use rulers in order to accomplish his purposes

d) God Has Control over Each Person

- God has control over people's hearts and minds
- God has control over people's actions . . .
- . . . Despite people's plans, their steps are directed by God
- God controls the good and bad things that happen to people
- God brings people down and exalts others
- God determines the length of people's lives . . .
- . . . and God finishes people's lives
- Note: The life of every person is in God's hands

e) Addendum: God's Early Dealings with Humankind

- God's creation of the first people, in an ideal environment
- Humankind's original sin and the judgment – including death and expulsion from the Garden of Eden
- The flood and Noah: Escalated sin and judgment; righteousness and salvation
- The Tower of Babel: Sinful pride and the dispersion of humankind



8. God's Word



I. General

a) What God's Word Comprises

- God's word primarily is Scripture
- God's word includes his laws
- God's word includes his covenants and promises
- God's word includes his prophecies
- God's word includes the gospel, proclaimed by his people
- Note: Jesus Christ is the Word of God

b) God's Communication of His Word

- God has given his word by the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . Further mention of Scripture coming by the Holy Spirit
- God gave his law through Moses
- God has spoken through prophets
- God has spoken through visions and dreams
- God's word was spoken by Jesus Christ

c) Characteristics of God's Word

- God's word is holy, righteous and good
- God's word is true . . .
- . . . and what God's word foretells comes true
- God's word is living and active
- God's word is powerful
- God's word is everlasting
- Note: God's word surpasses everything of this world

d) Functions of God's Word (I): General

- God's word makes known his commands
- God's word makes known his plans
- God's word plays a role in salvation
- God's word plays a role in sanctification
- God's word helps people avoid sin
- God's word helps people learn to fear God
- God's word encourages people
- Other roles of God's word
- Note: God acts by his word

e) Functions of God's Word (II): Blessings

- Life . . .
- . . . including spiritual and eternal life
- Light
- Knowledge
- Wisdom
- Hope
- Joy
- Freedom
- Note: Rejecting and not keeping God's word brings his judgment



II. Key Old Testament Covenants

a) God's Covenant with Abraham

- God called Abraham to go to the land of Canaan – and Abraham went
- Subsequently, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him: countless descendants; the land of Canaan; ...
- ... and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through Abraham
- Abraham believed God, and God credited this to him as righteousness
- God's covenant required Abraham to obey God, which he did
- God confirmed the covenant and promises with Abraham's descendants
- Note: God made circumcision the sign of the covenant with Abraham and his descendants

b) God's Making of Israel as His People

- God made the nation of Israel ...
- ... The people of Israel were Abraham's descendants
- God redeemed the Israelites out of Egypt to take them as his own ...
- ... The Passover and God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt
- God chose Israel out of all the nations to be his holy people ...
- ... Israel was God's chosen servant
- Foreigners were accepted into Israel and able to worship God
- Note: The tribes of Israel

c) God's Covenant with Israel and the Law

- God made a covenant with Israel, based on his law ...
- ... If the Israelites obeyed God, then they would be his people and he would be their God
- The core of the law: The Ten Commandments
- The whole law included: religious laws; ...
- ... judicial laws; and social laws
- By obeying all the law, the Israelites would be holy
- By obeying all the law, the Israelites would be righteous and live
- By obeying, the Israelites would have life and prosperity in the promised land
- If the Israelites disobeyed the law and broke the covenant, there would be dreadful consequences ...
- ... Their destruction would culminate in exile from the promised land

d) The Ark of the Covenant and God's Presence

- The ark of the covenant – which contained the stone tablets of the covenant
- The ark signified God's presence amongst the people
- Signifying God's presence, the ark was where God would meet with Moses and the people
- The ark brought great power and dreadful effects
- The ark was kept in the Most Holy Place, shielded by a veil – in the tabernacle and later the temple ...
- ... Access into the Most Holy Place and the whole sanctuary was greatly restricted
- Containing the ark, the tabernacle and later the temple signified God's presence ...
- ... Thus the temple became the focus of worship and prayer to God
- Note: God's presence amongst the Israelites was dependant on their continued obedience

e) God's Faithfulness to His Covenant with Israel

- God faithfully led Israel through the desert and provided for them
- God promised that none of Israel's enemies would withstand it – which he fulfilled
- Conquering its inhabitants, God gave the promised land of Canaan to Israel – as an inheritance ...
- ... Description of the promised land: Its goodness and location
- God duly cared for Israel in the promised land
- So, God was faithful to his covenants and promises with Abraham and Israel



f) God's Dealings and Covenant with David

- David was chosen and anointed by God, as ruler over Israel
- David reigned over Israel, as a powerful and righteous king – undergirded by God . . .
- . . . However, David was not free of sin and trouble during his reign
- God's covenant with David, promising that David's royal dynasty would last forever
- The royal line of any king descended from David would continue if he obeyed God as David did
- Note: God chose Jerusalem, David's city, as his dwelling place . . .
- . . . As such, God's temple was built in Jerusalem – by Solomon, David's son



9. The Problem of Sin



I. General

a) What Sin Is

- Sin is breaking God's law
- Even unintentionally breaking God's law is sin
- Doing evil and acting wickedly is sin
- All wrongdoing is sin
- Not doing what we should do is sin

b) Sin Is against God

- Sin is action against God
- Even acting wrongfully against other people is sinning against God
- Sin is rebellion against God
- For sin involves: turning away from God and his commands; . . .
- . . . and going our own way
- Sin is hated by God
- God can be grieved by sin

c) Sin Is Universal

- All people have sinned
- No one is righteous before God
- People have a sinful nature . . .
- . . . People have hearts and minds inclined towards evil
- People are led into sin by their sinful nature . . .
- . . . People are led into sin by their corrupt hearts and minds
- Note: God is aware of all sins . . .
- . . . and God remembers sin

d) Sin's Intrinsic III Effects

- Shame and disgrace
- Spiritual defilement . . .
- . . . Spiritual uncleanness
- Separation from God . . .
- . . . and spiritual death
- Captivity to sin . . .
- . . . involving enslavement to sin
- Foolishness and spiritual darkness
- Further intrinsic harmful consequences
- Note: Sometimes God "gives people over" to sin

e) Sin Brings God's Judgment – Ultimately Death

- When one sins, one becomes guilty
- God holds one responsible for one's sin
- Sin makes one subject to God's wrath
- God's wrath against sinners is manifested in punishment
- Sin results in physical death – through Adam's original sin
- Sin brings the prospect of eternal "death"
- Note: Sin can lead to consequences that affect others – notably children . . .
- . . . but it is the one who sins who will die for their sin



II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin △

a) Offerings for Atonement for Sinners

- The law made provision for the offering of a life of an animal, to make atonement for one who had sinned
- The major offerings for making atonement: The burnt offering; . . .
- . . . the sin offering; . . .
- . . . and the guilt offering
- Atonement was also made annually for all of the people

b) Aspects of Making Offerings for Sin

- All offerings were only to be made at the place God chose for his presence amongst his people
- Animals brought as offerings were to be without any blemish
- The sinner laid hands on the offering, identifying the animal with himself
- The blood of the offerings for sin featured in making atonement . . .
- . . . for the life of a creature is in its blood – and as such blood is not to be eaten
- The parts of an offering's body were burnt or eaten
- Note: Procedures for the Day of Atonement, involving the high priest entering the Most Holy Place

c) The Role of the Priests

- God designated Aaron and his descendants as priests . . .
- . . . With their appointment, God is said to have made a covenant with the priests
- The priests were responsible for God's sanctuary, the offerings and teaching the people . . .
- . . . The other Levites were given to the priests to assist them
- The priests made offerings for people when they sinned, to make atonement for them
- The high priest made atonement for Israel as a whole
- The offering of incense by the priests
- Note: Priests and Levites were given parts of the people's offerings, God being their inheritance

d) Ceremonial Cleanness

- Because God is holy, his people must be holy – which included avoiding uncleanness
- Uncleanness largely came through contact with things that were unclean
- Creatures were designated as either clean or unclean for eating . . .
- . . . Other sources of uncleanness
- Uncleanness would defile God's dwelling place amidst his people – and so required isolation and cleansing
- While a person was unclean they could not participate in worship practices
- Cleansing typically involved washing and a purification period
- Uncleanness often required offerings for atonement
- Note: Spiritual purity is paralleled with cleanness, and sin with uncleanness

e) Epilogue: Israel's Persistence in Sin

- Israel's sin and rebellion in the wilderness
- Israel's sin and unfaithfulness during the time of the judges
- Israel's sinful demand for a king – and the choice of Saul
- Solomon's unfaithfulness and the consequent division of the kingdom under his son, Rehoboam . . .
- . . . Jeroboam's subsequent archetypical apostasy in the northern kingdom
- Some kings in Judah did lead the people in godly ways . . .
- . . . but ultimately both kingdoms of Israel failed to keep God's laws and broke his covenant
- Note: The people polluted and defiled the land by their sin



10. God's Judgment



I. Basics

a) God Is the Judge of the World

- God is judge . . .
- . . . God is the judge of the whole earth
- God makes judgments in the world
- God judges nations
- God judges individuals – including rulers
- God judges his own people
- God judges evil spiritual powers

b) Reasons for God's Judgment

- To punish sin and unfaithfulness
- To discipline and cleanse God's people
- To punish the ungodly . . .
- . . . and to exact just vengeance
- To save God's people
- To vindicate God's people
- To reward God's people
- Note: God's judgments serve as examples and warnings to others

c) God's Judgment Is Just

- God judges with justice
- God judges righteously
- God does not show favoritism in his judgment
- God judges people with knowledge of all their deeds
- God takes into account thoughts and motives
- God's judgments are correct
- God judges and repays people according to what they have done
- God repays people's deeds with fitting recompense
- God gives fair warning of punishment for not obeying him . . .
- . . . Thus God allows for repentance and for punishment to be averted
- Note: In effect, it is people's own actions that brings God's punishment on themselves

d) God's Judgment Reveals God

- God makes himself known by his judgment
- God's judgment shows his might and his sovereignty . . .
- . . . God's judgment makes known that he is the LORD
- God's judgment evidences his glory – and also brings him glory
- God's judgment reveals his holiness
- God's judgment displays his anger
- Note: God's restraint of his judgment shows his compassion and love



II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment △

a) Means of God's Judicial Retribution

- Angels
- Nature
- Rulers . . .
- . . . and nations
- God's own people

b) Characteristics of God's Judicial Retribution

- Awesome power . . .
- . . . and irresistible
- Inescapable
- Terrifying . . .
- . . . causing great grief and anguish
- Horrific consequences . . .
- . . . even complete devastation

c) The Wicked and God's Pending Judgment

- The wicked often prosper
- God shows goodness to the wicked – even their prosperity ultimately comes from him
- Questioning of God's apparent lack of judgment regarding the wicked
- However, the situation of the wicked is precarious
- God does not leave the guilty unpunished
- In due time God does take action . . .
- . . . God's silence in the face of wickedness is followed by his judgment
- God destroys the wicked
- The destruction of the wicked is often sudden
- Note: "The day of the LORD" will bring God's judgment, with its destruction of the wicked

d) Repayments for the Wicked and the Righteous

- The wicked reap what they sow . . .
- . . . The wicked are brought down by their own evil deeds
- In contrast to the wicked, the righteous reap what is good
- God blesses the righteous
- God takes care of the righteous, in contrast to the wicked
- The future of the righteous contrasts with the end of the wicked . . .
- . . . This will be most evident in the afterlife
- The wicked and ungodly are bereft of hope
- Discourses on perils that the wicked typically face
- Note: Further contrasts between the righteous and the wicked

e) Epilogue: God's Judgment of Israel – and His Mercy

- Many times God called and warned his wayward people, through his prophets
- Eventually God determined to bring destruction on unresponsive Israel
- The temple and Jerusalem were destroyed
- God's judgment on unfaithful Israel culminated in exile from the promised land
- However, God would not completely destroy Israel . . .
- . . . God promised to spare a remnant of Israel
- God also promised to return people of Israel to the land
- Jews did return to the land – rebuilding the temple and Jerusalem's walls
- Note: Because God remembers his covenant with Abraham, God cares for and is merciful to Israel



11. God's Promised Messiah

I. The Messiah's Identity

a) The Promise of a Messiah in OT Scripture

- The OT Scriptures speak of a coming anointed one of God, who would have God's Spirit on him . . .
- . . . They describe him as a remarkable chosen servant of God
- The OT promises that such a one would arise as a great ruler of Israel
- The OT says the ruler will bring justice and salvation to the nations
- The OT speaks of the ruler crushing the wicked
- The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David
- The OT also says he would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted

b) Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

- Jesus Christ is the one chosen and appointed by God
- Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . Jesus is the messianic Holy One of God
- The OT Scriptures testify to Jesus being the Messiah, the Christ
- For the OT speaks of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .
- . . . and the OT speaks of the messianic salvation that would come through Jesus Christ

c) Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus

- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' birth and early years
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' life and ministry
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' rejection and betrayal
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' death . . .
- . . . Further OT Scriptures fulfilled or reflected in Jesus' death
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' resurrection
- Prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' ascension and exaltation
- Other messianic OT Scriptures applied to Jesus Christ

d) Further Testimony to Jesus Being the Messiah

- Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ
- Jesus himself claimed to be the Christ
- Jesus' followers acknowledged him as the Christ . . .
- . . . and Jesus being the Christ was a central aspect of his followers' teaching
- Others also acknowledged Jesus as the Christ
- Note: The Christ is understood to be the Son of God



II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

a) Jesus Christ's Mission from God

- God sent Jesus Christ into the world
- God sent Jesus to take away sins . . .
- . . . God sent Jesus to save the world
- Jesus came to bring spiritual light into the world . . .
- . . . Jesus came to bring truth
- Jesus came to enable us to know God
- Jesus came to destroy Satan's power and work
- Further objectives of Jesus Christ's mission
- Note: Jesus Christ's mission took place at a time chosen by God . . .
- . . . and aspects of Jesus Christ's mission occurred at designated or appropriate times

b) Jesus Christ's Humanity

- Jesus Christ became a human being
- Jesus was born, of Mary – after being conceived through the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . Jesus' mother Mary was a very godly woman, blessed by God
- Jesus was a descendant of David
- Jesus had family
- Jesus grew from childhood through to adulthood
- Jesus was called a man
- Jesus had a physical body . . .
- . . . and Jesus had physical limitations
- Like all humans, Jesus experienced difficult times – including temptation
- Note: Jesus' humanity was vital to his mission to save people

c) Jesus Christ's Personality

- Jesus was loving – shown ultimately in him giving up his life
- Jesus was compassionate
- Jesus was meek
- Jesus was gentle and humble – as a servant
- Jesus was good
- Jesus was righteous
- Jesus showed righteous anger and indignation
- Jesus showed great strength of character, being courageous and composed
- Note: Jesus was prepared to associate with and even support notably sinful people

d) Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ

- God works in all eras through Jesus Christ, impacting all things everywhere
- God enacts his will in or through Jesus Christ
- God fulfills his promises through Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Key promises of God have been centered on Jesus Christ
- God saves people through Jesus Christ
- God reconciles people to himself through Jesus Christ
- God gave the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ
- God works in and through his people, through Jesus Christ



12. Jesus Christ's Mission

I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ

a) Jesus Christ's Authority from God

- God granted Jesus sovereign authority
- Jesus had the authority to forgive sins
- Jesus' teaching had great authority
- Jesus had the authority to state what was required for eternal life
- Jesus had the authority to state what was required to enter God's kingdom

b) Jesus Christ's Power from God

- God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission
- The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did
- Jesus did many miraculous deeds with God's power . . .
- . . . God would do for Jesus whatever he asked
- Jesus' deeds led people to glorify God
- Jesus' deeds validated his claims about himself and God
- Jesus' deeds led many people to believe in him

c) Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God

- Jesus saw and heard things from God
- Jesus knew everything
- Jesus knew everything about all people . . .
- . . . Jesus even knew people's thoughts and intentions
- Jesus knew about future events
- Jesus was also filled with wisdom . . .
- . . . Nobody could match Jesus' wisdom
- Note: Jesus knew God

d) Jesus Christ's Direction from God

- God was with Jesus
- Jesus only did works of God, and God worked through him
- Jesus obeyed God
- Jesus carried out God's will, doing the work God had given him . . .
- . . . Jesus sought to do God's will as opposed to his own will
- Jesus spoke what God wanted him to say
- Note: In doing God's will, Jesus brought glory to God . . .
- . . . and Jesus was glorified by God



II. Ministry, Death and Resurrection

a) Jesus Christ's Miracles

- Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people
- Jesus delivered people from demons and Satan – demonstrating power over evil
- Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders
- Jesus even raised the dead
- Jesus exercised control over nature, in rescuing and helping people
- Note: Jesus initially did not want his deeds – nor his identity – to be widely known . . .
- . . . but still large crowds came to him from all around

b) Jesus Christ's Teaching

- Jesus was a prophet . . .
- . . . As a prophet, Jesus taught and preached to the people
- Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God
- Jesus' teaching was not his own; what he spoke was from God
- Jesus' teaching is the truth . . .
- . . . Jesus himself is identified with truth
- Jesus' teaching was amazing and powerful – leading people to believe in him . . .
- . . . However, many others did not believe Jesus
- Note: Jesus' use of parables and figurative speech

c) Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death

- Jesus was rejected
- Jesus was despised
- Jesus faced intense opposition, with efforts to kill him
- Jesus' betrayal and arrest
- The unjust condemnation of Jesus – who was innocent of any charge
- The horrific suffering and death of Jesus
- The events following Jesus' death and his burial
- Jesus' suffering and death (and resurrection) were planned . . .
- . . . It was God's will that Jesus die – for everyone
- Jesus suffered and died willingly

d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

- God raised Jesus from the dead, by his power . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit is linked to Jesus' resurrection
- Jesus' body was not found in his tomb
- Jesus was raised in a bodily form
- Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection
- Jesus was taken up to God in heaven
- Because he had willingly suffered death, God exalted and glorified Jesus Christ



13. Salvation through Jesus Christ



I. Salvation from Sin

a) Jesus Christ's Death as an Offering for Sin

- God provided Jesus Christ as an offering for sin
- Jesus Christ died for our sins . . .
- . . . He offered himself to God, as a sacrifice for our sins
- Jesus Christ is the "Lamb" who was sacrificed
- Jesus Christ was an unblemished offering – being without sin
- In his death, Jesus Christ bore our sins

b) Jesus Christ's Death and Atonement for Sin

- Jesus Christ died for us
- Jesus Christ's sacrifice of himself for us means that our sins can be forgiven . . .
- . . . and that we can therefore be justified and righteous before God
- So through Jesus Christ's death we can be reconciled to God . . .
- . . . and through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God
- Thus, Jesus Christ saves people from God's wrath
- Note: Further points about the significance of the shedding of Jesus Christ's blood

c) Jesus Christ's Death and Redemption from Sin

- Jesus Christ gave himself as a ransom for us, to redeem us from sin
- God's people have been bought by Jesus Christ's death . . .
- . . . They have been freed from sin and are now slaves to God – and Jesus Christ
- Jesus Christ's death sets us free from sin's control . . .
- . . . and Jesus Christ's death cleanses us from sin
- Note: Jesus Christ's death redeems people from the law and its consequences

d) Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Salvation

- Jesus Christ's resurrection has a key part in people being saved
- Jesus Christ's resurrection is linked to the forgiveness of sins and justification
- Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection
- Jesus Christ's death and resurrection were a triumph over Satan and evil
- Note: Jesus Christ's resurrection affirmed significant things about him



II. Salvation for the World

a) The Savior of the World

- God provides salvation through Jesus Christ
- Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world – in conjunction with God . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ realizes salvation and redemption
- We can only be saved through Jesus Christ
- Jesus Christ will bring believers' salvation to completion on his return

b) Life through Jesus Christ

- God provides life through Jesus Christ
- Jesus Christ gives spiritual life
- Jesus Christ gives eternal life
- Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life as opposed to death
- Jesus Christ saves people from the power of death
- Note: The book of life

c) Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ

- God has extended his salvation to the Gentiles
- God has provided salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ died for all people
- God has made the way of faith in Jesus Christ open to Gentiles as well as Jews – there is no difference
- The gospel about Jesus Christ is preached also to the Gentiles . . .
- . . . Through the gospel Gentiles come to faith
- God has given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles as well as to Jews

d) The Gentiles as Part of God's People

- Gentiles have been accepted by God as being of his people
- Jesus Christ has made Jews and Gentiles one
- Gentiles have been included in the true "Israel" . . .
- . . . God's people are now of the heavenly Jerusalem
- Those who have faith are the true, spiritual children of Abraham . . .
- . . . and God's promise or blessing to Abraham is for all who have faith
- Note: Believing Jews still have a privileged status, amongst God's people

e) Epilogue: Jesus Christ's Mission and Israel

- Jesus Christ came foremost to Israel . . .
- . . . and the gospel of Christ was first preached to the Jews
- But the Jews largely rejected Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . and many Jews strongly opposed the spreading of the gospel
- The Jews' negative response to Jesus Christ brought God's judgment
- God largely rejected the Jews and accepted the Gentiles, due to the Jews rejecting Christ and the gospel . . .
- . . . The Jews' negative response contrasted with the responsiveness of the Gentiles
- But God has left a faithful remnant of Israel
- Despite Israel's current state – which has benefited the Gentiles – Israel will be saved



14. The New Order



I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

a) Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ

- The Mosaic Law cannot bring perfection . . .
- . . . The law only exacerbates the problem of sin
- People are not justified or made righteous by obeying the law – but by faith in Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . This is the way of the righteousness from God, who justifies by faith – not by law
- By faith Abraham was declared righteous and received the promise – and so will all who emulate him
- One's righteous standing is no reason to boast, as it is not due to what one does – but to faith

b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ

- God chooses and calls people by his grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ – not because of works
- God leads people to respond to him by his grace
- People are justified and made righteous by God's grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law
- People are saved by God's grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . People are saved by God's grace and mercy rather than by works and the law
- Eternal life is a gift from God, through Jesus Christ
- Note: Jesus Christ's grace and mercy are integral to salvation

c) Release from the Law through Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards
- So through Jesus Christ believers have been released from the law
- With Jesus Christ's once and for all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sin
- The regulations and rituals of the law are no longer applicable . . .
- . . . Believers are released from the food regulations of the law
- Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace and Jesus Christ's law

d) The Relevance of the Law

- The law is not nullified . . .
- . . . The law is still good
- The primary purpose of the law is to make people aware of sin
- The spiritual and moral commands of the law are still to be obeyed
- The law's principles – such as love, justice and mercy – are of central importance, above its rules



II. Key Elements of the New Order

a) God's New Covenant

- Prelude: The OT Scriptures speak of God instituting a new covenant with his people – through the Messiah
- The first covenant (with its priesthood and law) was inadequate and superseded by the superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Components of the first covenant were merely a shadow of what was to come in the new covenant
- Jesus Christ's blood ratified the new covenant
- The new covenant is everlasting
- The new covenant is spiritual – of an internal nature and of the Holy Spirit
- Under the new covenant God's people know him and are forgiven
- Other contrasting aspects of the new covenant with the old

b) Jesus Christ as High Priest

- Jesus Christ is the high priest of God's people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary
- Jesus Christ was appointed by God as high priest forever, in the superior priestly order of Melchizedek
- Previous sacrifices offered by priests were ultimately ineffective in dealing with sin . . .
- . . . As high priest, Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all
- As high priest, Jesus Christ continues to intercede for God's people
- Jesus Christ is a high priest who is perfect – but can still identify with his people's humanity

c) The Kingdom of God

- The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission
- The kingdom of God will come in all its fullness in the future
- The spiritual nature of the kingdom of God
- The dynamism and power of the kingdom of God
- The great cost of participating in the kingdom of God
- Those who will enter the kingdom of God . . .
- . . . Those to whom the kingdom of God belongs
- Those who will not enter nor inherit the kingdom of God
- Note: The kingdom of God is also the kingdom of Jesus Christ

d) Jesus Christ as Lord of All

- Following his death and resurrection, God exalted Jesus Christ to his right hand . . .
- . . . and God made Jesus Christ Lord of all
- God has given Jesus Christ authority and power over all things
- God has entrusted everything to Jesus Christ – and made him heir of all things
- Jesus Christ has power over all other powers
- Jesus Christ's power extends over death
- In the end, all Jesus Christ's enemies will be made his footstool – totally conquered



15. 'The Last Things'



I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Judgment

a) Prologue: Judgments Preceding Jesus Christ's Return

- The first series of judgments: The seven seals
- The second series of judgments: The seven trumpets
- The third series of judgments: The seven bowls
- The guilt and consequent judgment of "Babylon the Great"

b) The Timing of Jesus Christ's Return

- God has set times for the end of the age and related events . . .
- . . . God has set times for Jesus Christ's return and subsequent events
- Jesus Christ's return will be at an unexpected time, while people are living as usual
- Jesus Christ's return will be preceded by distressful events
- Awesome cosmic events will occur just prior to Jesus Christ's return
- Jesus Christ's return is spoken of as being imminent
- Note: The time of Jesus Christ's return is referred to as "the day of the Lord"

c) Jesus Christ's Return

- Jesus Christ will return with his angels
- Jesus Christ will come in great glory
- On Jesus Christ's return believers who have died will be resurrected . . .
- . . . and all his followers will be gathered to him
- On Jesus Christ's return his followers will be rewarded
- On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed

d) The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes

- Prelude: There will be a final "day" of God's judgment
- God will judge every person, for all they have done . . .
- . . . All that is hidden will be revealed and judged
- The dead will rise . . .
- . . . They will rise to be judged, and either rewarded with eternal life or be condemned
- Eternal life will be the reward for godliness
- God's wrath and destruction will be the recompense for ungodliness

e) The Final Judgment (II): The Process

- God has appointed Jesus Christ judge and will judge all people through him
- On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done . . .
- . . . God's people will be judged and rewarded according to what they have done
- People will have to give an account of themselves
- Those who have believed in Jesus Christ will be saved and have eternal life
- Those who have rejected Jesus Christ – not obeying and doing evil – will be condemned
- What people have known will be taken into account

f) Jesus Christ's Universal Rule

- Prelude: The thousand years
- God will establish the Messiah as ruler over all, forever
- The Messiah will have a universal reign of righteousness and peace
- All nations will turn to God
- All nations will worship God
- All people will acknowledge and submit to Jesus Christ
- God's people will reign with Jesus Christ



II. The Afterlife

a) The New Creation

- The present heavens and earth will pass away . . .
- . . . The devastation of the heavens and earth in association with God's judgment of the wicked
- God will create new heavens and a new earth
- God will renew all things
- God's people will live in the new Jerusalem
- Description of the new Jerusalem
- Note: The new Jerusalem is linked with the renewed Jerusalem prophesied in the OT . . .
- . . . This association is seen in the descriptions of the two cities

b) Eternal Life

- As God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, God will also raise his people
- On Jesus Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ
- God's people will be given eternal life
- Eternal life transcends physical death and precludes eternal spiritual death . . .
- . . . There will be no more death for God's people
- God's people will have the right to the tree of life and the water of life
- God's people will have accompanying eternal blessings

c) The Heavenly State of God's People

- God's people will enter the kingdom of God . . .
- . . . and God's people will inherit the kingdom
- God's people will be in heaven . . .
- . . . Heaven is where their reward is kept
- God's people will be made perfect
- God's people will have glory
- God's people will have great joy . . .
- . . . There will be no more sorrow
- Note: The salvation and redemption of God's people will be fully realized

d) Being with God

- God will dwell with his people
- God's people will see God
- God's people will be with Jesus Christ
- God's people will have God's and Jesus Christ's names written on them
- God's people will share in God's and Jesus Christ's glory
- God's people will praise God – and serve him
- Note: The feast in the kingdom of God

e) The Punishment for the Ungodly

- The ungodly face God's wrath . . .
- . . . The ungodly face destruction
- The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ – shut out from the holy city
- The ungodly will be thrown into fire
- There will be darkness and torment
- The punishment is eternal
- Note: There will be varying degrees of punishment



16. The Standing of God's People



I. Basics

a) Prologue: God Draws People to Himself

- God chooses people (to be his people) . . .
- . . . God chooses people to receive spiritual blessings
- God calls people . . .
- . . . God calls people to the blessings and other aspects of the faith
- God's choice and call were determined before creation
- God's choice and call are in accordance with his purpose
- God enables people to believe
- God enables people to come to him, in repentance
- Note: God's mercy and people's destiny

b) God's People Belong to God

- God's people belong to him
- They are God's people . . .
- . . . and God is their God
- God's people belong to Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . The Father gives his people to Jesus Christ
- God's people are called and identified by his name and Jesus Christ's name

c) God's People Are His Family

- Each believer belongs to the household of God
- God is their Father
- God's people are his children
- As God's children, they are heirs of God
- God's people are Jesus Christ's brothers and sisters
- God's people are brothers and sisters of each other
- Some of God's people have parent-child relationships

d) God's People Are His Church

- God's people form his and Jesus Christ's church
- Jesus Christ is the church's Lord and ruler
- The church is God's temple or house, in which God dwells by his Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . As such, God's people meet together in his presence
- Being God's, the church is holy



II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ △

a) God's People Are 'in' Jesus Christ

- God's people are "in" Jesus Christ
- God's people are "in" Jesus Christ because of what God has done
- Jesus Christ identifies himself with God's people
- God's people live with Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . and Jesus Christ is in his people

b) The Significance of Being 'in' Jesus Christ

- "In" Jesus Christ God's people are saved
- "In" Jesus Christ they have righteousness and are redeemed
- "In" Jesus Christ God's people are sanctified
- "In" Jesus Christ they are identified with him in his death, resurrection and life – meaning release from sin and the law . . .
- . . . This identification also has other implications – present and future
- "In" Jesus Christ God's people are given God's grace
- "In" Jesus Christ God's people have peace and other spiritual "fruits"
- "In" Jesus Christ God's people have eternal life
- "In" Jesus Christ they will have glory and other blessings in the afterlife
- Further blessings of being "in" Jesus Christ

c) God's People Are One Body 'in' Jesus Christ

- All believers – including Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free – are one body "in" Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . The church is in fact the body of Christ
- God's people are many different parts making up one body "in" Jesus Christ
- The church body is built by and "in" Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . and Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the church
- Jesus Christ is the head of the church body
- Jesus Christ is portrayed as the husband of the church
- God fosters unity and peace in the church body
- The church's unity is linked with it having one God, one Lord and one Spirit

d) Epilogue: God's People Relate to God through Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ's death and priesthood have opened the way into God's presence for God's people
- God's people have access to God through Jesus Christ – by the Holy Spirit
- God's people give thanks and praise to God through Jesus Christ
- God's people ask the Father for things in Jesus Christ's "name"
- Further references to God's people relating to him through Jesus Christ



17. Keys to God's Interaction



I. Basics

a) God Is Always with His People

- God and Jesus Christ are with their people
- God and Jesus Christ are always with their people . . .
- . . . God's people are always with God – living in his presence
- God is with his people wherever they go . . .
- . . . God also goes before his people
- God is with his people in trouble
- Being with his people in trouble, God sees them through it
- God and Jesus Christ in fact live in their people . . .
- . . . and God's people live in him and Jesus Christ
- God's people are with Jesus Christ even in death
- Note: Examples of people being successful because God was with them

b) God Knows His People and They Know Him

- God and Jesus Christ know their people
- God knows all his people's needs and troubles
- God and Jesus Christ enable their people to know them
- So God's people know him . . .
- . . . and God's people know Jesus Christ
- God's people are friends of him and Jesus Christ
- God's people have fellowship with him and Jesus Christ

c) God Loves His People

- God loves his people
- God loves his people greatly
- God's love is with his people forever
- God shows his love for his people in delivering them . . .
- . . . and God shows his love for his people in protecting them
- God shows his love in his kindness and blessings to his people
- Jesus Christ loves God's people – as he showed when he gave his life for them
- Note: God delights and rejoices in his people

d) God Is Faithful to His People

- God is completely faithful to his people
- God is faithful even if his people are unfaithful and do wrong
- God shows his faithfulness in helping and blessing his people
- God faithfully keeps his promises to his people
- God faithfully maintains his covenants with his people forever
- Note: God remembers his people

e) God Shows Grace to His People

- God and Jesus Christ show abundant grace toward their people
- By grace God's people are given spiritual blessings and gifts
- By grace God's people are entrusted with his work . . .
- . . . By grace God's people are enabled to do his work
- By grace God's people are strengthened
- By grace God's people avoid sin
- Further notes on grace in the lives of God's people



II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

a) God Gives the Holy Spirit to His People

- Prelude: Prophecies of God giving his Spirit to his people
- God gives his people his Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe and obey him
- The Holy Spirit lives in God's people
- Having the Holy Spirit verifies that a person is one of God's people . . .
- . . . Having the Holy Spirit indicates that God lives in a person
- The Holy Spirit is God's seal, guaranteeing what is to come
- Examples of people receiving the Holy Spirit
- Examples of people being filled with the Holy Spirit
- Note: The concept of asking for the Holy Spirit

b) God Works in His People through the Holy Spirit

- God saves his people through the Holy Spirit
- God instructs and teaches his people through the Holy Spirit
- God works through his people by the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . God speaks through his people by the Holy Spirit
- Jesus Christ works amongst God's people through the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit continues Jesus Christ's work in and through his people

c) The Holy Spirit Renews God's People

- The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life
- The Holy Spirit sanctifies God's people
- The Holy Spirit gives God's people love and faith
- The Holy Spirit gives God's people joy and peace
- The Holy Spirit teaches God's people . . .
- . . . The Holy Spirit teaches God's people about all things
- Having the Holy Spirit is linked with having wisdom and knowledge

d) The Holy Spirit Helps God's People

- The Holy Spirit helps each believer
- The Holy Spirit leads God's people
- The Holy Spirit directs God's people in doing God's work
- The Holy Spirit empowers God's people to do God's work
- The Holy Spirit has a significant role in what God's people speak
- God's people worship and pray by the Holy Spirit



18. God's Transformation of His People

I. General

a) God Makes His People Spiritually Alive

- God's people have spiritual life
- They have passed from their former state of spiritual death to spiritual life
- In union with Jesus Christ, their sinful selves have "died" and they are now spiritually alive
- God's people are spiritually reborn of God . . .
- . . . They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God's word
- God's people are a new creation
- Note: God's promise of a new or renewed heart and spirit – so that his people will be committed to him

b) God Makes His People Holy

- God makes his people holy . . .
- . . . God's people are a holy people
- God's people are primarily made holy through Jesus Christ's sacrifice
- God's people are being made like God . . .
- . . . God's people are being transformed to be like Jesus Christ
- Note: God's people are his workmanship

c) God Teaches His People

- God teaches his people
- God teaches his people how to live
- God enables his people to know the truth
- God makes known things about himself to his people . . .
- . . . and God makes known other things of his to his people
- God reveals unknown and concealed things to his people
- Note: God's word and truth dwell in his people – but not in others

d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons

- When his people turn to sin, God punishes and disciplines them . . .
- . . . By punishment and discipline God causes his people to seek him again
- God disciplines his people to rid them of sin
- God disciplines his people to save them from sin's consequences
- However, hard times from God are not always due to sin
- God also tests his people to show if they will obey him and remain faithful
- Further reasons why God disciplines and tests his people

e) God Disciplines His People (II): Insights

- God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves
- God's discipline is characterized by faithfulness and justice
- God's punishment of his people is warranted . . .
- . . . and God's punishment is often less than what his people's sins really deserve
- God's discipline and testing are temporary . . .
- . . . Due to his mercy and compassion, God limits his people's punishment
- God's discipline and testing can be intense, but God brings his people through



II. Spiritual Attributes

a) Love, Faith and Hope

- God gives his people love . . .
- . . . God enables his people to love
- God gives his people faith
- God gives his people hope – especially by what he has done through Jesus Christ
- God's promises give his people hope
- God's promises to his people include promises for the present life . . .
- . . . and promises for the afterlife – notably eternal life

b) Peace

- God gives his people peace
- God provides his people with rest
- Jesus Christ gives his people peace and rest
- God's people have great peace
- God's people have peace and rest even in death
- Note: God is the God of peace

c) Joy

- God gives joy to his people
- God gives his people fullness of joy
- The joy is present even in trouble
- Promises of God replacing sorrow with joy
- Note: Joy strengthens people

d) Wisdom and Knowledge

- God gives his people wisdom
- God gives his people knowledge
- God's people are given spiritual sight . . .
- . . . They have spiritual light instead of spiritual darkness
- Note: The exceptional wisdom and knowledge that God gave to Solomon, Daniel and others



19. God's Care of His People



I. God's Saving of His People

a) God's Capacity to Save His People

- God is able to save his people – no matter what the circumstances
- God has mighty power to save his people . . .
- . . . God can perform awesome deeds to save his people
- God does not need to use any other means but himself to save his people
- Note: Salvation belongs to God – for he is the only savior

b) God Saves His People – from All Things

- God is the Savior of his people . . .
- . . . God is the one who their salvation is in
- God saves his people out of all troubles
- God saves his people from all their enemies
- On delivering them, God may even honor or exalt his people
- Note: God is the light of his people, giving them light . . .
- . . . God gives his people light even amidst darkness

c) God Redeems His People

- God is the Redeemer of his people . . .
- . . . God redeems his people
- God redeems his people from enemies
- God sets his people free from suffering and things that imprison
- God will redeem his people from death
- Note: God vindicates his people

d) God Helps His People against Enemies

- God helps his people in need, including against enemies
- God consistently helps his people in need
- God helps his people by upholding them and delivering them from enemies
- God helps his people defeat enemies
- For God fights for his people, giving victory over enemies . . .
- . . . as God fought for the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan
- God enables his people to overcome all that is in the world, including Satan
- Further examples of God saving his people from enemies
- Further promises of God saving his people from enemies

e) God Is Revealed in Saving His People

- God's saving of his people makes known his salvation to the nations
- God's saving of his people makes known that he is the LORD – the only God
- God's saving of his people reveals God's great power
- God's saving of his people reveals God's glory
- God's saving of his people evidences God's love and faithfulness
- God's saving of his people shows God's holiness and righteousness . . .
- . . . God's righteousness is closely associated with his salvation



II. God's Preservation of His People

a) God Meets His People's Needs

- God cares for his people
- God sustains his people
- God meets his people's physical needs . . .
- . . . God satisfies his people's physical needs
- God meets their physical needs even in harsh circumstances . . .
- . . . Further specific examples
- God satisfies his people's spiritual hunger and thirst
- God will provide for all his people's needs – they will not lack anything
- Note: God is his people's portion

b) God Strengthens His People

- God is the strength of his people
- God strengthens his people
- God strengthens his people when they are weak . . .
- . . . God restores and renews his people
- God strengthens his people in the face of adversity
- God strengthens them spiritually, until Jesus Christ's return
- God encourages his people
- God heals his people
- God also supports and upholds his people . . .
- . . . God even carries his people

c) God Protects His People (I): General

- God preserves his people
- God protects his people from enemies
- God preserves his people's lives . . .
- . . . God keeps his people safe and secure
- God protects his people from all evil, including Satan
- God and Jesus Christ keep their people as their own – until the end

d) God Protects His People (II): Depictions

- God shields his people
- God surrounds his people
- God is a refuge for his people
- God is a rock for his people
- God guards and keeps his people . . .
- . . . God watches over his people, keeping his eyes on them
- God is a shepherd to his people . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ is a shepherd to his people
- Further depictions of God's protection

e) Epilogue: God's Care of the Needy

- The needy experience hardship . . .
- . . . The needy are often mistreated by the wicked and made to suffer
- However, God rescues the needy
- God secures justice for the needy
- God protects and is a refuge for the needy
- God provides for the needy
- Other ways God cares for the needy



20. God's Plans for His People



I. General

a) God Has Plans and Purposes for His People

- God has plans and purposes for his people
- God's plans and purposes include work for his people to do
- God's plans and purposes are not dependent upon a person's background
- Further examples of God appointing people to a specific role
- In spite of his people's troubles, God will fulfill his plans and purposes for them
- God may actually use his people's troubles in fulfilling his purposes for them . . .
- . . . God may even initiate seemingly bad things to fulfill his purposes for his people
- Note: The plans of God's people are subject to his will

b) God Works through His People (I): General

- God works through his people
- God works through his people in the spreading of the gospel
- God purifies his people, making them holy, to do his work . . .
- . . . God effectively makes them priests, to serve him
- God sends his people to do his work . . .
- . . . and God moves his people to do his work
- God works with his people, helping them
- God makes it possible for his people to do the work

c) God Works through His People (II): Empowerment

- God empowers his people to do his work
- God equips his people for the work . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ gave authority to his disciples and other followers for God's work
- God strengthens his people for the work
- God helps and empowers them to do his work even if they feel inadequate . . .
- . . . God's power works through his people in their weaknesses
- God's power for his people is great
- Note: The empowerment to perform miracles

d) God Guides His People

- God guides his people . . .
- . . . God leads his people
- God guides his people always
- God guides his people in difficult circumstances
- God commands and directs his people in doing his work
- Examples of divine guidance through dreams and visions



II. God's Plans for Israel

a) Return to the Land

- God will gather the remnant of exiled Israel from the nations and bring them home
- God will aid them on the journey home and the nations also will assist
- Judah and Israel will be reunited in the land – and share in God's blessings
- The people of Israel will possess the land – forever

b) Physical Renewal

- Israel will be physically restored
- The land will be blessed and fruitful
- Israel's population will be markedly increased, taking up more area
- Joy will accompany God's renewal of Israel . . .
- . . . Israel's sorrow will be no more

c) Deliverance and Everlasting Peace

- God will save Israel
- God will take vengeance on those who persecute Israel
- Siege, suffering and deliverance of Jerusalem – followed by judgment on its attackers
- Israel will defeat its enemies
- Israel will greatly rejoice in God's salvation
- God will protect and care for Israel
- The Davidic Messiah will reign over Israel
- The Messiah will rule forever over Israel, in righteousness and peace
- Israel will have peace – and no fear – forever . . .
- . . . Never again will Israel be invaded or destroyed

d) Spiritual Renewal

- God will cleanse Israel of all impurities and sin . . .
- . . . and God will forgive the people's sins
- Israel will be holy
- Israel will be righteous
- The people of Israel will be given God's Spirit
- The people of Israel will be given spiritual understanding

e) A Renewed Relationship with God

- Israel will turn to God
- Israel will worship God – and trust in him
- Israel will be devoted to God
- God will be as a husband to Israel, renewing his relationship with her
- The people of Israel will be God's people and he will be their God
- God will dwell in Jerusalem, living among his people forever
- Note: References to a temple of God in Jerusalem in the future

f) Exaltation and Glorification

- Israel will be dominant among the nations, who will serve it
- The nations will know and acknowledge God's presence in and care of Israel
- The nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God . . .
- . . . and nations will be established with Israel as God's people
- The nations will bring their wealth to Jerusalem, as the city of God
- God himself will exceedingly bless Israel
- God will glorify Israel
- Israel's glory will primarily be God, with the glory of his presence
- Israel's renewal will bring God glory
- Note: Israel will have no more shame



21. Being Right with God



I. Getting Right with God

a) God's Invitation

- God and Jesus Christ invite all people to come to them and be saved . . .
- . . . For God wants all people to be saved, making salvation open to everyone
- God wants us to earnestly seek him – and so find him
- We have the choice of whether or not to respond to God and Jesus Christ
- We must believe in God and what he says
- We need to be open to believing and responding to God
- Now is the time to seek God and to respond to him
- Other preliminary points to consider
- Note: Apart from God, life is pointless

b) Repentance

- We must repent
- Confess your sins . . .
- . . . and turn from sinful ways
- In turning from sin, do what is good and right . . .
- . . . and turn to God
- Repentance is required for the forgiveness of sins
- Repentance leads to life
- Repentance leads to spiritual enlightenment
- Not repenting will result in judgment and eternal punishment
- Note: The great rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents

c) Belief in Jesus Christ (I): General

- Believe in Jesus Christ
- Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
- Further key things to know and believe about Jesus Christ
- Believing in Jesus Christ is integral to believing in God . . .
- . . . One's response to Jesus Christ is one's response to God, who sent him
- Superficial belief is not enough . . .
- . . . We are to both believe and repent

d) Belief in Jesus Christ (II): Reasons to Believe

- Jesus Christ's words and knowledge
- Jesus Christ's deeds
- Jesus Christ's death and resurrection
- Testimonies about Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . God himself testified to Jesus and his claims

e) Belief in Jesus Christ (III): Outcomes

- We are forgiven of our sins and purified
- We are granted righteousness and justified before God
- We are saved
- We have eternal life
- We become a child of God
- We are given God's Holy Spirit
- Other results of believing in Jesus Christ
- Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are condemned and do not have life . . .
- . . . Further implications of not believing in Jesus Christ

f) Reasons for Assurance

- God's word, including his promises
- Jesus Christ's death and his ministry in his risen life
- Having the Holy Spirit
- Obeying God and doing what is right
- Loving other Christians
- Further reasons
- Note: God's people are free from condemnation



II. Staying Right with God

a) The Need to Obey God

- Obedience accompanies belief and faith
- Obedience leads to righteousness
- Obedience leads to holiness and purity
- Obedience brings one into a close relationship with God and Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . God and Jesus Christ are with those who obey – they in God and he in them
- Obedience and doing God’s will are critical for salvation
- Obedience and doing God’s will lead to eternal life
- Not obeying God ultimately ends in eternal destruction

b) The Need for Good Deeds

- We are to persistently do good deeds
- True faith involves good deeds . . .
- . . . One’s Christianity should be proven by one’s deeds
- Good deeds are critical for salvation and eternal life
- Note: Our good deeds or works do not earn righteousness and salvation, which are by grace

c) Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit

- Our freedom from the Mosaic Law does not permit us to sin . . .
- . . . In fact, sinning results in enslavement to sin
- We have been freed from the law to live by the Holy Spirit
- Instead of living by the sinful nature, live by the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . and live in God’s grace
- Living by the Spirit brings life – in contrast to living by the sinful nature and to the law
- Note: Inner righteousness and right attitudes are needed, rather than mere compliance with rules

d) Epilogue: Living ‘in’ Jesus Christ

- Live “in” Jesus Christ
- Remain “in” Jesus Christ
- We live “in” Jesus Christ – and he in us – by faith . . .
- . . . and by holding to his teachings
- Speak “in” Jesus Christ
- Act towards others “in” Jesus Christ
- Do God’s work “in” Jesus Christ
- Rejoice and take pride “in” Jesus Christ
- Further aspects of living “in” Jesus Christ



22. Having Faith in God



I. Faith and Hope

a) Have Faith in God

- Have faith in God and Jesus Christ
- Live by faith
- Pursue faith – and grow in faith
- Have strong faith . . .
- . . . For faith is tested
- Persist in faith
- Reasons to trust in God: God's steadfast love; . . .
- . . . God's power; . . .
- . . . and God's past deliverance

b) What Faith in God Involves Doing

- To have faith in God and Jesus Christ: believe in them and what they say; . . .
- . . . and trust in God
- Have faith that God will fulfill what he promises
- Have faith that God will care for you
- Have faith that God and Jesus Christ will do what you ask
- Note: Faith involves believing in what we do not see

c) The Importance of Faith (I): Godly Living

- By faith we stand firm
- Faith produces obedience to God
- Faith produces work in service to God
- Faith is vital to prayer, for God to grant requests
- If we have faith nothing will be impossible
- Further points on the importance of faith in living the Christian life

d) The Importance of Faith (II): Blessings

- By faith we remain in a right relationship with God and Jesus Christ
- Like Abraham, by faith we receive what God has promised . . .
- By faith we will receive the promises and salvation of the afterlife
- By faith our needs are met
- Trusting in God leads to his deliverance and protection
- Trusting in God brings joy and peace
- Further blessings of trusting in God

e) Have Hope in God

- Put your hope in God and Jesus Christ
- Put your hope in God's promises
- Set your hope on God's timely care
- Set your hope on Jesus Christ's return and what will follow
- Reasons to have hope in God: God's steadfast love and faithfulness; . . .
- . . . and the deeds of God, our Savior
- Other godly sources of hope
- Further general points on hope

f) The Importance of Hope

- Hope is vital for faith
- Hope helps us remain firm
- Further ways hope is important for living the Christian life
- Note: The depressing plight of a lack of hope



II. What Not to Do

a) Do Not Lack Faith

- Do not be lacking in faith . . .
- . . . Do not doubt
- Do not test or question God
- Lack of faith is associated with not obeying God
- Lack of faith can have other detrimental effects
- Lack of faith can even bring God's punishment

b) Do Not Be Afraid (I): Instructions

- Do not be afraid . . .
- . . . Do not be afraid or dismayed
- Do not be afraid – have faith in God and Jesus Christ, trusting in them
- Do not be afraid – be confident and bold
- Do not be afraid – be strong and courageous . . .
- . . . Look to God and Jesus Christ for your strength
- Do not even be afraid of death

c) Do Not Be Afraid (II): Reasons

- God is far more powerful than our enemies
- God is always with his people
- God helps his people
- God saves his people
- God is a refuge for his people, protecting them
- God's promised blessings
- Further reasons to not be afraid
- Note: Being afraid has grave consequences

d) Do Not Worry

- Do not worry – trust God with your concerns . . .
- . . . Ask God to provide for your needs
- Do not worry about the cares of this life for God will provide; focus instead on things of God
- The futility and dangers of worrying about the cares of this life

e) Do Not Trust in Other Things

- Do not trust in other people, but rather trust in God . . .
- . . . People are not worth trusting in
- Do not trust in yourself
- Do not trust in riches
- Do not trust in worldly power
- Do not trust in wickedness
- Do not trust in idols



23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God



I. Loving and Fearing God

a) Love God

- Love God . . .
- . . . Love Jesus Christ
- Love and treasure God's word
- Love for God and Jesus Christ is shown by obeying them
- Love for them is linked with loving and caring for other Christians

b) The Importance of Loving God

- Loving God is of the utmost importance
- God and Jesus Christ love those who love them
- God cares for those who love him
- Various spiritual blessings from loving God and Jesus Christ
- Blessings in the afterlife from loving God

c) Fear God

- Fear and be in awe of God
- Fear God to the extent that you tremble before him . . .
- . . . and tremble at God's word
- Do not fear anyone or anything but God
- Further examples of people fearing God
- Note: God's people should not live in fear of his punishment

d) Why God Should Be Feared

- God's surpassing greatness and sovereignty
- God's great deeds . . .
- . . . including God's creative work and control over nature
- God's anger and judgment . . .
- . . . Ominous commands to be silent before God in the face of his judgment
- God's holiness
- God's love and forgiveness

e) The Importance of Fearing God (I): Godly Living

- Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him
- Fear of God is associated with righteous living
- Fearing God compels one to avoid sin and evil
- Fearing God and Jesus Christ ensures we deal rightly with others
- Not fearing God is linked with ungodliness – and the consequences

f) The Importance of Fearing God (II): Blessings

- God delivers and protects those who fear him
- Fear of God leads to life . . .
- . . . along with physical and material blessings
- Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge
- Further present-day blessings of fearing God
- Future blessings for those who fear God



II. Obeying God

a) Obey God

- Keep God's commands
- Do all that God commands
- Obey God always – forever
- Do God's will . . .
- . . . Do what pleases God
- Obey Jesus Christ
- We should obey God because he is our God . . .
- . . . It is no good expressing commitment to God and Jesus Christ without obeying them
- We should obey God and Jesus Christ because of the great things they have done for us
- Note: Implications of not obeying God

b) Learn God's Commands – and All His Word

- Learn God's commands
- Ask God to teach you his ways and commands
- Persistently read and study God's commands – and all of God's word
- Listen carefully and pay attention to God's word and commands
- Listen carefully to Jesus' teaching
- Pay attention to all Christian teaching
- Receive and believe God's word
- Note: Not listening to God and his word has ill consequences

c) How to Obey God

- Do what you learn of God's and Jesus Christ's word . . .
- . . . Do not just listen to God's word
- Ask God to help you follow his ways and commands

- Submit yourself to God
- Obey God wholeheartedly
- Delight in God's commands
- Be careful to obey God
- Note: God's and Jesus Christ's commands are not too difficult or burdensome

d) Blessings of Obeying God

- General promises of blessing
- God's and Jesus Christ's love
- God's help
- The realization of God's promises
- Peace and rest
- Other present-day spiritual blessings
- Future blessings
- Note: Ill consequences of not obeying God

e) Epilogue: Follow Jesus Christ

- Follow Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Be a disciple of Jesus Christ
- Follow Jesus Christ's example
- Follow Jesus Christ's example of love and service of others
- Further aspects of Jesus Christ's example to follow
- Make Jesus Christ your Lord . . .
- . . . Live for Jesus Christ, pleasing him
- Be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus Christ
- Blessings of following Jesus Christ
- Note: Follow God and his commands . . .
- . . . and imitate God, as children of God



24. Connecting with God



I. Being Close to God

a) Seek God

- Seek God – with all your heart
- Seek God wholeheartedly and you will find him
- Seeking God should be accompanied by obedience to him
- Seek God and his help through prayer and fasting
- Blessings of seeking God
- Not seeking God has detrimental results
- Note: Desire God and things of God

b) Focus on God

- Keep thinking about God and his love
- Keep thinking about what God has done
- Think about Jesus Christ – and his example
- Look forward to what is to come in the afterlife . . .
- . . . Do not dwell on the past
- Further godly things to focus on

c) Meet with God and Live before Him

- Prepare yourself to come before God, as shown in the OT practice of consecration
- Approach God . . .
- . . . Draw near to God
- Come before God, meeting with him
- Continue to live before God, in his presence . . .
- . . . “Walk” with God
- Act before God – in awareness of his presence and scrutiny

d) Know God

- Know God and Jesus Christ
- Knowing God and Jesus Christ is linked to obeying their commands
- Knowing God is linked with loving and caring for others
- Knowing God and Jesus Christ aids godly living
- Knowing God and Jesus Christ is vital for spiritual growth
- Further blessings of knowing God and Jesus Christ
- Note: Not knowing God leads to sin and evil



II. Praying to God

a) The Importance of Prayer

- Prayer is portrayed as an offering to God and Jesus Christ
- Prayer is very powerful . . .
- . . . If we ask God for things, he will give or do them
- We help others by praying for them
- We are called on to pray

b) Praying before God

- Pray before God, in his presence
- Approach God with confidence
- Be reverent . . .
- . . . and humble yourself before God
- Pray to God as a caring father
- Pray in the Holy Spirit
- Note: It is vital for prayer that we live righteously . . .
- . . . and so it is vital for prayer that we act rightly towards others

c) Physical Aspects of Prayer

- Pray aloud or in your heart
- Pray anywhere
- Pray anytime
- Pray constantly
- Spend long periods alone in prayer – like Jesus did
- Keep alert to pray
- Postures and gestures used in prayer
- Note: Do not pray for show and do not babble on

d) Making Requests

- Ask for things in Jesus Christ’s “name”
- Ask earnestly . . .
- . . . Even fast when making requests of God
- Ask persistently
- Believe and do not doubt that what you ask will be granted
- Give thanks and praise when asking
- Note: “The Lord’s Prayer” – the prayer Jesus gave as an example

e) Epilogue: God’s Response to Requests

- God answers those who obey and please him . . .
- . . . God does not listen to those who do evil rather than good
- God and Jesus Christ grant anything we ask that is in accordance with their will . . .
- . . . Further verses regarding prayer and God’s will
- Sometimes God may not appear to answer, or does not answer immediately
- Sometimes God and Jesus Christ refuse requests
- Examples and affirmations of God answering prayer
- Further promises and prophecies of God answering prayer



25. Exalting God



I. Instructions

a) Glorify and Honor God

- Glorify God, giving glory to him
- Honor God
- Exalt God
- Glorify and honor God by thanksgiving and praise
- Glorify and honor God and Jesus Christ by how you live . . .
- . . . Glorify and honor them by doing godly work and good deeds
- Live so that others will glorify God because of what you do
- Not glorifying and honoring God has detrimental outcomes
- Note: God honors and gives glory to his people

b) Do Not Dishonor God

- Do not blaspheme God
- Do not by your actions indirectly blaspheme or profane God
- By ungodly actions we bring dishonor to God before other people . . .
- . . . Live a life worthy of God and Jesus Christ – and all that is of them
- Do not profane or defile things of God
- Additionally, do not despise God . . .
- . . . and do not scoff at God
- Note: We must treat God as holy

c) Praise and Thank God

- Praise God
- Bless God

- Calls for all things everywhere to praise and bless God
- Praise and bless God constantly
- Praise and bless God forever
- Give thanks to God
- Give thanks to God always
- Blessings of giving praise and thanks to God
- Note: God has formed his people to bring himself praise and honor

d) How to Give Praise and Thanks (I): General

- In righteousness
- Wholeheartedly
- Through prayer
- In singing . . .
- . . . along with making music
- With dancing
- With lifting up of hands
- Loudly and with shouts
- By making offerings
- Note: Give praise and thanks to God with and among other people

e) How to Give Praise and Thanks (II): Rejoicing

- Rejoice and be glad in God
- Rejoice in God always
- Exult and glory in God
- Rejoice and exult when giving praise and thanks to God
- Be glad and joyful when praising and thanking God
- Joy should characterize singing and shouting to God
- Note: Delight in God and in things of God



II. Reasons to Exalt God

a) Aspects of God's Being

- God's glory
- God's eternity
- God's greatness
- God's power
- God's wisdom and knowledge
- God's "name"

b) Aspects of God's Character

- God's holiness
- God's steadfast love . . .
- . . . along with God's faithfulness
- God's righteousness and justness
- God's mercy
- God's goodness

c) What God Does in the World

- God's deeds in general
- God's creative work
- God's provision of water and food . . .
- . . . in which one should rejoice
- God's reign
- God's word . . .
- . . . and the spreading of the gospel
- God's judgments

d) What God Does for His People

- God's great deeds for his people
- God's salvation through Jesus Christ and the associated blessings . . .
- . . . in which we should rejoice
- God's deliverance from difficulties . . .
- . . . in which we should rejoice and exult
- God's strength for his people
- Further things that God does for his people

e) Epilogue: God's Vast Blessing of His People

- God and Jesus Christ greatly bless their people . . .
- . . . God bestows much favor on his people
- God does many good and great things for his people
- God blesses his people in many ways
- God's people lack no good thing
- Ultimately, God gives his people all things
- Note: God gives his people blessings that last



26. Being One Body

I. General

a) The Church as One Body

- God's people form local groups, called churches
- The many church members form one body – the body of Christ – with no overriding distinctions
- As one body, church members meet together
- Church members function together as one body
- The church body grows – spiritually and numerically
- Note: All God's people together are the universal church

b) Be in Unison

- Be united as one
- Live in peace and harmony with each other
- Submit to one another
- Avoid foolish controversies and quarreling
- Disagreements and quarreling cause divisions . . .
- . . . Quarreling can even cause ruin
- Sometimes disputes and differences may be necessary
- Note: Have any internal legal disputes judged by people of God

c) Be in Fellowship

- Have fellowship together . . .
- . . . Believers have fellowship collectively with God and Jesus Christ
- Participate together in church activities
- Share together in the sufferings that come because of Jesus Christ
- Share together in the joy that comes in being of the church

- Share in each other's troubles . . .
- . . . and share in each other's joy
- Keep in touch about each other's welfare – and keep the others informed of your own
- Note: Believers share together in spiritual blessings and privileges . . .
- . . . Believers will share together in future blessings and privileges

d) Love Each Other (I): General

- Love one another
- Love one another more and more
- Loving other Christians is indicative of being of God and Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Not loving other Christians has negative implications
- Love is vital for Christian service and living
- Further blessings of loving each other

e) Love Each Other (II): How

- Love is expressed with actions
- Love each other as Jesus Christ loved us, even laying down his life
- Love each other genuinely and earnestly
- Love each other as brothers (and sisters)
- Keep each other in your hearts . . .
- . . . Long for each other
- Greet or send greetings to each other . . .
- . . . and welcome each other
- Note: Obedience to God and other aspects of the faith are essential for love



II. Caring for the Body

a) Pray for Each Other (I): General

- Pray earnestly for other Christians
- Pray constantly for other Christians
- Pray for those facing persecution
- Pray for those spreading the gospel
- Always thank God for other Christians because of their faith and love
- Thank and praise God because of the service of other Christians

b) Pray for Each Other (II): What to Ask

- Ask that other believers will live as God wants
- Ask God to forgive them and show mercy when they do sin
- Pray for their spiritual growth and maturity
- Pray for them in their work for the kingdom, asking God to aid them in the work
- Ask God to help and take care of them
- Pronounce godly blessings on other believers . . .
- . . . Pronouncements of blessings of God's and Jesus Christ's presence
- Note: Prayer for the blessing and peace of Jerusalem

c) Encourage Each Other

- Encourage each other
- Strengthen each other
- Encourage and strengthen each other by what you say . . .
- . . . Exhort others to continue in God's grace
- Encourage and strengthen each other by what you do . . .
- . . . Do not do anything that will cause another to "stumble"
- Comfort each other
- Comfort those in need by visiting them

d) Help Each Other

- Care about and be concerned for each other
- Consequently, help each other
- Meet each other's needs . . .
- . . . Share what you have with those in need
- Help others who are doing God's work
- Note: What one does for another Christian, one does for Jesus Christ



27. Worshiping God



I. General

a) Worship God

- We must worship God
- Worship God alone – do not worship anything or anyone else
- Worship God for his glory and sovereignty
- Worship God for his marvelous deeds – including his creation of everything
- Worship God because of his care of his people

b) Worshiping before God

- Worship before God, in his presence
- Worship God in spirit and by the Holy Spirit
- Worship God in reverence and awe . . .
- . . . Even bow and fall down before God
- Worship God with praise
- Worship God with thanksgiving
- Worship God through prayer and even with fasting

c) Worshiping Together (I): General

- Worship God together
- Offer praise and thanksgiving together
- Pray together
- Repent together for corporate sin
- Offerings should be made during collective worship
- Have order and propriety in collective worship

d) Worshiping Together (II): OT Feasts and Festivals

- The Israelites were to celebrate together three annual festivals or feasts
- Celebration of God's deliverance: The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread
- Celebration of God's provision: The Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost); . . .
- . . . and the Feast of Booths
- Israel was also to celebrate new moon festivals
- The feasts and festivals were generally times of rejoicing
- The feasts and festivals included sacred assemblies and days of no regular work
- Offerings to God were a prominent part of feasts and festivals



II. Offerings

a) Reasons to Give to God

- We are required to give offerings to God
- Offerings are an important part of worshipping God
- Offerings acknowledge God’s provision for us . . .
- . . . In fact, all we have to give God has been given to us by him and ultimately belongs to him
- Offerings express thanksgiving to God for his deliverance
- Offerings support the service of God
- Offerings are often to help the needy – bringing thanks and glory to God
- By giving to God, we ourselves will be blessed
- Note: God has given us the ultimate gift – Jesus Christ himself

b) What to Give to God

- Give the “firstfruits” to God
- Give the best to God . . .
- . . . Do not give what is inferior to God
- Give all that you can
- The practice of giving an amount in proportion to one’s income – such as a tenth
- Offer spiritual sacrifices to God

- Note: The OT grain and peace offerings

c) How to Give to God

- Give in a way that is acceptable to God
- Give willingly
- Give joyfully
- Give generously
- Give regularly . . .
- . . . and give on special occasions
- Note: The practice of making of vows to God, which have to be kept

d) Righteousness and Making Offerings

- We must live righteously to acceptably worship God . . .
- . . . Our offerings are not acceptable to God if our lives do not please him
- God desires righteousness more than offerings and sacrifices
- We should in fact offer ourselves to God, in service to him



28. Serving God

I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights

a) Be Prepared to Serve God

- We are called to serve God and Jesus Christ
- Be willing to do God's work
- Ensure that you are ready to do God's work
- Live a godly life in readiness for doing God's work
- Consecrate yourself to serve God . . .
- . . . Be holy and set apart
- Note: The purification of the priests and Levites for consecration and preparedness for God's service

b) Be Devoted to God's Work

- Devote yourself to God's work
- Serve God only – do not serve anything or anyone else . . .
- . . . Seek to please God rather than people
- Put God and Jesus Christ before everyone else
- Put God's and Jesus Christ's interests before your own interests and other matters
- Give up your life to live for God and Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Be willing even to endanger your life
- Be willing to give up everything – even life's most basic and dearest things

c) Reasons to Serve God

- He is our God, who has done great things for us
- We are God's and Jesus Christ's servants
- God cares for his servants . . .
- . . . God rescues his servants
- Your work for God will be productive
- You will be rewarded for your work . . .
- . . . You will be rewarded particularly in the afterlife
- Whoever does not produce good "fruit" will be cut off from God and Jesus Christ
- Further warnings and consequences regarding not doing God's work
- Note: Do not work for things that do not satisfy or do not last – and so are in effect meaningless

d) Being Guided by God

- To be guided by God, live a godly life
- Ask God to guide you (as in troubled times)
- God and Jesus Christ's will can even be understood through godliness and prayer
- Other sources of godly and wise guidance
- Note: In the OT, inquiring of God was at times done through an intercessor . . .
- . . . and it sometimes involved the use of lots



II. Doing God's Work

a) Do God's Work – the Best You Can

- Do God's work
- Do the work assigned to you . . .
- . . . Carry out God's will
- Work hard at God's work . . .
- . . . Endure associated persecution and hardships
- Do quality work which bears "fruit" – "fruit" that will last
- Persist at the work
- Complete the work you have been given

b) Do the Work through God

- Apart from God and Jesus Christ we can accomplish nothing
- Pray to God for help in the work – and ask others to pray
- Do God's work through God and his power
- Do the work by faith and in God's "name" . . .
- . . . Do God's work in the "name" of Jesus Christ
- Serve God through the Holy Spirit
- Note: Commit to God whatever you do

c) The Manner in Which to Serve God

- Serve God in holiness and righteousness
- Serve God with humility
- Serve God with all your heart
- Serve God with zeal . . .
- . . . but zeal must not be misguided
- Be strong and courageous, as God is with those doing his work
- Do not be afraid as you do God's work . . .
- . . . Instead, fear God and serve him faithfully
- Further points on the manner in which to serve God

d) Working with Other Believers

- Serve each other
- Do God's work together
- Encourage each other in doing God's work
- Keep each other informed about the work and associated challenges
- Note: Churches send out workers, to aid the spread of the gospel and for other work . . .
- . . . The practice of workers going out in pairs

e) Spiritual Gifts

- God gives each of his people a spiritual gift, through the Holy Spirit
- God's people are given different spiritual gifts
- The various spiritual gifts . . .
- . . . Examples of the Holy Spirit enabling believers to speak in other languages and to prophesy
- Make good use of spiritual gifts, using them appropriately
- Use your spiritual gift to build up the church
- Further instructions about spiritual gifts
- Other insights concerning spiritual gifts



29. Significant Practices



I. Symbolic Rites

a) Baptism

- God's people are baptized in the "name" of Jesus Christ
- Baptism into Jesus Christ signifies being united with him – with the corresponding implications
- Baptism signifies belief
- Baptism signifies the washing away of sins
- Baptism signifies or is linked with receiving the Holy Spirit . . .
- . . . Receiving the Holy Spirit is sometimes spoken of as being "baptized" with the Holy Spirit
- Further notes on baptism
- Note: John the Baptist's baptism, for repentance

b) The Lord's Supper

- Observe the Lord's Supper – in remembrance of Jesus Christ and his death
- Participating in the Lord's Supper also symbolizes participating in the blood and body of Jesus Christ
- Further insights on the Lord's Supper
- Do not participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner

c) Circumcision: Its Needlessness

- Circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham – and included in the Mosaic Law
- Circumcision does not bring salvation
- For believers, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any consequence
- It is our hearts that must be circumcised – as is ultimately accomplished by God
- Denunciation of people advocating circumcision



II. Other Significant Practices

a) Confession of Jesus Christ

- Confess Jesus Christ, before others
- Things to confess (or acknowledge) about Jesus Christ
- Examples of people making confessions about Jesus Christ
- Outcomes of confessing Jesus Christ
- Note: If we deny Jesus Christ, he will deny us

b) Keeping the Sabbath Holy

- On finishing creation, God rested on the seventh day – and made it holy
- Observe the Sabbath as holy by resting on it
- Observance of the Sabbath was given as a sign between God and his people Israel
- Further reasons for keeping the Sabbath holy
- It is permissible to do good and necessary things on the Sabbath
- On the Sabbath God's people assemble for worship . . .
- . . . During Sabbath worship there is teaching, with reading of Scripture
- Blessings for keeping the Sabbath holy – and judgments for not
- Verses alleged to indicate that Christians do not need to keep the Sabbath
- Note: Early Christians met together on the first day of the week

c) Fasting

- Fasting involves abstaining from food and drink
- Fasting can be done regularly – as an adjunct to prayer and worship
- Fasting can be done on particular occasions, in petitioning God – as in seeking God's help . . .
- . . . or as in asking God to relent from punishing sin
- Fasting can be done to express distress in trouble or remorse over sin
- Note: Fasting in itself is not significant

d) The Laying on of Hands

- In conveying the gift of the Holy Spirit
- In conveying blessing
- In conveying God's healing
- In commissioning for ministry
- Note: The OT use of oil to anoint and consecrate people for God's service



30. Church Leadership



I. General

a) Introductory Insights

- Churches have leaders
- Typically churches are together overseen by a central leadership group
- Ultimately it is God who chooses leaders . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit play a role in the making of leaders
- Leaders will be accountable to God for their work
- Leaders will be richly rewarded for good work
- Note: Examples of the ordination of leaders

b) Required Characteristics

- Godliness
- Wisdom and competence
- Strength and courage
- Willingness to serve
- Deep love for church members . . .
- . . . and concern for church members

c) Managing the Church

- As a leader, supervise church affairs
- Delegate work to capable people
- Be gentle and sparing in the use of authority . . .
- . . . but exercise authority where necessary
- Be an example for church members to imitate

d) Caring for Church Members

- Be a shepherd taking care of God's flock
- Pray for church members
- Strengthen members in the faith
- Exhort and urge members on in aspects of the Christian life
- Follow up and pastor members by visiting them . . .
- . . . or by writing letters to them
- Serve church members
- Work hard at helping church members

- Be prepared to suffer hardship for church members

e) Dealing with Sin in the Church

- Confront church members over sin
- Rebuke members for their sin . . .
- . . . and warn them to stop sinning
- Expel unrepentant sinners . . .
- . . . This is partly for the benefit of the offenders themselves
- Have multiple witnesses in disciplinary procedures
- Restoring a person who has sinned
- Note: Unchecked sin corrupts others

f) Women in Leadership

- In the OT Israelite nation, some women had roles as leaders . . .
- . . . and some women were prophetesses
- In the NT church, some women had significant ministerial roles . . .
- . . . One such role was prophesying
- Controversial passages on women not speaking in church
- Note: The oneness and interdependence of women and men "in" Jesus Christ

g) Church Members' Duties to Leaders

- Love your leaders
- Respect and revere your leaders
- Honor your leaders
- Listen to your leaders and their teaching
- Obey your leaders
- Give your leaders material support . . .
- . . . Leaders deserve material support
- Church members can bring their leaders great joy, in loving them and others
- Church members can bring leaders joy by firm faith and obedient, godly lives



II. Teaching in the Church

a) What to Teach: God's Word

- Teach and preach God's word
- Teach God's commands and ways
- Teach the truths of the faith . . .
- . . . Examples of spiritual truth being taught from Scripture
- Read God's word in church assemblies
- Use God's word as the authoritative standard in determining what is true . . .
- . . . and use God's word in determining what actions are legitimate
- Note: Do not add to or subtract from God's word – nor distort it

b) How to Teach

- Explain God's word and truths
- Where applicable, use illustrations in teaching
- Do not teach beyond what the hearers can understand
- The manner in which to teach
- The teaching needs to be correct . . .
- . . . and the teaching needs to be complete
- Keep reminding church members of teachings
- Note: Church members can themselves instruct one another

c) Traits of False Teachers (I): Their Teaching

- False teachers speak lies and delusions of their own, in God's name
- Their teaching is hollow – of worldly, human origin
- False teachers say what their listeners like to hear – appealing and pleasant things . . .
- . . . False teachers do not confront their listeners with their sin

- False teachers teach different doctrine to what is correct
- False teachers distort and oppose the truth
- False teachers typically deny Jesus Christ – and so are of the antichrist
- Other notes about their teaching
- Note: False teachers and their teaching are savage and destructive – causing controversies and divisions

d) Traits of False Teachers (II): Characteristics

- The minds and consciences of false teachers are corrupted
- False teachers typically follow their sinful desires
- False teachers are generally greedy for personal gain
- False teachers are deceitful
- False teachers are often conceited and contemptuous
- False teachers lack understanding and knowledge
- Note: False teachers stand condemned . . .
- . . . False teachers face destruction

e) Guarding against False Teachers

- Watch out for false teachers and their teaching . . .
- . . . Do not be deceived or led astray by false teachers
- Test teachers by comparing their teaching with the Scriptures and sound biblical doctrine
- False teachers can be recognized by their "fruit" and actions
- Do not tolerate false teachers and their teaching . . .
- . . . Have nothing to do with false teachers
- Note: False teachers often succeed in leading people astray . . .
- . . . False teachers can lead many astray



31. Love



I. Loving Qualities

a) Love

- What love is
- The supremacy of love
- Live in love
- Do things in love
- Love others as you love yourself . . .
- . . . "Love your neighbor as yourself" sums up God's law
- Love your enemies and do good to them . . .
- . . . Do not repay evil with evil, but with good

b) Generosity

- Be generous
- Lend to others
- Share with others
- Practice hospitality . . .
- . . . Examples of hospitality
- Be kind and gracious . . .
- . . . Insights on and examples of kindness
- Generosity brings oneself great blessing

c) Mercy

- Show mercy
- Be merciful and God will show you mercy
- Be compassionate
- Forgive others . . .
- . . . Forgive and God will forgive you
- Do not judge others . . .
- . . . If you judge others, God will judge you accordingly
- Note: Human judgment is typically superficial and inadequate

d) Gentleness

- Be gentle
- Be patient, bearing with others
- Be meek
- Do not take revenge . . .
- . . . Rather than taking revenge, wait for God to act
- Seek peace, including peace with others . . .
- . . . and seek peace for others – in part through prayer
- Live and act in a quiet manner



II. Antitheses of Love

a) Selfish Attitudes

- Do not pursue selfish ends . . .
- . . . Examples of selfishness
- Do not be greedy
- Do not covet
- Seek the interests of others before your own . . .
- . . . Do so even at great cost to yourself, as Jesus Christ did
- Be considerate and reasonable

b) Ill Feelings

- Avoid anger
- Do not hate
- Get rid of bitterness
- Do not bear malice
- Do not be jealous . . .
- . . . Do not envy
- Do not show contempt

c) Adverse Speech

- Do not quarrel
- Do not curse
- Do not scoff
- Do not slander
- Do not gossip
- Do not grumble, particularly against others

d) Adverse Force

- Do not use violence . . .
- . . . God hates and punishes violence
- Do not murder
- Do not rape
- Do not kidnap
- Do not oppress



32. Justice

I. Justice in Action

a) Do What Is Just and Right

- Practice justice
- Practice righteousness along with justice . . .
- . . . Do what is right
- Do no wrong to others
- Strive to do what is right in the eyes of both God and people
- Acting justly brings blessing
- Injustice brings God's judgment

b) Administering Justice

- Administer and maintain justice
- Judge justly
- Do not show partiality in judging . . .
- . . . Nor show partiality in other matters
- Further instructions about legal judgments
- Have the same laws for foreigners as for the native-born
- OT laws of compensation
- Note: Avoid going to court

c) Justice and the Needy (I): Instructions

- Do not mistreat the needy
- Defend the cause of the needy
- Give to the needy . . .
- . . . Provide the needy with food and clothing
- Even sell your possessions to give to the poor

- Note: Treat foreigners the same as your native-born

d) Justice and the Needy (II): Insights

- Defending and providing for the needy are a vital part of true religion
- Defending and providing for the needy are associated with righteousness
- Defending and providing for the needy bring one blessing . . .
- . . . but giving to the needy must be done in an appropriate manner
- Blessings include one's own needs being met . . .
- . . . There will also be reward in the afterlife
- God will punish those who mistreat the needy
- God will punish those who ignore the needy

e) OT Structured Provisions for the Needy

- The providing of produce for the needy
- The prohibiting of taking interest or profit from the poor
- The canceling of fellow Israelites' debts every seven years
- The release of Israelite servants every seven years
- The year of jubilee
- The right of redemption for Israelite servants and of ancestral land



II. Being True

a) Faithfulness

- Be faithful . . .
- . . . Examples of faithfulness
- Be trustworthy and reliable
- Stand by others . . .
- . . . Do not desert others
- Do not betray others
- Results of faithfulness
- Consequences of unfaithfulness
- Note: Insights on friendship . . .
- . . . Jonathan and David’s close friendship

b) Truthfulness

- Be truthful . . .
- . . . Speak the truth
- Be honest
- Be sincere
- Have integrity . . .
- . . . Integrity brings security and other blessings

c) Deceitfulness

- Do not deceive
- Do not lie
- Do not give false testimony
- Do not use flattery
- Do not plot evil schemes
- Avoid hypocrisy: Not acting in accordance with what you say; . . .
- . . . and false external practices – doing things for show
- Deceptive practices bring oneself harm
- Deceptive practices ultimately bring God’s judgment

d) Dishonest Gain

- Do not pursue dishonest gain
- Do not steal
- Do not defraud
- Do not practice extortion
- Do not accept bribes
- Ill-gotten gain does not last
- Ill-gotten gain has ill consequences

e) Addendum: Oaths

- The practice of swearing oaths, in God’s name – not to be done falsely
- Swearing oaths to assert the truthfulness of a statement
- Swearing an oath to confirm a pledge . . .
- . . . Such oaths are barred by NT teaching
- Note: References to God’s or Jesus Christ’s presence and approval regarding a matter



33. Wisdom



I. Being Wise

a) Prologue: The Precedence of Godly Wisdom

- Godly wisdom is superior to anything else
- Worldly wisdom is flawed and inferior to the wisdom of God
- Worldly wisdom and knowledge are ultimately futile, even detrimental
- So get godly wisdom and be wise . . .
- . . . Seek out wisdom and knowledge

b) Wisdom through God

- Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom
- Ask God for wisdom . . .
- . . . For it is God who gives wisdom
- Obeying God's commands brings wisdom . . .
- . . . Those who have wisdom and understanding keep God's law
- Note: Wisdom involves doing what is right – and shunning evil

c) Wisdom through Others

- Pay attention to instruction . . .
- . . . Wise people listen to and learn from instruction
- Listen to advice – which is important for making plans
- Accept reproof
- Additional insights on accepting reproof and discipline
- Outcomes of ignoring reproof and discipline
- Further advice and insights on gaining wisdom

d) Wise Speech (I): Instructions

- Be quick to listen and slow to speak
- Be careful when speaking
- Use few words – in contrast to fools
- Speak gently
- Speak graciously
- Do not sin in what you say
- Note: Instructions and insights on giving rebuke

e) Wise Speech (II): Insights

- The righteous speak wisely . . .
- . . . One's words are determined by the "heart"
- Wise speech is of great value
- The speech of the wise imparts wisdom and knowledge
- Further ways wise speech benefits others
- Other ways one's words can be beneficial
- Beware: The tongue has great power, capable of evil and destructive effects

f) Wise Personal Practices

- Be self-controlled . . .
- . . . Self-control comes from God and wisdom
- Do not act in haste
- Work hard . . .
- . . . Ensure you have adequate provisions
- Do not be idle . . .
- . . . Idleness leads to poverty and associated troubles
- Enjoy life and so be joyful



II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

a) Foolishness

- Fools spurn and lack both wisdom and knowledge
- Foolishness involves failure to comprehend God and his ways
- Foolishness involves failure to comprehend other spiritual truths
- Foolishness involves acting contrary to God
- Foolishness encompasses sin
- Foolishness encompasses wickedness and doing evil
- Further characteristics of fools
- Results of foolishness . . .
- . . . Ultimately, foolishness results in ruin – even death

b) Foolish and Ungodly Practices

- Being quick-tempered is foolish and ungodly
- Indulging in pleasure is foolish and pointless . . .
- . . . and indulging in pleasure is ungodly
- Drunkenness and gluttony are unwise, causing one trouble . . .
- . . . Drunkenness should be avoided, particularly as it leads to ungodliness
- Further ungodly practices that are notably foolish
- Further practices typical of fools
- Unwise practices comparable to foolishness
- Note: Warnings against putting up security for another's debt

c) Spiritual Ignorance (I): Causes and Results

- Spiritual ignorance is caused basically by sin and ungodliness
- Spiritual ignorance and lack of perception is caused partly by the ungodly being closed-minded . . .
- . . . God and Jesus Christ may even judicially blind ungodly people
- Thus, the ungodly lack spiritual sense and knowledge . . .

- . . . and the ungodly are in spiritual “darkness”
- Spiritual ignorance results in further sin and ungodliness
- Spiritual ignorance and lack of spiritual perception result in unbelief
- Spiritual ignorance and lack of spiritual understanding culminate in dire consequences

d) Spiritual Ignorance (II): Knowledge Lacked

- The ungodly do not know God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit
- The ungodly do not comprehend God's word
- The ungodly do not know how God wants them to live . . .
- . . . and they do not know or understand many other spiritual truths
- The ungodly are ignorant of and deceived about their sin
- The ungodly are misguided about their standing with God and Jesus Christ
- The ungodly are skeptical of God knowing their deeds and of his judgment
- The ungodly are largely oblivious of God's pending punishment – which they will bear

e) Epilogue: Blessings of Wisdom

- Understanding and insight . . .
- . . . and discernment
- Prudence and discretion
- Knowledge – including knowing what to do
- Righteousness and justness
- Protection . . .
- . . . and life
- Strength and success
- Prosperity
- Honor
- Further blessings of wisdom
- Note: Living without wisdom has harmful consequences



34. Common Relationships

I. Family Relationships

a) Prologue: Getting Married

- Issues in deciding whether to stay single or marry: General; . . .
- . . . Forsaking marriage for God and Jesus Christ
- Do not marry outside of God's people – particularly as it can result in being led astray
- A person should have only one spouse
- Remarriage and adultery
- Note: Finding a good wife is a great blessing – a gift from God . . .
- . . . but a quarrelsome or ungodly wife is troublesome

b) Spouses (I): General

- A husband and wife should be as one, which involves sexual union
- Husbands should love their wives
- Wives should submit to their husbands
- Do not commit adultery – which brings God's judgment . . .
- . . . Warnings against being enticed by an adulteress – which leads to ruin
- Avoid divorce – it is contrary to God's purposes

c) Spouses (II): Romantic Love

- The marvel of love
- Spouses and their love belong exclusively to each other
- Further insights on love
- Examples and declarations of love
- Adoration of lover's beauty
- Desire to give oneself to one's lover
- Further desire for and enjoyment of sexual intimacy with one's lover

d) Parents' Duties to Children (I): Love and Care

- Parents should love their children
- Parents should have compassion on their children
- Parents should care for their children
- Parents should provide for their children
- Parents should pray for their children
- Note: Points on relating to children in general

e) Parents' Duties to Children (II): Godly Training

- Parents should raise their children to live as God wants
- Parents should discipline their children
- Parents should teach their children about God and his deeds, inspiring them to obey God's laws . . .
- . . . Parents should promote faith in their children
- Note: Godly parents bring great blessing to their children

f) Children's Duties to Parents

- Children are to honor and respect their parents . . .
- . . . Children should not dishonor or mistreat their parents
- Likewise, all older people should be treated with respect
- Children are to obey their parents
- Children should heed their parents' teaching – which brings great benefits
- Children are to help their parents . . .
- . . . One should assist any relative in need
- Note: Children are a blessing to their parents from God . . .
- . . . and children can bring their parents much joy



II. Civil Relationships

a) Citizens' Duties to Authorities

- Citizens should submit to and obey the governing authorities . . .
- . . . For the authorities have been established by God and they will punish wrongdoers
- Citizens should defy any command that conflicts with God's will
- Citizens should honor authorities
- Citizens should pray for authorities

b) Authorities' Duties to Citizens (I): General

- Governing authorities should act and rule according to God's law and ways
- Authorities should rule as servants of God
- Authorities should rule wisely . . .
- . . . Authorities need to be wise
- Note: Further traits that should characterize authorities

c) Authorities' Duties to Citizens (II): Justice

- Authorities should rule justly
- Authorities should defend the needy
- Authorities should not rule unjustly . . .
- . . . Unjust rule brings God's judgment
- Various insights on unjust rule

d) Servants and Masters

- Servants should obey, submit to and respect their masters
- Servants should be faithful
- Good service is rewarded
- Masters must treat servants justly
- Masters should pay servants their wages
- Note: Miscellaneous instructions and insights regarding slaves



35. Spreading the Gospel



I. Instructions

a) Tell People the Gospel

- Tell people the gospel message . . .
- . . . Tell people the gospel about Jesus Christ
- Tell all people, everywhere
- Continue to tell people the gospel despite suffering for doing so
- Do not be ashamed of the gospel, even despite suffering for it
- Try to persuade people to believe and respond to the gospel

b) What Things to Explain

- That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God . . .
- . . . Further key things about who Jesus Christ is
- Jesus Christ's person and deeds – as witnessed and testified to by NT believers
- Jesus Christ's death and resurrection . . .
- . . . NT believers testified to Jesus Christ's death and resurrection having witnessed them
- The outcomes of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection
- The kingdom of God
- What God is like and what he has done . . .
- . . . including what God has done for you
- What else you have seen and heard (of God and Jesus Christ)
- How people should respond

c) How to Spread the Message

- Present the gospel accurately and plainly
- The manner in which to present the gospel message
- Spread the gospel by the Holy Spirit
- Spread the gospel boldly . . .
- . . . Spread the gospel boldly with God's help
- Work hard at spreading the gospel message
- Further notes on spreading the gospel message
- Note: Spreading the gospel is not to be done for profit; take measures not to be a financial burden

d) Supplementary Actions

- Pray for the proclamation of the gospel, including others who proclaim it
- Pray for the salvation of unbelievers
- Rather than insist on your own rights, act in the interests of others for the sake of the gospel
- Live and act in a way that is consistent with the gospel
- In acting consistently with the gospel, you and the faith will not be discredited . . .
- . . . You will have credibility, attracting people to the gospel
- Support others spreading the gospel . . .
- . . . Give hospitality and aid to visiting preachers and workers
- Note: Guard the gospel message



II. Insights

a) Insights on the Gospel Message

- The gospel is not made up by men – it is true
- The gospel reveals God’s hidden mystery concerning Jesus Christ
- The gospel is of God’s grace
- The gospel is good news
- The message of Jesus Christ is a stumbling block for many people
- Those who do not believe and respond to the gospel will be condemned

b) The Need to Spread the Gospel

- We have been entrusted with the gospel and the task of telling others . . .
- . . . We are responsible for telling others
- Through believers spreading the gospel message others come to believe . . .
- . . . and there are many ready to respond to the gospel – but they need someone to tell them
- The gospel brings salvation, saving those who respond to it
- The gospel brings life to those who respond
- Further blessings that spreading the gospel brings to those who respond

c) God and the Gospel’s Effectiveness

- The gospel is the power and wisdom of God to save – though it may seem foolish to the world
- The gospel is not dependent on us and our presentation of it – but on the Holy Spirit and God’s power
- The Holy Spirit witnesses about Jesus Christ to people, fostering belief
- God and Jesus Christ at times confirm the gospel message by miracles . . .
- . . . Miracles lead people to believe the message and turn to God

d) Further Insights regarding the Gospel

- Believers are to be light for the world
- Insights regarding spreading the gospel
- Those who spread the gospel will be blessed
- The gospel has spread far and wide
- The gospel will be preached to all nations before the end



36. Standing Firm



I. General

a) Be Faithful to God

- Be faithful to God and Jesus Christ
- Hold fast to God and his ways
- Serve God and Jesus Christ faithfully . . .
- . . . Examples of faithful service
- Do not be unfaithful to God by not keeping his commands
- Do not forsake God
- God and Jesus Christ protect and bless those who are faithful to them
- God punishes those who are unfaithful
- God punishes those who forsake him

b) Remember God and His Word

- Ensure you remember God
- Remember what God has done
- Remember God's word and commands
- Persistently meditate on God's word and commands . . .
- . . . Keep God's word and commands in your heart and thoughts
- Note: Forgetting God has dreadful consequences

c) Hold to the Faith

- Continue in the faith
- Stand firm
- Hold to Christian teaching, abiding in it . . .
- . . . Continue to live by Christian teaching
- Grow in the faith and in your knowledge
- Grow in all aspects of your Christian life . . .
- . . . and produce spiritual "fruit"

d) Persist until the End

- Stand firm until the end
- Persist and be diligent so that you will receive the reward . . .
- . . . Be like an athlete, striving for a prize
- Be careful not to turn away from God . . .
- . . . Do not rebel against God
- Some people do fall away
- Falling away brings dire consequences
- Note: Dreadful consequences of Israel's rebellion against God

e) Be Ready for Jesus Christ's Return

- Await Jesus Christ's return – and for all that will follow
- As we do not know when Jesus Christ will come, "stay awake" and be ready
- To be ready for Jesus Christ's return, live a godly life . . .
- . . . and live a constructive life
- Do not live an ungodly life, leaving you unprepared for Jesus Christ's return
- Do not be deceived by false claims, for Christ's return will be only after certain events – and obvious to all



II. Spiritual Warfare

a) The Existence of Spiritual Warfare

- Believers are involved in conflict of a spiritual nature
- Believers have spiritual enemies, notably Satan
- Believers have human enemies, spiritually opposed to them
- Believers face internal spiritual conflict
- God and Jesus Christ aid believers in spiritual warfare, enabling them to overcome

b) Engaging in Spiritual Warfare

- Beware of spiritual dangers
- Resist Satan
- Use spiritual weapons and armor
- Spiritual weapons and armor include: faith; . . .
- . . . God's word; . . .
- . . . and prayer

c) Counteraction of Demons

- Distinguishing between the Holy Spirit and demons
- Jesus Christ drove out demons . . .
- . . . Jesus Christ gave some of his followers similar authority over demons
- Demons are driven out of people in Jesus Christ's "name"
- The Holy Spirit, faith and prayer also figure in the driving out of demons

d) Ungodly Spiritualistic Practices

- Do not practice witchcraft or other occult practices
- Do not consult anyone who does perform occult practices
- Do not have other "gods" or idols
- Other "gods" and idols are man-made, lifeless fallacies . . .
- . . . Other "gods" and idols are useless
- Worship of idols is correlated with worship of demons
- Having other "gods" and idols is very detrimental
- Having other "gods" and idols is detrimental to our relationship with God
- Having other "gods" and idols culminates in God's retribution
- Note: Other "gods" and idolatry are not restricted to physical images



37. Rejecting Sin



I. Encountering Sin

a) Consequences of Sin for God's People

- Prelude: God's people still sin
- Sin deprives God's people of his blessings
- Sin deprives God's people of rest and peace
- God punishes sin, which can mean physical suffering and emotional anguish . . .
- . . . along with various other troubles
- Sin defiles God's people – making them spiritually unclean
- God turns away from those who persist in sin . . .
- . . . God rejects them and thrusts them from his presence
- Further implications of deliberately or habitually continuing to sin

b) Addressing Sin (I): Return from Sin to God

- Stop sinning, turning away from sin
- Do not be stubborn, like the Israelites were, resisting God and persisting in sin
- So get rid of sin . . .
- . . . and get rid of things involved in sinful practices
- Return to God
- Return to God with all your heart – not insincerely
- In returning from sin to God, do what God wants

c) Addressing Sin (II): Deal with Sin before God

- Confess your sin to God
- Be sorrowful over your sin
- Humble yourself before God over your sin – and its consequences
- Ask God for forgiveness and restoration
- In petitioning God, express your anguish over consequences of your sin – even with fasting
- Note: Accept God's discipline for sin

d) God's Response to Repentance

- Prelude: God seeks to draw his wayward people back to him
- When we repent God forgives our sins . . .
- . . . Further references to God forgiving sin
- Being merciful and compassionate, God saves us from the consequences of our sin
- When we repent God restores our relationship with him
- Note: Not repenting and returning to God brings judgment . . .
- . . . Unrepentant churches face Jesus Christ's judgment



II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

a) Avoiding Sin

- Take care not to sin
- Ask God for help to avoid sin . . .
- . . . For God and Jesus Christ are willing and able to help us withstand temptation
- Use God’s word to avoid sin and counter evil
- Avoid sinful passions and desires . . .
- . . . Sinful passions and desires lead to sin
- Renew your mind and take care of your “heart”
- Get rid of sinful influences
- Avoid all evil
- Hate evil and sin
- Along with hating evil, love what is good

b) Alternatives to Sin

- Instead of living by the sinful nature, live by the Holy Spirit
- Instead of living in darkness, live according to the light and truth . . .
- . . . Insights on living in darkness and living in God’s light and truth
- Instead of living as a slave to sin, live as a slave to God and righteousness . . .
- . . . In avoiding sin be focused on doing what is right
- Pursue righteousness . . .
- . . . Be righteous and upright
- Be good
- Note: Further actions that counter sin and evil

c) Be Holy (I): General

- Be holy
- Be holy because God is holy
- Be godly
- Be pure . . .
- . . . Be blameless
- Make every effort to be holy and godly, particularly in view of what is to come
- Things that lead to holiness
- Things that lead to purity
- We should be holy and pleasing to God because of the things he has done for us
- The godly, blameless and pure are accepted by God and Jesus Christ
- The godly, blameless and pure are cared for and blessed by God

d) Be Holy (II): Being Set Apart

- Prelude: The world is basically evil
- Be set apart for God
- Do not love this world
- Do not conform to this world
- Do not live as other people do . . .
- . . . Worldly and human behavior to be avoided
- Avoid bad company . . .
- . . . Bad company is corruptive and harmful
- Avoid compromising alliances with unbelievers and the wicked
- Note: God’s people are not of this world . . .
- . . . God’s people are in effect exiles and temporary residents in this world – even homeless in it



38. Major Pitfalls



I. Pride

a) Pride in Thought

- Do not be proud or conceited
- Do not be arrogant
- Do not be haughty . . .
- . . . Do not think you are better than others
- Do not be wise in your own eyes . . .
- . . . Seeing yourself as wise is associated with foolishness
- Do not be self-righteous . . .
- . . . Self-righteousness causes one to overlook sin
- Do not embrace glory from people – particularly in preference to glory from God
- Note: Pride can easily stem from riches and power

b) Pride in Action: Self-Exaltation and Boasting

- Do not exalt yourself . . .
- . . . Honor others, rather than yourself
- Do not dress lavishly for outward appearances
- Those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted
- Do not boast about yourself . . .
- . . . Only boast about God and Jesus Christ
- Boasting about oneself typically is bad
- Boasting is of no benefit and even destructive

c) Outcomes of Pride

- Pride is very detrimental to a relationship with God . . .
- . . . and acting presumptuously is linked with not obeying God's commands
- Pride and arrogance lead to ill treatment of others
- Pride is associated with self-deception and flawed understanding
- Pride leads to one's downfall – in contrast to humility
- God punishes the proud and arrogant . . .
- . . . God brings down and humbles the proud

d) Antithesis of Pride: Humility

- Be humble, particularly before God
- Humbly acknowledge your unworthiness before God and Jesus Christ
- Fast as a means of humbling yourself before God
- Be humble towards others
- Humility is important for obeying and serving God
- God cares for and blesses the humble
- Not humbling yourself can bring dire consequences



II. Riches and Sex

a) Riches and Godliness

- Riches are a barrier to a relationship with God
- Riches draw one away from God . . .
- . . . Contrastingly, the poor are given prominence as recipients of the gospel and God's kingdom
- Desire for riches can lead to mistreatment of others
- So, do not love money . . .
- . . . Be content with what you have
- Note: Wealth ultimately comes from God

b) Further Warnings about Riches

- Riches are not secure . . .
- . . . and we do not know what the future holds
- Life does not last and the dead cannot take their riches with them
- Hoarding riches will bring ill consequences in the afterlife
- Other shortcomings of riches
- Note: Advantages of riches, as opposed to poverty

c) Sexual Sin

- Avoid sexual sin . . .
- . . . Be pure
- Sexual sin has ill consequences
- Sexual sin ultimately results in God's judgment
- Further insights on sexual sin
- Note: The sexually immoral who believe and repent are forgiven and granted righteousness

d) Prohibited Forms of Sex

- Lust
- Fornication
- Prostitution
- Homosexual acts
- Incest
- Bestiality

e) Epilogue: Be Wary

- Be sober-minded
- Watch yourself . . .
- . . . Watch and guard yourself against sinning
- Examine and evaluate yourself
- Keep a clear conscience . . .
- . . . A good conscience is vital for governing ourselves in pleasing God
- Evaluate all things
- Do not be deceived, nor deceive yourself
- Beware: Sin is deceptive
- Warnings against complacency



39. Hard Times



I. General

a) Prologue: God's People Still Have Hard Times

- Trouble is characteristic of human life
- The wicked seek to oppress the righteous and the poor
- Examples of God's people undergoing hard times
- Examples of God's people even attributing hard times to God
- Note: The desire to contend with God over one's plight

b) Mourn Loss

- Mourn and weep over loss – particularly deaths
- Mourn and weep before God
- Openly express your sorrow and grief
- Fast in mourning

c) Keep in Mind God and His Word

- In hard times, remember God . . .
- . . . and remember what God has done
- Seek God in hard times
- Do not forget God's word
- Keep meditating on God's word and obeying it – living righteously
- Put your hope in God's word
- Take comfort in God's word and delight in it

d) Trust in God

- During hard times, trust in God
- Commit yourself to God and take refuge in him . . .
- . . . For God saves and protects those who take refuge in him
- Accept hard times from God
- Do not complain against nor contend with God because of hard times

e) Hope in God and Wait for Him

- During hard times, put your hope in God
- Look resolutely and expectantly to God
- Wait for God
- Wait for God patiently and quietly
- Wait with confidence and in the knowledge that God will act . . .
- . . . For God cares for and blesses those who wait for him



II. Praying in Hard Times

a) Express Your Anguish to God

- Tell God of your plight and how you feel . . .
- . . . Pour out your heart to God
- Prayer anxiously speaking of God's seeming remoteness and of apparent isolation from him . . .
- . . . Consequent longing for God amidst suffering
- Prayer despairingly speaking of God as even the source of one's suffering
- Prayer desperately asking God how long suffering and his apparent inaction or wrath is to continue

b) Ask God for Help (I): General

- When facing trouble, call on God . . .
- . . . Cry out to God for help
- Ask God and Jesus Christ for mercy
- Ask God for strength
- Ask God to guide you
- Ask God to preserve and protect you
- Ask God to deliver you
- Ask God to hear and answer your prayer . . .
- . . . Ask God to quickly answer and help you
- Persist in prayer to God
- Note: Prayer asking for retribution for wicked enemies

c) Ask God for Help (II): Things to Appeal To

- God's righteousness
- God's steadfast love and faithfulness . . .
- . . . along with God's mercy
- Your devotion to and relationship with God . . .
- . . . and God's promises to his people
- The sake of God's "name"
- Note: Believe that God will hear you and answer your prayer – and tell him so

d) Praise and Rejoice in God

- Praise and thank God amidst trouble
- Rejoice in God amidst trouble
- Determine and promise to praise and thank God for deliverance
- Praise and thank God when he answers prayer made in hard times
- Rejoice in God's deliverance from hard times

e) Epilogue: God Does Respond to Suffering and Cries

- God is near us in hard times and when we pray
- God does not ignore the suffering and cries of the afflicted
- God comforts his people in hard times, and in delivering them
- God hears the cries of the godly and rescues them . . .
- . . . God has compassion on his people, saving and blessing them
- Further testimony to God answering prayers in suffering and trouble
- Further specific examples of God answering prayers in suffering and trouble



40. Persecution



I. The Persecution of God's People

a) God's People Face Persecution

- Following God and Jesus Christ results in persecution . . .
- . . . It brings all kinds of hardships and suffering
- Spreading the gospel can lead to opposition . . .
- . . . and spreading the gospel can result in persecution
- God's people are hated
- God's people may face plots against them

b) Types of Persecution

- Ridicule
- Verbal abuse
- Lies and slander
- Ostracism and expulsion
- Imprisonment
- Beatings and violence
- Threat of death . . .
- . . . and even death
- Further forms of persecution

c) The Antichrist and the Final Persecution

- Scripture speaks of the coming of an antichrist
- The antichrist will be of Satan and opposed to God
- The antichrist will have great authority and be worshiped
- Persecution of God's people will increase in the end times – especially due to the antichrist . . .
- . . . Martyrdom will be prominent
- "Three and a half years" is given for the rule of the antichrist and intense persecution
- The end of the antichrist
- The contrasting outcomes for submitting and not submitting to the antichrist

d) God's Care of Persecuted Believers

- God's all-surpassing purpose, work and love for his people – despite adversity
- God and Jesus Christ strengthen their people amidst trials
- God and Jesus Christ will rescue their people from trials . . .
- . . . Examples of God and Jesus Christ rescuing believers from trials
- God will ultimately save believers from the persecution of the end times
- Note: God will take vengeance on those who persecute his people



II. What to Do in Persecution

a) Be Faithful to God and Endure

- Remain faithful to God and Jesus Christ
- Continue to do what God wants
- Endure persecution and suffering
- Endure persecution and suffering patiently
- Consider and follow Jesus Christ's example in suffering . . .
- . . . and share Jesus Christ's sufferings
- Note: Be on your guard against persecutors and avoid persecution when appropriate

b) Have Faith in God and Pray

- Have faith and hope in God and Jesus Christ . . .
- . . . Faith enables one to endure persecution and suffering
- Do not be afraid of persecutors or suffering
- Do not worry about what to say – you will be given what to say
- Pray to God, asking for help
- Pray for and bless those who persecute you

c) Rejoice

- Rejoice because trials develop Christian character and virtues
- Rejoice because of rewards for suffering and enduring persecution . . .
- . . . and look forward to these rewards
- Other reasons to rejoice in persecution and difficulties
- Further examples of rejoicing during persecution and difficulties

d) Epilogue: Blessings for Faithfulness in Persecution

- Blessings amidst suffering and in the present life
- The future rewards of: eternal life; . . .
- . . . God's kingdom; and glory
- Other blessings in the afterlife . . .
- . . . Blessings for "one who conquers"



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The Seven Editions

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, aiming to address the needs of non-Christians through to mature Christians, from teenagers to adults. There are also studies based on four of the editions. The studies contain the same text, but include questions at the end of each section.

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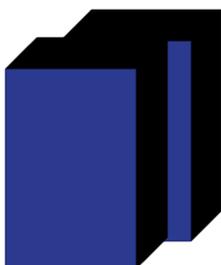
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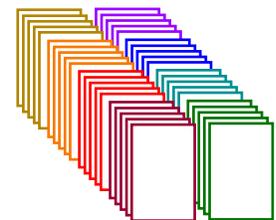


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Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

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

Barnabas Fund – www.barnabasfund.org

Barnabas Fund provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local leaders.

Christian Solidarity International – csi-usa.org

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – www.csw.org.uk

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

Open Doors – www.opendoors.org

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

Religious Liberty Commission – www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See www.idop.org regarding the International Day of Prayer.

Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin – rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com

This site provides weekly prayer bulletins.

The Bible League – bl.org.au/get-involved/bibles-for-the-persecuted; bl.org.au

The Bible League provides Bibles for persecuted Christians, as well as other under-resourced churches. It also trains national believers to plant new churches in countries of persecution.

Voice of the Martyrs – www.persecution.com

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

World Watch Monitor – www.worldwatchmonitor.org

World Watch Monitor reports the story of Christians around the world under pressure for their faith.

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' Matthew 25:40

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